

Stepwells: The Water Temples of Rajasthan

Dr . Yatindra Pal Singh



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please contact:

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

www.BlueRoseONE.com

info@bluerosepublishers.com

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+4407342408967

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Dedicated to my parents

Late Shrimati Kalavati Devi and Late Shri Vir Pal Singh

यदुबीर सिंह रावत

महानिदेशक

Yadubir Singh Rawat

Director General

Tele : +91-11-23075357/54

Email : dg.asi@gov.in

Web : www.asi.nic.in



भारतीय पुरातत्व सर्वेक्षण

संस्कृति मंत्रालय

भारत सरकार

धरोहर भवन 24, तिलक मार्ग,

नई दिल्ली-110001

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

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Foreword

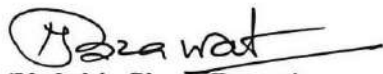
Natural water bodies were the prime areas where prehistoric cultures developed. Ancient civilizations thrived along the valleys of major rivers and their tributaries. Establishment of permanent settlements and urban centres also necessitated the creation of permanent water bodies such as ponds and wells. Excavations of the Sindhu - Saraswati civilisation sites in India have brought to light the earliest water structures dating back to 2600 BCE. Among these structures, wells were common to most of the settlements but site like Dholavira in Gujarat revealed a very elaborate water harvesting system based on a chain of large reservoirs of stone masonry. The legacy of the Sindhu – Saraswati civilisation continued during the early historical and historical periods in the form of water structures such as wells, reservoirs and Kunds. However, around the 9th/10th century CE, a new architectural form that emerged in the semi-arid region of western India, especially in Gujarat, is known as stepwell. These stepwells contributed immensely to fulfil the need of domestic as well as the irrigation uses, mainly in semi-arid regions of the Northern, Western and Central India. India is believed to have the largest number of stepwells in the world while Rajasthan is said to be having the largest number in India. Majority of stepwells served their purpose till the late 18th or early 19th century CE. But the advent of the submersible pumps and borewells in 20th century, the stepwells lost their importance. The spread of urbanisation and overuse of the ground water for farming and agriculture pursuit, the water level went down drastically. Finally, the commencement of piped water supply completely stopped the utility of stepwells. This resulted into the complete neglect in their maintenance and consequently they became dumping ground for the public waste. India is the largest user of the ground water in the world. China and USA follow it in the second and third place. The quantity of ground water used by India is more than the total used by China and the USA and is said to be more than 25% of the quantity drawn by the whole world. The importance of the ground water in the

daily life and the livelihood of the Indians cannot be underemphasised. In the current scenario of the scarcity of water, there is an urgent need for revival of as many stepwells as possible. These water bodies, built by our ancestors, can be reused for water harvesting and as ground water recharger wells by evolving a proper system to fill them during rainy season.

This book, written by Dr. Y.P. Singh, provides details of many stepwells of Rajasthan. He has described stepwells with their present state of preservation and their history of construction. I am told that this is the first book containing about 230 stepwells of Rajasthan with details of each of them. He has mentioned the geographical locations of these stepwells along with their architectural details. The book contains beautiful photographs of all these stepwells. Considering all these facts, I think, this is the first book on stepwells of Rajasthan with so much information. Dr. Singh has made commendable contribution in this direction. He has suggested various steps to be taken for maintenance and revival of the stepwells.

I am sure, this book will be of great use to the researchers, tourists and heritage enthusiasts apart from the authorities responsible for maintenance of these water structures and heritage monuments. I wish the book a grand success.

New Delhi
Dated: 9th June, 2025


(Yadubir Singh Rawat)
Director General
Archaeological Survey of India

Acknowledgements

At the time of writing the acknowledgements for this book, I had already visited around 500 stepwells in India, including about 232 stepwells of Rajasthan, which are featured in this volume. This process has been ongoing since 2020. Many of my friends, spread all over India, have been of great help in this endeavour. It is my duty to acknowledge their kind assistance, without which I could not have visited so many stepwells. Some of them even accompanied me during my visits to the stepwells. I wish to especially express my gratitude to late Shri P. K. Agnihotri, Sr. DEN (retd.), Jaipur Division, North Western Railway who is no more in this world now. He accompanied me to many stepwells and offered me delicious food prepared by Mrs. Agnihotri during such visits. I miss him greatly. As for this volume, which contains stepwells of Rajasthan, I would like to appreciate the kind help received from the following:

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My loving wife, Dr. Shashi Bala Singh; my daughter, Dr. Vanessa Hensler; my son-in-law, Mr. Brett Robert Hensler; my son, Mr. Shashank; and my daughter-in-Law, Mrs. Guneet Kaur, have been the constant source of encouragement throughout my work on stepwells. I am grateful to God for receiving their love and affection.

While working for this project and writing this book, our family was blessed with the arrival of a new-born grand-daughter, Maya, and a grandson, Kirin. Their arrival in this world has given me a reason to redouble my efforts in writing this book for the sake of posterity, so that they may learn about the great culture of India.

.....

Preface

In the past two decades, a few excellent and well researched books have been published on stepwells. These include notably, inter alia, *The Stepwells of Gujarat: In Art-Historical Perspective* by Jutta Jain-Neubauer; *The Queen's Stepwell at Patan* by Kirit Mankodi; *The Vanishing Stepwells of India* by Victoria Lautman; *Steps to Water: The Ancient Stepwells of India* by Morna Livingston; *Her Space, Her Story: Exploring the Stepwells of Gujarat* by Purnima Mehta Bhatt. In addition to these, there are some monographs, such as *Lesser Known Stepwells: In and Around Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar Region*, edited by Manvita Baradi et al., and *Stepwells: Architectural Treasure of Gujarat-A Guide Book* by Sumanben H. Pandya and Kumarpal Parmar, among others. Almost all of them are centred on the stepwells of Gujarat, except Victoria Lautman's book, where she has included a few stepwells from Rajasthan, and a handful from other states. However, it can be safely assumed that these published books have a significant emphasis on the stepwells of Gujarat, with only a few from Rajasthan, mostly written in Hindi.

In my opinion, the publication of a small number of books on the stepwells of India is a serious issue, which requires to be addressed. It's a matter of grave concern that, firstly, the public is not aware of the existence of such a large number of stepwells, and secondly, people are oblivious to their wonderful heritage. Thus, people are not bothered about the gross neglect of the stepwells, due to which these marvellous pieces of architecture are being lost over time. This book is an attempt to fill the void in the available literature on the stepwells of India. I have visited around 500 stepwells in 12 states of India, over the last four years. No book, so far, has details of so many stepwells. There was no information available about the location of many stepwells, which made it very difficult for me to find them. I have included the latitudes and longitudes of all these stepwells in the book. It would be very easy to reach them if you know their location. Being a civil engineer by profession, I am aware of the structural and architectural aspects of these stepwells, which I have included in my book, apart from their historical aspect.

Except for a few stepwells, maintained by the ASI and the State Departments of Archaeology, most of them are facing total neglect of maintenance and consequently 'vanishing' in the words of Victoria Lautman. I have suggested some measures that must be taken in this regard.

I must confess that, though, it was a painful exercise in the beginning to visit these stepwells, with no details of their location, without any available means of transportation, but gradually it became my passion to visit them, and I started enjoying such visits. Many of the stepwells, covered with thorny vegetation, were infested with wasps, bees, bats, and even snakes. Some parts of many of these are crumbling due to constant deterioration by weather. I had to be extra cautious for my safety.

All the photographs in this book have been captured by me by using Canon Power Shot camera, except for a few that were taken through my mobile phone. Locational details like latitudes, longitudes, directions of orientation, and elevations of the stepwells have been recorded through a mobile phone compass. However, there are some stepwells where I forgot to record elevations. The details of the stepwells, along with their photographs, have been included in the book in the sequence of my visits. I have not arranged them in any other sequence like region, importance, type, or classification of the stepwells. I used to write about them just after my return from such visits.

By May 2025, I had visited more than 500 stepwells in various states of India, out of which nearly 45% belonged to the state of Rajasthan. Initially, I was thinking of writing only one book containing all the stepwells. However, as the time passed, the number of the stepwells visited by me also grew larger. Had I included all these stepwells in a single volume, it would have become unwieldy and costlier for the readers. Hence, I decided to bring out a separate volume for the stepwells of Rajasthan, because there are not many books written on the stepwells of Rajasthan. While writing this book, I could not find any book written in English on the stepwells of Rajasthan. I hope this book will fill this vacuum. It is also desirable to spread awareness about the rich culture and heritage of these architecturally monumental water structures of India among foreigners. I am also hopeful of an increase in the number of foreign tourists wanting to visit these stepwells once they come to know about their architectural beauty.

The Department of Posts of the Government of India has issued commemorative stamps of sixteen stepwells—the information about most of which are in public domain. A copy of such postage stamps has been included in the preface. This shows the immense cultural and heritage value which the government attaches to these stepwells, but very few of them have been marketed as important tourist attractions. For example, the condition of Nagar and Sagar Kunds of Bundi indicates that a lot needs to be done in this regard. These kunds are full of waste. Moreover, there is not much publicity about these stepwells. Consequently, tourist inflow to these stepwells is very low, except for a few of them. Many of the stepwells included in this book have great potential to become tourist attractions—both for local and foreign tourism, if they are developed accordingly.

I am sure that this book will be of great interest to the tourists—local as well as foreign, engineers and architects, ASI and other archaeologists, local administrative authorities (municipalities), responsible for the maintenance of these stepwells, and the general public. I will consider that my efforts were worth taking if this book is successful in arousing a keen interest in the stepwells—their maintenance and ultimately in preservation of our invaluable cultural heritage.

बावड़ी Stepwells



Postage stamps on stepwells, released by the Department of Posts, Government of India.

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Introduction

India has a tropical climate. It has three distinct seasons: hot summers, from April to June; hot and humid monsoon, from July to September; and winter season, from October to March. India experiences rains during monsoon, which can extend from June in Kerala to October in the Northeast. The temperature ranges from -40 degrees centigrade in Ladakh in the north to 50 degrees centigrade in Rajasthan in the western region. The average rainfall in India is about 1200 mm. While Meghalaya in the northeast experiences rainfall of 1000 cm, states like Rajasthan and Gujarat in western India get rainfall as low as 30 cm. Generally speaking, Rajasthan and Gujarat have always received very low to low rainfall. The famous Thar Desert is spread over the western Rajasthan. There are some other parts of central India like Karnataka, Telangana, and Maharashtra which experience low rainfall. This necessitated the storage of water—the elixir of life—for water requirements during hot summer seasons for drinking, agriculture, and other domestic needs.

Due to vagaries of the monsoon rains, people of the affected regions with low rainfall decided to store water and build stepwells for fulfilling their water needs in case of insufficient rains. Though a 5,000-year-old stepwell has been found in the excavations of the Indus Valley civilisation at Dholavira, Gujarat, in 2014, the first surviving and live stepwells—dating back to the 6th and 7th century AD—exist at Dhank, Gujarat. Similar to the Dholavira stepwell, a few stepwells in their earliest form, dating back to the 3rd to 4th century, exist in the Buddhist Khapra Kadiya caves in Junagadh, Gujarat. Although the census of stepwells has not been conducted yet, it is estimated that around 3,000 stepwells exist in India, out of which nearly 400-500 are in usable condition. While around 5,000 stepwells exist in the whole world, most of them are in the Middle East and West Asia, apart from India.

In the places which experience abundant rains, like Amritsar and Lucknow, stepwells were built as a place for amusement. However, in the states of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Telangana, and Maharashtra, these stepwells are dotting the dry and arid regions. They exist almost in all the villages of northeast Gujarat and are in plenty over the dry Saurashtra region, but mostly absent in the region south of Vadodara, in the South Gujarat. They were built all over Rajasthan in and around Jodhpur, Marwar, Sirohi, Jaipur, Sawai Madhopur, Bundi, Kota, and Udaipur. It was very costly and dangerous to construct stepwells in the Thar region, due to sandy soil which would collapse very easily, and moreover, there was no ground water in the sandy strata near the ground surface, since the water table was very deep. Water scarcity in Fatehpur Sikri had forced Akbar to shift his capital to Agra. Stepwells were built in Fatehpur Sikri and Agra forts, and the surrounding area of Dholpur and Karauli in Rajasthan and Gwalior, Datia (both in Madhya Pradesh), and Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. A number of stepwells were constructed in Maharashtra, Telangana, and northern Karnataka, which are dry and arid and experience low rainfall. Bhopal and Chanderi areas of

Madhya Pradesh are full of stepwells because their terrain is rolling and mountainous and the rain water could not be used to recharge the ground water, and had to be stored. These water structures were mainly of two types: stepwells and stepped ponds. Most of the stepped ponds, also called kunds, pushkarnis, or kalyanis, were built by the side of temples, mainly for rituals or religious bathing by the devotees. Such stepped ponds exist in almost all the temples of Kerala. Stepwells and stepped ponds were also built inside all the forts to tide over the water crisis during the period when the fort was under siege by an enemy. Stepwells exist in the Red Fort, Tughlaqabad Fort, and Old (Pandav's) Fort in Delhi, Daulatabad Fort in Aurangabad, Golconda Fort in Hyderabad, Telangana, and Kannur Fort in Kerala, etc.

The stepwells were located on the trade routes, so that traders and merchants could take shelter in these stepwells during the scorching summer heat. Many of these stepwells were built for the purpose of providing armies with rest during their marches. In Maharashtra, Ghud-Vavs (Horse-Stepwell) were built in such a way that the horses of the Maratha army could approach the water in the stepwells.

These stepwells are located in the cities and villages, inside jungles, in the temples and mosque complexes, by the side of roads, in the forts, inside palaces and individual houses, and in the agricultural fields. In spite of their presence in large numbers throughout India, the stepwells and stepped ponds/kunds are one of the least known and visited monuments, especially by Indians. I have seen many foreigners eager to know about these water structures, which are architecturally as beautiful as an ancient temple, but Indians are hardly interested in them, while they represent an important aspect of our culture. Due to this, these water structures are the most neglected monuments in India. In spite of their great usefulness to the public, neither the administration—local, state, or national—nor the public is interested in their maintenance. During my visit to more than 500 stepwells in various parts of India, I found that the least awareness about their importance is in the public. I only hope that with the grave water crisis already staring the residents in many cities of India, like Chennai, stepwells will draw the attention of both the administration and the public. The main aim of my writing this book is to make the people aware of the great importance of stepwells in our lives.

This book contains details and photographs of 233 stepwells, spread over the state of Rajasthan. The social, religious, historical, and architectural aspects have been discussed in respect of these stepwells.

Attributes of Stepwells

The word 'stepwell' instantly evokes a feeling of nostalgia inside a person, transporting one to the glorious past of India when these stepwells were built. What is a stepwell? What is the difference between a simple well and a stepwell?

A well is a hole dug or drilled into the ground to access the water naturally contained in an aquifer. It may be with or without lining. The lining may be of bricks or stones. A stepwell means a well with steps. We could have—more appropriately—called it a 'stepped well', but the term 'stepwell' has become so well understood and universal that it is better to continue with it. Different words are available for 'stepwell' in different languages and different regions or states of India. In Delhi, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, the term used in Hindi can be written in English as baoli, bauli, or bavli, while in Rajasthan, baodi or bavdi is more common. In general, the terms baodi or baoli are commonly used in North India. In Gujarat, vav is the most commonly used term. A small vav is called vaavdi in Gujarati. The term vihir is used in Maharashtra, while kalyani and pushkarni are commonly used in Karnataka. People use different terms like bai, bavi, kalyani, bowdi, and baodi in Telangana. The terms vapi and vapika have Sanskrit origin. Overall, baodi, baoli, and vav are the most commonly used terms for a stepwell all over India, wherever people speak or understand Hindi or Urdu. Even in South India, which includes Telangana and Karnataka, baodi is the most understood term for a stepwell because these regions were controlled by Muslim rulers who spoke Urdu.

A kund means a pit or pond surrounded by steps. It is akin to kalyani and pushkarni of south India. Kupa or koop is the term used for a well in Sanskrit, while kua is used in Hindi, and kuo in Gujarati. In this book, I have mostly used the terms, baodi, baoli, and vav interchangeably, out of which baodi and vav have been used very frequently for a stepwell. Similarly, kund, kalyani, and pushkarni have been used for kund type stepwells. Sometimes, local word has also been used.

This book contains the details of the above two types of water structures, namely, the stepwells and stepped ponds or kunds of India.

Types of Stepwells

A stepwell is an underground structure with a long and narrow stepped corridor, sandwiched between side walls which serve as retaining walls, connected to an open vertical well shaft at one end. The well shaft can be quadrangular, circular, or octagonal in plan.

The stepwells can be classified based on various aspects. One such classification may be on the basis of the number of entrances, or the directions to enter the stepwell to access the water in the well shaft. If there is only one entrance or a single stepped corridor leading to the well shaft, then this style of architecture is called as **Nanda** style. In case of two, three, or four stepped corridors or

entrances from two, three, or four directions, such stepwells are known to have been built in the **Bhadra**, **Jaya**, and **Vijaya** style of architecture, respectively. They are also called **ekmukhi** (one way), **dwimukhi** (two ways), **trimukhi** (three ways), and **Chaturmukhi** (four ways) stepwells. There is also a type of stepwell with seven entrances, called as **Saptamukhi Vav** in Dabhoi town of Vadodara district of Gujarat.

Most of the stepwells have been built in the Nanda type of architecture, with one-way entrance. Stepwells of Neemrana, Tasing, Behror and Bhandarez, Maaji ki Baodi, Kale Hanuman ji ki Baodi, and Rukmini Baodi of Jaipur; Rani Baodi of Nadol, Bhooton ki Baodi of Ransi village, Tapi and Jalap, and Eidgah Baodis of Jodhpur etc., are all examples of the Nanda style of stepwells. The number of people who can use the stepwell simultaneously increases with the number of entrances. Qazion ki Baodi and Noor Baodi of Chanderi, Madhya Pradesh, and Sindhvai Mata Temple Vav of Patan, Vyas Baodi of Lakheri in Rajasthan are examples of the Bhadra style of stepwell i.e. dwimukhi vav with two entrances. Adalaj Vav of Ahmedabad, Rayagiri Baodi of Telangana, Bada Bagh Baodi of Bhopal, and Binota ki Baodi, Da Vav of Narlai, Trimukhi Vav of Debari, all in Rajasthan have three entrances and, thus, are called trimukhi vavs or Jaya style stepwells. Sri Ranganayak Koneru of Srirangapur, Telangana; Chatusmukhi Vav of Surat, Gujarat; and Chaubari Vav in Gujarat are chaturmukhi vavs or Vijaya style of stepwells.

The stepwells can also be classified on the basis of their material of construction. They can be built of bricks, stones, or both. The type of stone masonry may be **random rubble (RR)**, **coursed rubble (CR)**, **dressed stone**, or **Ashlar masonry**. The random rubble masonry consists of different sizes of undressed and rough stones, used in un-coursed style of masonry. This type of masonry is quite inexpensive. In coursed rubble masonry, stones of approximately equal height are used in layers or courses. Though they are rough and irregularly shaped, they are hammer dressed. The dressed stone masonry or Ashlar Masonry is very expensive and made with stones, cut and dressed in a specific form, typically rectangular in shape. There are very few stepwells built of bricks, such as Interi Vav or Botter Kothani Vav of Mehsana and Bhai ki Baoli of Kaithal, which have been mainly built of bricks.

Another classification of stepwells is on the basis of the straightness of the stepped corridor or steps. This classifies the stepwells into **L-shaped stepwell**, also called as Kaatkhuni Vav in Gujarati. The Amritvarshini stepwell of Ahmedabad, Manjushri Vav of Dhank, and Vanzaari Vav of Modasa in Gujarat; Badami Vihar and Bajirao Vihar of Satara in Maharashtra; Red Fort Baodi in Delhi; Bala Saheb ki Baodi of Kanore, Shri Krishna Vatika Baodi of Badi Sadri; Manohar Baodi, Bhawalde ki Baodi, and Somaniyon ki Baodi of Bundi; Chand Baodi of Jodhpur, Gauri Shankar Baodi of Naraina, and Alanpur Baodi of Sawai Madhopur in Rajasthan are all examples of L-shaped stepwells. These types of stepwells have a long axis and a short axis. Sometimes, such stepwells may be in the form of a **reverse-L**, like Amritvarshini Vav of Ahmedabad; Bhawalde ki Baodi, Manohar Baodi, and Somaniyon ki Baodi of Bundi. L-shaped stepwells are adopted when there is a space constraint in constructing the Nanda type of stepwell with a long single stepped corridor. All this depends on the land available at the time of construction as well as the difficulties likely to be faced during construction due to the presence of various obstacles.

In the case of **Helical stepwells**, the steps descend in a helical form along the well shaft. For example, the Helical Stepwell of Champaner, Sevasi Helical Vav in Gujarat, and Ram Baodi of Chitrakoot in Uttar Pradesh, are all helical stepwells. Helical wells are in between a simple well and a normal stepwell with a stepped corridor. This type of stepwell is an improvement over a simple well because it provides access to water at various levels inside the helical well, which is not available in a simple well. The helical well is simpler and inexpensive as compared to a stepwell because it does not need side walls to withstand the earth pressure and elaborate arrangements like a stepwell. In another type of helical stepwells, the steps descend within the two walls—interior and exterior—of the stepwell, with openings towards the well shaft in the interior wall for light and ventilation. Such stepwells have pavilions within the two walls of the well shaft, for example, Rani ka Kua of Machadi in Rajasthan and Bhammariyo Kuo of Halisa in Gujarat.

Kund vav, i.e., the **Stepped Pond**, is the third type of structure in this classification. Kund Vav can serve a much larger number of people at the same time as compared to stepwells with stepped corridors, because of the large number of pairs of steps provided along the three or four sides. The steps on the sides of the kund can be built with a steeper slope, with steps descending in lateral directions. Due to the numerous steps, there is no criss-crossing of people coming down or going up. They have the liberty to use any pair of steps on three or four sides. Stepped ponds normally have steps to access the water from either of three sides or all the four sides. The examples of kund-type stepwells are the stepwells of Abhaneri, Osian, Pipar City, Sumer, Bhinmal, Badi Sadari, Shitla Mata kund of Kanore, Panna Meena kund of Jaipur, Jachcha Baodi of Hindaun City, Nagar and Sagar kunds, and Dhabhai ka kund of Bundi and Basantgarh in Rajasthan; Akhaj Shakti kund, Kapadvanj and Sabli in Gujarat, and Pul Kanjari of Amritsar etc. Similar to kund, **Jhalaras** have been built in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Jhalaras also have steps on three or four sides just like kunds, and pavilions on one of the four sides. The only difference is that the word 'Jhalara', instead of kund, is used in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Toor ji ka Jhalara and Kriya ka Jhalara are well known stepwells of this type in Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

As I have already written above, stepwells can be classified on the basis of their historical development, their location, type of construction material, type of masonry, type of directional orientation, type of their function, and the number of storeys.

Though all these types have been discussed above, it is useful to discuss their classification based on their ground plan and broad architectural features. On the basis of their plan and distinguishable architectural features, the stepwell can generally be classified into the following main types:

1. Type One: With one entrance and straight stepped corridor or the Nanda style

This type of the stepwell is said to be of the Nanda style and have only one entrance with a single stepped corridor, ending at the well shaft. This type can further be divided into two classes: (1) those without any pavilion towers, and (2) those with pavilion towers. Most of the stepwells fall into this category. The cost of building such stepwells is lesser as compared to the other types. This style of stepwell without any pavilion tower is followed when water is available at a lower depth. However, pavilion towers—koots and ardh-koots—are built when

the depth of water is more, and the side walls need to be supported with pavilions against the earth pressure. The number of persons that can use the stepwell is the least as compared to the other styles because there is only one entrance. Most of the stepwells have been built in the Nanda style of architecture (Refer to Fig. 1).

2. Type Two: With two entrances and two straight stepped corridors or the Bhadra Sstyle

This type of stepwell is said to be of the Bhadra style, where there are two entrances and two straight stepped corridors, leading to the well shaft. They may be further classified into the stepwells without pavilion towers or with pavilion towers. The stepwell near a mosque by the side of RPF Training Centre of South-Central Railway in Secunderabad is an example of the Bhadra style of stepwell. Vyas Baodi of Lakheri in Rajasthan, with entrance from two directions, is an example of the Bhadra style of architecture. I found this type of stepwell in the least numbers during my visits around India (Refer to Fig. 2).

3. Type Three: With three entrances and three straight stepped corridors or the Jaya style

This type of stepwell is said to be of the Jaya style of architecture, with three entrances and three straight stepped corridors, such as the Trimukhi Baodi of Debari village near Udaipur, Da Vav of Narlai, and the stepwell at Binota in Rajasthan. This type of stepwell allows much larger number of people to use the stepwell simultaneously. However, this type of stepwell has also been built in fewer numbers (Refer to Fig. 3).

4. Type Four: With four entrances and four straight stepped corridors or the Vijaya style

Such stepwells are built in the Vijaya style of architecture and have four entrances and four straight stepped corridors. For example, Chaturmukhi or Chatushmukhi Vav in Surat, Gujarat, is an example of the Vijaya style. In this case, the well shaft is in the centre and can be approached from all four sides. I could not find any stepwell with four directional entrances, built in Vijaya style of architecture, anywhere in Rajasthan. However, the Chatusmukhi Vav of Surat and Chobari Vav of Gujarat can be quoted as examples in this category. This type of stepwell requires a larger land area for construction and is generally costlier than the three types mentioned above (Refer to fig. 4).

5. Type Five: L-Shaped Stepwells

This type is slightly different from Type One, which has only one entrance and a single stepped corridor. In L-shaped stepwell, there are two limbs of the straight corridor, which join at right angles. One of the two limbs of the L is longer than the other limb. Typically, the first portion of this type of stepped corridor is smaller in length. Whenever, there is a problem of finding sufficient land to construct a longer straight corridor, an L-shaped stepwell is preferred. For example, Amritvarshini Vav of Ahmedabad, Vanzari Vav of Modasa, Tintoi Vav of Gujarat. Bala Saheb ki Baodi of Kanore, Shri Krishna Vatika Baodi of Badi Sadri, Manohar Baodi, Bhawalde ki Baodi, and Somaniyon ki Baodi of Bundi; Chand Baodi of Jodhpur, Gauri Shankar Baodi of Naraina, Alanpur Baodi of Sawai Madhopur, and Bagh ki Baodi of Gendoli in Rajasthan are the

examples of the L-shaped stepwells. These can either be in the shape of a normal-L or a reverse-L. Bhawalde ki Baodi, Manohar Baodi, and Somaniyon ki Baodi of Bundi in Rajasthan are examples of the reverse-L shaped stepwells.

6. Type Six: Helical Stepwells

The helical stepwells have steps going down the well in the form of a spiral or helix. The steps follow a circular path and revolve around a central axis. The steps can go down either in one direction or in two directions, forming a pair of steps. Helical wells can be classified into two categories: (1) when the steps are enclosed within a circumambulatory passage around the well, forming a stepped corridor winding down the well, and (2) when the steps are not enclosed within a passage and they are descending in open, without any railing. In case of the second category, it is quite dangerous to go down the steps, and even more so when climbing up with water, whereas descending in the first one is safer. The Ra' Khengar stepwell at Vanthali, Navghan Kuo of Junagarh, Bhammariyo Kuo of Mehmudabad, and Halisa in Gujarat; and Rani ka Kua of Machadi in Rajasthan are categorised under the first kind, as they have a circumambulatory passage, while the stepwells at Tapa Baodi of Chanderi, Ram Baoli of Chitrakoot, and Sevasi helical well are examples of the second category under this type.

7. Type Seven: Kundtype Stepwells

All kund vavs, kalyanis, and pushkarnis may be classified under this type. In fact, kunds are stepped ponds. Most of the kunds have steps on three sides and, in some cases, on all the sides, with well shaft in the centre. They get sub-terranean water from a nearby upstream source of water, such as a river or a lake. Almost all of them were constructed by the side of temples and mosques and had religious functions to perform. While stepwells are linear in design, dark, and hardly visible from the surface, kunds are usually quadrangular in shape and illuminated by sunlight. Many of these appear to be inverted pyramids or inverted temple. They were also used for domestic purposes and to irrigate the agricultural fields. Kunds served the purpose of purification of the people who took bath in them before going to the temple. Many kunds were also built inside graveyards. Surya kund near the Sun Temple of Modhera, Kund Vav of Kapadvanj, Lolark kund of Varanasi, Mahasatiya kund of Udaipur, Shakti kund of Akhaj, kund at Badi Sadari of Rajasthan, Nagar and Sagar kunds of Bundi, Dhabhai ka kund at Bundi, Virupaksh Temple Pushkarni, and Lok Pavani Pushkarni, among others at Hampi, Jind Baba ka kund at Lakheri, Jachcha ki Baodi at Hindaun City, Sukhwas kund, and Bazaar kund of Allapur near Sawai Madhopur all fall in this category. The Peralassery Temple pond at Kannur and many other ponds by the side of temples in Kerala also come under this category. In many cases, there are steps either on three sides or on all four sides, while the water hauling arrangement is on one of the four sides, such as Jas kund of Bedla in Udaipur. In Rajasthan, the Nanda type stepwell with one entrance has been built in the largest number. After ek-mukhi stepwell, the kunds are the next largest in number.

Main Components of a Stepwell

Before I write about the details of various stepwells, it would be advisable to explain different parts or components of stepwells.

When we enter a stepwell, we find, in many cases, an open pavilion on a raised platform, supported on columns at the entrance of the stepped corridor, which is called as the **mukhmandap or the entrance pavilion**. This may have a circular dome on top, or it may be a rectangular or square hall. In Hindi, it is called as *baradari*—having twelve openings. Such pavilions have been built mostly in the case of the Nanda type stepwells, having one directional entrance. A domical pavilion has been provided in the case of Jethabhai vav and Bai Harir Vav in Ahmedabad, Ancient Vav of Hampar, Pancham Mehta Vav of Vadnagar, in Gujarat, and Noor Baodi of Chanderi. In Gujarat, mostly round pavilions with circular domes are found, while in the stepwells of Rajasthan, we find quadrangular pavilions, as in the case of stepwells at Alooda, Bhapura, Abhaneri, Bhandarez, Sakat, and Rukmani stepwell, and Gangadas ki Baodi in Jaipur. This pavilion was used by the villagers to meet, gossip, and discuss about the issues related to their day-to-day lives, while enjoying the cool surroundings of the stepwell.

In some cases, the entrance to the stepped corridor is flanked on both sides by a pair of gate-towers or ornate pillars called as *todas*. These pillars or **todas** have a small niche for lighting lamps. This type of stepwell is found in Gujarat. Some examples of such stepwells with *todas* are Tintoi Vav, Trikam Barot ni Vav of Patan, Sindhvai Mata ni Vav of Patan; Jhilani Vav, Manjushri Vav, and Vavdi ni Vav of Dhank, and Pahad Vav in Gujarat. The Khetla ji ki Baodi in Sirohi, Rajasthan, which borders Gujarat, and Manohar Baodi of Bundi, have such gate towers or *todas*. Gujarat has many stepwells with *todas* and *mukhmandaps*, while it is not a common feature in the stepwells of other states. These *todas* may be either plain, moderately, or heavily ornamented depending upon the scale, style, and importance of the stepwell. In some stepwells, a **toran** is provided at the entrance, for example, Rani ki Vav at Patan, Toran Baodi of Udaipur, Toran ki Baodi of Lakheri, and Rani ki Baodi of Bundi. A toran is an archway, also called as the victory arch. The arch is normally very ornately decorated and intricately carved with figures and patterns. A toran is considered very auspicious in Hindu and Buddhist culture. One can see a toran gate at the Sanchi Stupa. A temporary toran gate, made of banana stems and leaves, is erected on the occasion of Hindu marriages, through which the guests pass before entering a hall for marriage rituals. In many stepwells of Rajasthan, only a square or rectangular platform on both sides of the entrance has been built, which was possibly used by the public to sit and engage in discussions.

In most of the stepwells of Rajasthan, a stone post is found fixed near the entrance of the stepwell. This is called by various names, such as **jal-stambha**, **garuda-stambha**, or **Goverdhan**. The images of Lord Ganesh, Lord Shiva, and cow suckling her calf, the Sun and the Shivalinga are carved on

this stone post. It is considered very sacred, and people offer water on jal-stambha after taking bath in the stepwell. Sometimes, inscriptions describing the details about the construction of the stepwell, such as who built it and when, are made on this stone post or jal-stambha. I have normally used the word, 'jal-stambha' for this stone post in this book.

After the entrance pavilion, we find steps descending to the water level, ultimately meeting the bottommost opening in the well shaft or the auxiliary tank, before the well shaft.

The well shaft may be many storeyed deep to which the steps descend. There are landings in between the flights of steps—mostly after each storey. On these landings, the pavilions are built. These pavilions contain niches in the side walls with sculptures of deities, and are the places where people can rest for a while. The pavilion after the first flight of steps is called the first **pavilion** or **kuta** or **koot**. The pavilion on the second landing, after two flights of steps, is usually two storeyed. Similarly, there are three, four, or five storeyed pavilions. These multi-storeyed pavilions are called **pavilion-towers** or **kuta** or **koot**. In between two kutas or pavilion-towers, **ardhakutas** or **ardh-koots** or **half-pavilion towers** are also built to support the earth pressure, without providing larger spaces for landing or for building pavilions. The steps could be taken continuously through the ardh-koots. Sometimes, these ardh-koots do not get supported on the landings. The roof-tops of the top pavilions in the pavilion-towers are in one line with the level of entrance, which means that, they remain below the ground level. Sometimes, there is one more pavilion above the ground level in all the pavilion towers. These pavilions may have benches for sitting and enjoying the cool breeze during summers. The koots are normally supported on archways. These arches may be pointed-arches, corbelled arches, or circular arches. These pavilions, through the arches, support the side walls against the earth pressure. The pavilion towers may also be supported on beams and columns. There are **ledges** on all levels, projecting from the side walls to reach different parts of the stepwell. These ledges are about 10 to 12 inches wide, and supported on **brackets**. Such brackets are sometimes very beautifully decorated. Most of the stepwells have spiral staircases to approach different storeys from the ground level, separately. The troughs for watering animals were also provided on one side of the stepwells. The water drawing platform, called as the **ghat-yantra** or **ghatika-yantra**, is provided in the vertical well shaft, which may be either one or more in number. Geometric or floral patterns are also provided in the form of bands, strips, and panels along the side walls and on the pavilions. Sometimes, a quadrangular kund or auxiliary well is made before the well shaft, which is connected to it. A **courtyard** or **angan** is built around this kund. The well shaft is connected to the stepped corridor at all the levels or storeys. The sculptures of deities are provided inside the well shaft and on the side walls as in case of Queen's stepwell at Patan. A **parapet** is raised on the side walls to protect the public from falling into the stepwell (Refer to Fig. 5).

Some niches are built in the side walls of the stepped corridors, as well as inside the pavilions. Such niches are also made in the well shaft. These are used to house the sculptures of various deities, such as Lord Ganesh, Lord Shiva, Lord Kal-Bhairav, Jal-Devi, etc.

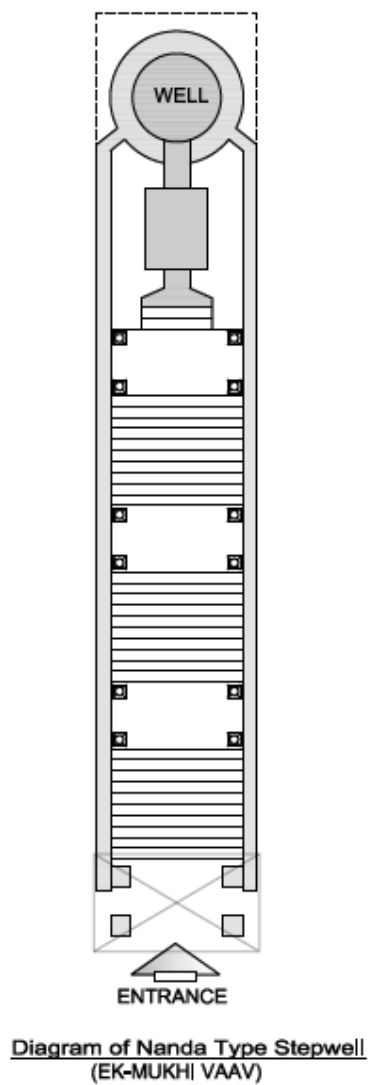


FIG.-1
(NOT TO SCALE)

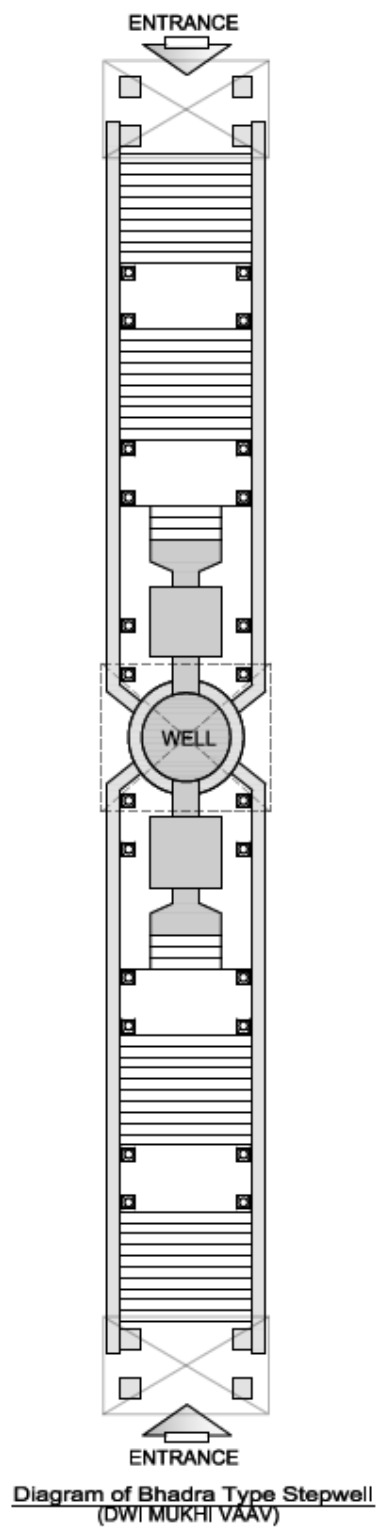


FIG.-2
(NOT TO SCALE)

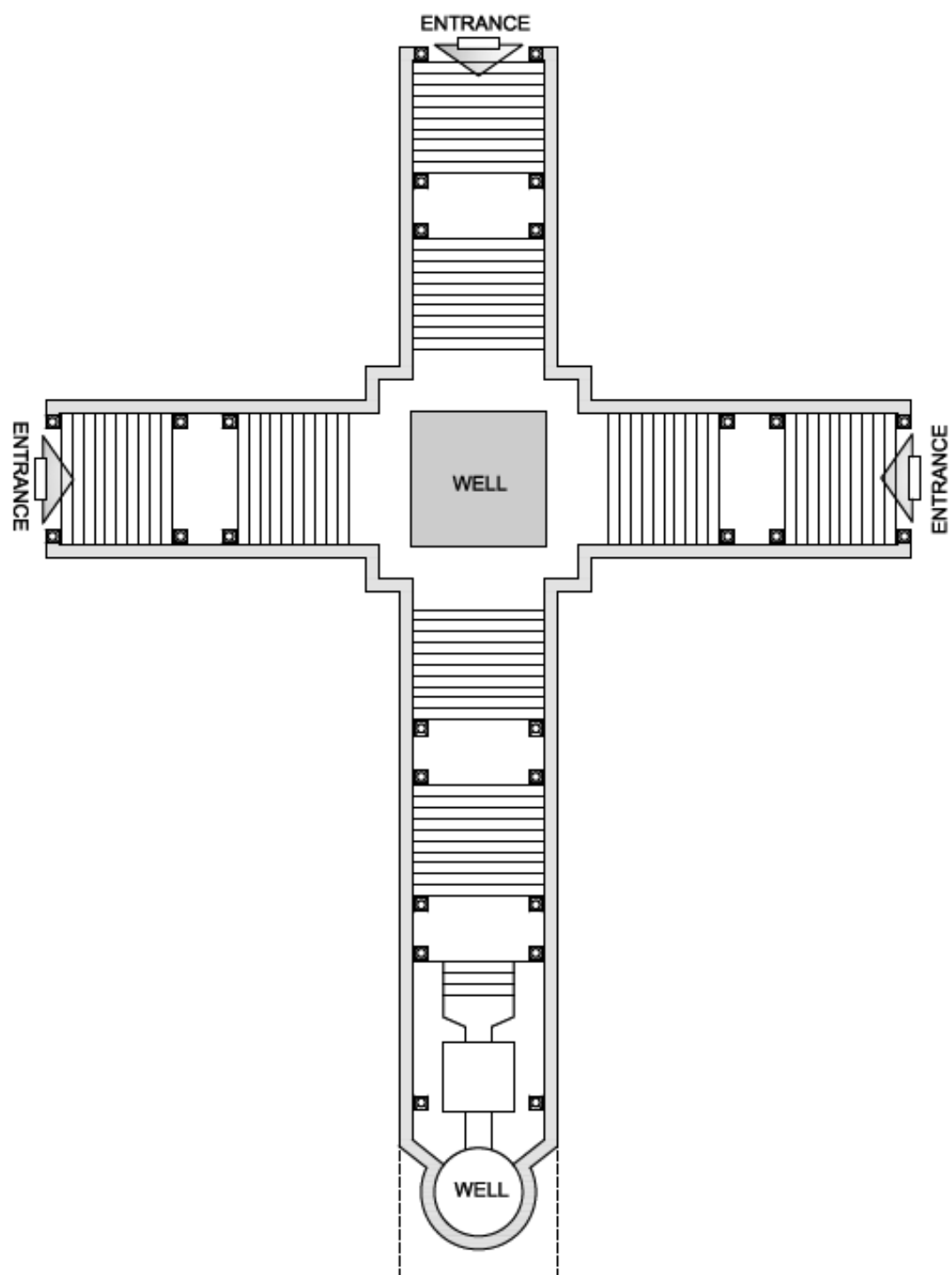


Diagram of Jaya Type Stepwell
(TRI-MUKHI VAAV)

FIG. 3
(NOT TO SCALE)

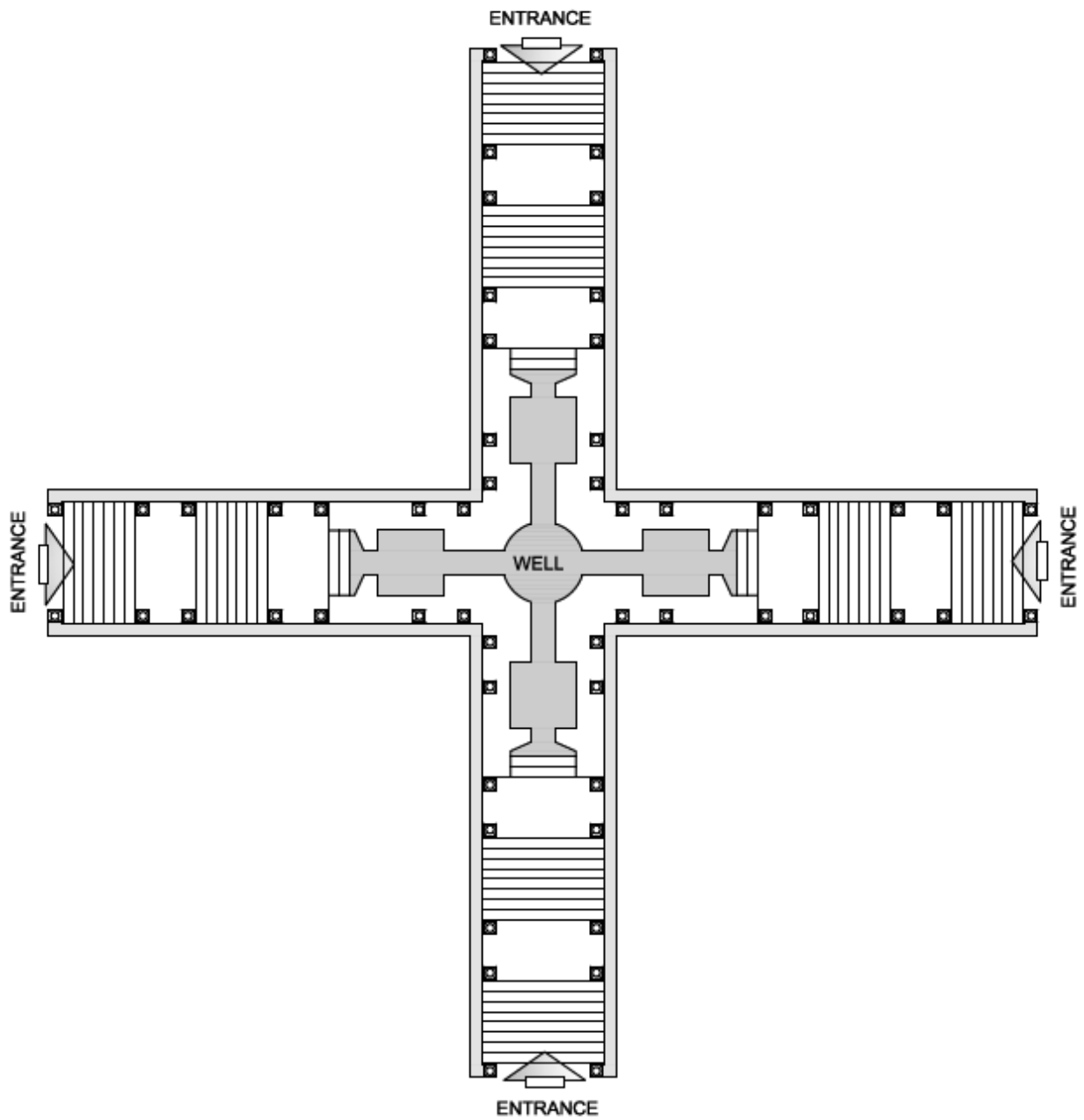


Diagram of Vijaya Type Stepwell
(CHATUR MUKHI VAAV)

FIG.-4
(NOT TO SCALE)

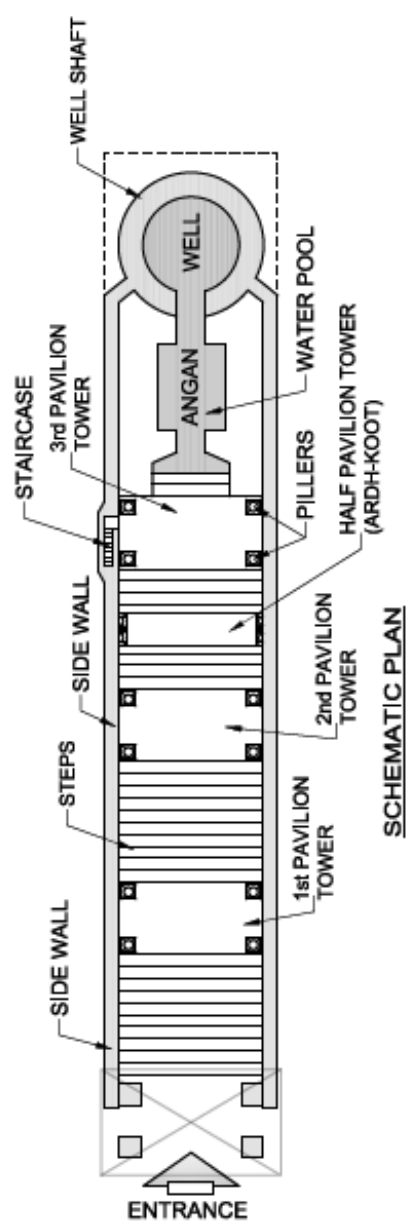
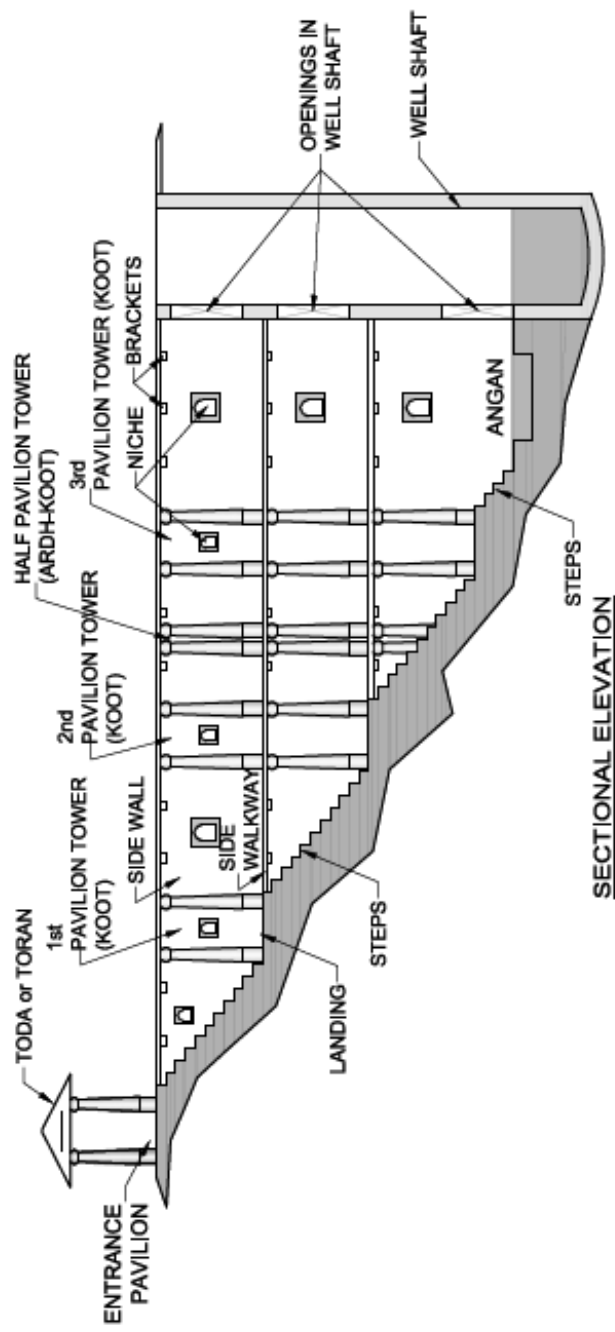


FIG.-5
(NOT TO SCALE)

Patrons and Locations of Stepwells

The construction of stepwells was in response to the geographic location and the climate prevailing over such regions. Most of the stepwells in India were built in dry and arid regions, such as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Delhi, Mathura, the Agra area of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, and some areas of Madhya Pradesh bordering Rajasthan, including Dholpur, Gwalior, Chanderi, and Mandu.

Initially, the stepwells were built as a source and storage of water for domestic use. Khapra Kodiya caves in Junagarh have small-sized stepwells, excavated in solid rocks for storing water for use by the monks inhabiting these caves, dating back to the 3rd- 4th centuries. A part of Navaghan kuvo of Uparkot in Junagarh was built in stages, with the first construction been carried out in the 2nd to 4th centuries. Jhilani and Manjushri stepwells, built in the 6th and 7th century in Dhank village of Gujarat, were used for storing water for drinking and domestic use by the public in the times of scarcity. Since it was beyond the capacity of a common man to construct a stepwell, the responsibility to build these stepwells fell upon the kings, queens, nobles, courtiers, and rich businessmen. The stepwells known as Jhalras in Jodhpur, viz. Toor ji ka Jhalra and other stepwells like Chand Baodi, Raghunath ji ki Baodi, Suraj kund Baodi, and Mahila Bagh Jhalra were built by the kings and queens of Jodhpur or Marwar region. Similarly, Rani ji ki Baodi, Nagar and Sagar kunds, Dhabhai ka kund of Bundi; Trimukhi Baodi, Raj Rajeshwar Mahadev Bavdi of Debari, and Sagasji Bavji Baodi of Gulab Bagh in Udaipur had the patronage of Maharanas of Mewar. The stepwells at Ransi village, Ghanerao, and Nadol have been built by the Thakurs or Thikanedars of these riyasats or thikanas. We can say that the stepwells got the biggest patronage from the kings, queens, and nobles. Some rich businessmen, including Banzaraas, also built many stepwells in Rajasthan, such as Beed ka Johada, Ghadwa ka Johada, and Anantram ka Johada in Fatehpur Shekhawati; Todi College Johada in Lakshmangarh; and Anwana Baodi near Jodhpur. The Banzaraas built a few stepwells too, for example, Modasa in Gujarat and Khandar in Rajasthan. Some religious personalities also chipped in, with the help of their benefactor kings, such as Mahant ji ki Baodi at Rajgarh, and Chetan Das ki Baodi at Lohargal in Rajasthan.

The kings also constructed these stepwells for themselves and their army. It was a necessity to construct stepwells or ponds inside the forts as a safety measure. These stepwells or ponds inside the forts were used to sustain the army and the people living inside the forts during the times of long sieges by enemy army. The earliest stepwells were built in the Uparkot, the fort at Junagadh in Gujarat. The different types of stepwells exist in the Red Forts at Agra and Delhi, Tughlakabad fort, Firozshah Kotla, and the Ancient Fort of Pandavas in Delhi, Golconda Fort in Hyderabad, Aurangabad Fort, Nahargarh Fort in Jaipur, Royal Stepwell in Lucknow, and at Fatehpur Sikri near Agra. Such stepwells were also built along the route followed by army for carrying out their attacks,

where they could take rest and their horses and elephants could drink water. In Maharashtra, many stepwells are known as Ghud-Vav or Ghodi-Vav, which were built by the Marathas at various places along their routes for carrying out attacks on their enemies. These stepwells were used for the horses of kings' armies to drink water, such as Joshi Vihir of Satara in Maharashtra, Malkhavni Baodi of Mungaoli, and Ashoknagar in Madhya Pradesh. Shahjahan ki Baodi of Meham in Haryana is one such stepwell, which was on the marching route of the Mughal army.

Some personal stepwells were also built inside the palaces by various kings or nawabs, for example, the Royal Stepwell at Lucknow, and the stepwell at the Wankaner Palace. Such stepwells were often named after the patrons who built them, like Rani ki Vav built by Queen Udaymati of Patan, Bajirao Vihir of Satara, Raniji ki Baodi of Bundi, Rani ka Kua of Machadi, and Royal Stepwell of Karauli in Rajasthan. They were built for the exclusive use of the kings, queens, and nawabs.

Many stepwells were built along the famous trade routes followed by most of the traders and banzaraas, such as the stepwells located on the way from Delhi to Jaipur, and further to Ahmedabad via Nadol, Ghanerao, and Sirohi. The stepwells of Behror, Neemrana, Shahpura, Sarai ki Baodi at Jaipur, and other stepwells at Amber, Dudu ki Baodi, and at Palanpur and Mehsana beyond Rajasthan, fell on an important ancient trade route. Such stepwells provided shelter in the sweltering heat, and drinking water to the traders and their entourage, including their staff, camels, and horses.

Some riyasatdars or thikanedars and rich farmers built the stepwells for farming. Many stepwells are still being used for irrigating agricultural land. Vavdi ni Vav of Dhank, Katwari stepwell, Moongbi ki Baodi and Dua Baodi of Nadol, Dholi Vav and Dungaria Baodi of Ghanerao, Gurudwara Baodi of Sawarda, Bhoot Baodi of Moruda, Suwa Baodi of Merta, Da Vav, and Amba Vav of Narlai, Kharbuja Baodi of Jodhpur, Lavera Khurd Baodi, Sarneshwar Mandir Baodi of Sirohi, Basantgarh Vav, Gopinath mandir Baodi of Tehla, stepwells in Gulab bagh of Udaipur, and Bagh ki Baodi of Gendoli, among others, all in Rajasthan, are still actively being used for irrigation purposes.

The main purpose of constructing stepwells was to provide and store water for domestic use and irrigation purposes. They were also used as resting places and to provide shelter to the pastoralists, travellers, and armies during scorching summers. Many stepwells are still being used for irrigation and quite a few are being used for the supply of drinking water, even in the cities. The stepwell at Hadad, near Ambaji in Gujarat, is still the only source of water in the town.

Most of the stepwells were constructed at the edge of the villages, such as Adalaj ni Vav, Katwari stepwell, and Rani Baodi of Nadol, Tehla stepwell, Sultan Singh Baodi, and Sundarbai ki Vav in Udaipur. Of course, almost all of them have now been incorporated into the inhabited area after the passage of time and due to population explosion.

Some stepwells in the northern and western India were built next to a place of worship—such as temples or mosques. For example, Modhera Vav, which was built by the side of the Sun Temple; Bhawani Mata Vav and Ashapura Vav, built by the side of the temples in Ahmedabad; Dada Harir Vav, built near a mosque in Ahmedabad; Chand Baodi near the Harsad Mata temple at Abhaneri in Rajasthan; Sundarbai ki Baodi at Udaipur; Bhinmal stepwell; Lakhansi Baodi, built near the Ashapura Mata temple at Nadol; the Sarneshwar Temple stepwell, and Khetla ji ki Baodi near

Sirohi; the stepwell at Tehla near Gopinath ji temple; Hanuman Mandir Baodi at Jaswantpura in Jalore; Ratan Vav in Sirohi; Kale Hanuman Mandir Baodi in Jaipur; Sumer kund; Meera Temple Baodi, Bhana Ganesh Mandir Baodi, the Raj Rajeshwar temple stepwell, and Navlakha Hanuman ji ki Baodi in Udaipur; Sitala Mata kund of Kanore; Charbhuj Mandir Baodi of Badi Sadri; Suraj kund Baodi of Jodhpur; Chopada kund in Dholpur; Neelkanth Mahadev Baodi of Begun; and Bala ji ki Baodi of Baswa in Rajasthan. The list is endless. At Chanderi, all the mosques had a stepwell next to them.

In Kerala, most of the temples have stepwells in the form of a kund next to them, which are used for rituals. Similarly, kalyanis and pushkarnis were constructed next to the temples of Telangana and Karnataka since ancient times, as early as the Hampi period.

Some stepwells like Bund Talab Baodi and Sura ki Baodi of Amber, Kesar Baodi of Khandar, Shankar Chaudhary ki Baodi of Sawai Madhopur, and Raj ki Baodi of Lakheri, were built in the forest area, with the primary purpose of providing water to the animals in those regions. These stepwells, perhaps, may have also assisted in hunting by the nobles or kings, as the animals could be hunted easily when they came to these stepwells for drinking water.

Most of the stepwells were open to the public without regard to castes, except a few who were possibly denied access to the public stepwells. Hence, some stepwells were built exclusively for certain communities. Perhaps, such stepwells were also built by the kings and nobles, or even by the communities themselves, with the financial help from their patrons. Such stepwells were named after these communities. Thatera kund and Telan Panseri ki Baodi in Sawai Madhopur; Tamboliyon ki Baodi or Hijron ki Baodi in Lakheri, and Palsaniyon ki Baodi of Khandela, in Rajasthan, are examples of this category.

We can say that the stepwells were built in various locations: at the edge of the villages, inside the towns, amidst agricultural farms, in the palaces and the forts, in the jungles, and even within temple compounds. In Rajasthan, stepwells are scattered across the entire state because of its dry and arid climate. The number, of course, is low in the area covered by the Thar Desert due to the scarcity and non-availability of ground water, and also due to scanty rainfall. Thus, we find that the stepwells are uniformly scattered in the villages and small towns over the whole state, except the area of the Thar Desert. The density of these stepwells increases in the main cities and their surrounding areas due to the higher population. The number of stepwells is higher in Jodhpur, Jaipur, Bundi, Ajmer, Udaipur, Nadol, Ghanerao, Sirohi, Kota, and Bharatpur, as these cities were the seats and main centres of the Rajputana States viz. Marwar, Mewar, Hadoti, Sirohi, and Jaipur.

Functions of a Stepwell

The basic and fundamental purpose of the construction of stepwells was to provide water for domestic uses, i.e., drinking, bathing, and washing clothes. Owing to decent rainfall and perennial rivers flowing through north, northeast, eastern, some parts of central India, and Kerala, drinking water could be fetched very easily from the shallow wells, dug into soft soils prevailing in the regions of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, and northeast India. One can find a large number of lined wells in these regions in which water is available at small depths. These wells could supply clean drinking water from the underground aquifers. The history of these wells is quite old; wells, lined with bricks, have been found in the excavations of the Indus Valley civilisations and Lothal. However, in the regions with arid climates in northwest, western, and southern India, including the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, some areas of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh bordering Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Telangana, which experienced scanty rainfall and were devoid of perennial rivers, the citizens faced problems in fetching water for their domestic use. Hence, they developed stepwells to mitigate this problem. These stepwells were also used to irrigate agricultural land in such areas.

Water from the stepwells was used to be fetched by the women of the village. Slowly, the stepwells became a central place, buzzing with activities of the village women, where they could chit-chat, exchange their pleasantries, and involve in their daily gossip. They used to wash their clothes there while singing songs. These stepwells also became a part of their folksongs. Similarly, men also used to frequent the stepwells, especially during summers to get comfort in the cool breeze of the stepwells. Thus, the stepwells became a centre for social gathering and a place of activities in the village or the locality. They became the place for interactions among different kinds of people.

The importance of the stepwells in the society cannot be overstated. Many of them were located on the important military and trade routes, where the armies, trading caravans, business travellers, and pilgrims could take rest for the night, as well as during daytime in scorching summers. The armies, while on their march, could take a break and their horses and elephants could drink water.

Many stepwells were constructed in forest and desert areas, which were used by the pastoralists and their animals, like Jhilani Vav of Dhank, Kesar Baodi of Khandar, and Shankar Chaudhary ki Baodi inside the forest of Sawai Madhopur. These stepwells are still far away from the habitation nearby.

A large number of stepwells were built by the kings and nobles for their amusement inside their palaces, or irrigation of gardens and orchards, for example, the Wankaner Palace stepwell, the Royal stepwell of Lucknow, Ganesh Bagh Baoli of Chitrakoot, Salarjung stepwell of Hyderabad, and Bada Bagh Baoli of Bhopal. These stepwells had various pavilions and chambers for taking rest and were to be used by the queens and consorts, apart from the kings and the nobles.

Furthermore, many stepwells were also constructed next to a religious place—such as a temple or a mosque, like Ashapura Vav and Bhawani Mata Vav next to the temples in Ahmedabad, Bai Harir Vav near a mosque in Ahmedabad, Pachmadi Masjid Baodi in Chanderi, and Chand Baodi at Abhaneri. Almost all the kunds in the north and west India, and all the kalyanis and pushkarnis in south India, including Telangana, Karnataka, and Kerala, were constructed alongside the temples, mainly for religious purposes. In the Chanderi area, there were once more than 1200 mosques along with stepwells. In such cases, the stepwells served a religious purpose along with domestic uses. The devotees used to wash their hands or take bath before visiting the deity in the temple or offering namaz. The stepwells are sometimes called as ‘Jal-Mandir’ in Gujarat. The people used to offer water on the jal-stambha or gowrdhan, fixed outside the entrance to the stepwell, after taking bath. All the stepwells, built by Hindu patrons, invariably had the sculptures of Hindu deities placed in the niches made in the side walls. Such sculptures can also be seen inside the well shaft. The stepwells were considered to be very sacred place due to their importance in the public life and as water provider. In fact, the shape of the kund type stepwells or kund vav is like an inverted temple. Even after the decline in the importance of the stepwells in social life of the people, they are still visited by people who come to worship their deities whose sculptures exist in the niches, for centuries. In the ancient and medieval India, the village life was centred around the stepwells where villagers used to gather in the evenings, engage in gossip, exchange their views, and communicate with each other. The women came there to fetch water while singing songs, and communicated about their daily lives.

Many stepwells are located inside muslim graveyards or kabristans, which could be either personal or public, for example, Bada Bagh Baoli, which contains graves of the family members of nawab of Bhopal, and other stepwells inside the mullah’s graveyard in Bhopal, Akol Bagh Baodi of Chanderi, Mahasatiya kund of Udaipur, and Kirya ka Jhalra of Jodhpur. Such stepwells are also used for different rituals, before and after the cremation.

Water of some stepwells had the property of curing some diseases, as in the case of Peeliya ki Baodi of Lakheri, which can cure peeliya or jaundice. Taking bath in some, like Jachcha ki Baodi in Hindaun City, could result in fertility and help a woman conceive.

Thus, the stepwells were built to serve various purposes, just like any other building.

Construction Methodology of a Stepwell

The sites of well shafts were selected with caution and skills by water diviners, based on various clues provided by the terrain, vegetation, and astronomical calculations. The various rituals, such as consecration of the site and celebrations, preceded the actual construction of the stepwell. While simple unlined wells were usually constructed by the villagers themselves, elaborate stepwells with pavilions, carved columns, beams, niches, friezes, and other complex architectural elements, were constructed by specialists. In Gujarat, a community called Od has been building stepwells for over a thousand years, from the 7th century onwards to the mid-19th century in the region. In Mewar region of Rajasthan, harwa used to tell the location and direction of water veins, and his help was taken for the construction of the stepwell. In Marwar region, these experts are called Seervi or Paani wale Maharaj, who tell where to dig for water. They can smell the excavated soil. Even in modern times, people move with a coconut, sitting straight on their palms, and wherever this coconut falls, the place is considered good for construction of a well. Various living creatures like snakes, monitor lizards, iguana (goh), frogs, scorpions, mongooses, and tortoises indicate the presence of water in the ground. The people used to decide the location based on these factors. It is said that Varahmihir, an author in ancient India, has mentioned all about this in his book.

The orientation of the stepwell was selected based on an auspicious direction. I have noted during my visits to nearly 500 stepwells that they were oriented the most in the east-west direction, and then in the north-south direction. Traditionally, according to Vaastu, locating a water source in the east, west, north, and north-east region has been considered auspicious. The north direction is said to be the direction of water as per udak-disha in Hindi, while the west is considered as the direction of Varun Dev, the God of water.

The earliest stepwells in the Khapra Kodiya Caves, Navaghan Kuo, and Adi-Kadi Vav in Junagarh, Gujarat, were built by excavating solid, rocky terrain. The steps, the stepped corridor, and the well shaft were dug into the hard rock. There was no decoration in these stepwells. If you see the stepped corridor of the Adi Kadi Vav and the circulating steps of the Navaghan Kuo, you will certainly be surprised and awe-struck as to how the people at that time constructed them without the help of the modern tools and technology to cut and excavate into the hard rock.

From the 8th to 12th century, the stepwells were mostly built with stone block masonry, using metal connectors or interlocking through male-female connections. Hindus adopted trabeated method of construction, i.e., by using beams and columns as the elements of construction. They also used corbelled arches by building up the corbels and reducing the span between the supports. Thereafter, the stepwells were built in random-rubble (RR) masonry with different sizes of stones. The lime plaster was used in this masonry. After this, coursed rubble (CR) masonry was used. Finally, dressed stones were used to build the well shaft and side walls.

From the 12th century onwards, after the arrival of muslims in India, the elements of construction changed from beams and columns to domes and arches for bridging the spaces. In most cases, even when the side walls were of RR masonry, the beams and columns were made of monolithic stone pieces. Many stepwells were built in baked bricks, such as the stepwells at Kaithal, Maham, and Mehsana. However, most of the stepwells were built of stones for durability due to their requirement of being under water round the year.

For construction of the stepwells, unlike wells, the excavation is carried out in a slope, with a width of around 15 to 25 ft, and up to an approximate depth of 50-60 ft at the end, where well shaft would be located. Whenever water comes out, the excavation is stopped. The well shaft and the side walls, along with steps, are then built in stone or brick masonry. As the depth increased, landings were provided between the flights of steps. Depending upon the depth, type of soil, and soil qualities, the side walls and pavilion towers (koots and ardh-koots) were constructed with archways to support the earth pressure. Initially, only simple stepwells with stone masonry were built without any decorations and carvings. Later on, intricate carvings on beams, columns, corbels, and niches were made, and beautiful sculptures of deities were installed in these niches and well shafts. Other architectural elements like niches, geometric and floral patterns, water drawing platform (ghat-yantra), sculptures of deities were provided accordingly. After the construction of these stepwells, their consecration called as the 'pran-pratishtha', was performed, accompanied by the chanting of Vedic mantras.

Evolution of Stepwells in India

The earliest stepwell found in India, perhaps, is the one at Dholavira in Gujarat, belonging to the Indus Valley Civilisation, which reached its peak around 2650 BC. It consists of a central well and steps leading to it, up to what would have been the water level.

One of the earliest structures connected with collecting and storing water has come to light at the Buddhist caves, known as Khapra Kodiya caves in the Uparkot area of Junagadh in Gujarat. These rock cut caves, in east-west direction, are said to have been built in the 3rd-4th century AD for the use by monks. The caves were damaged because of the quarrying activities. There are inter-connected rock-cut tanks with the steps inside. There are pavilions or verandahs supported on columns around these tanks. These tanks do not have any architectural embellishment.

After these tanks, the oldest example of stepwells in India is Navghan Kuo, which has been cut into rock in the Junagadh Fort. There are different opinions about its time of construction. According to some experts, it might have been constructed during the Ksatrapa period in the 2nd-4th century AD, while others believe it to belong to the Maitraka period i.e. the 6th or 7th century. However, some experts say that its construction was commenced by Ra' Navghan and completed by his son, Ra' Khengar in the 11th century. The Adi-Kadi Vav, which exists nearby, is believed to have been constructed in the 10th century. All the above stepwells are rock cut. There are not many architectural decorations in them. The most praise-worthy quality about these early stepwells, is to appreciate as to how hard they would have worked many years to make these structures, by cutting into rocks without the use of modern tools.

The three stepwells in and around Dhank village of Gujarat come next. Their dating is not controversial. The Jhilani stepwell dates back to 600 AD, while Manjushri stepwell is said to have been built in the early 7th century. There are similarities in their styles of construction, such as niches and pilasters. The third stepwell, called as the Bochavdi Vav, is also ascribed to the 7th century.

Thereafter, Chalukyans experimented with architecture in Badami, Aihole, and Pattadakal in Karnataka, and built beautiful stone temples between the 6th and 8th centuries. Along with temples, they built various kalyanis near the temples for religious purposes, for example, Durga Mandir kalyani, Mallikarjun temple stepwell, Gaudergudi kalyani, Jyotirlinga temple stepwell, Veniyagudi kalyani, and Huchchimalli temple stepwell at Aihole over a period from the 6th to 11th century. These kalyanis were built of stones, and some of them—like the Veniyargudi kalyani—had beautifully carved gateways at the entrance of the stepwell. These temples are full of wonderful carvings. At the same time, several architecturally beautiful temples were constructed in Hampi, along with the pushkarnis, which are equally beautiful. These pushkarnis were used for religious purposes, such as for Tepotsavas, apart from fulfilling domestic needs of the people. In Rajasthan, kund-type stepwells at Osian, Abhaneri, and Bhinmal were built in the 8th century, which are all adjacent to the

temples. These stepwells were having beautifully carved ghat-pallav style of columns, apart from intricately carved capitals of the columns. Songiri baodi of Khandela was also built in the 8th century for personal use of the king, possibly for agriculture and domestic uses.

After the initial period of the 6th to 8th century AD, many stepwells were constructed from the 9th to 13th century AD, and these were promoted and patronised by the benevolent kings and rulers. During this period, the Rani ki Vav i.e. Queen's Stepwell, was built in 1063 AD by Udaymati, the queen of Bhimadev-I, who reigned from 1022 to 1063 AD. The stepwell is so beautiful and of heritage value that it has been declared as a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO. The Government of India has also issued a currency note of Rs. 100 with its photograph. Vimal Shah, the minister for Bhimadev and later the governor of Chandravati, built the Jain temple of Adinath in 1032 AD at Mount Abu, which resembles to it in sculptures. The Modhera vav and Sun Temple of Modhera were also built in the 11th century. The Chaulukyas or Chalukyas—also called as the Solanki dynasty—ruled some parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan in the north-western India, from 940 to 1244 AD with its capital at Anhilvada-Patan. The kingdom was at its zenith during the rule of Siddharaj Jaysimha and Kumarpala. Siddharaj Jaysimha ruled from 1092 to 1142 AD and Kumarpala from 1142 to 1171 AD. Many excellent temples in Maru-Gurjar style of architecture were created during this period. The Sun Temple at Modhera, Kiradu temples in Rajasthan, and Jain temples at Delwara, Mount Abu, all belong to this period and Maru-Gurjar style of architecture. The Queen's stepwell at Patan with excellent sculptures was constructed in 1063 AD at the bank of Saraswati River at Patan in Gujarat. The famous Somnath Temple in Gujarat, was raided by Mehmud of Ghazni in 1024-25 AD during the rule of Bhimadev-I, who ran away and came back to stitch his kingdom again. The Chudasmas were ruling in Saurashtra at that time. Siddharaj defeated the Chudasma king Navaghan. Muhammed Ghori invaded the Chaulukyas in 1178 AD during Bhimadev-II. After this defeat, the Chaulukyas became very weak and were dethroned by the Vaghelas in 1240s AD. Many stepwells were built during the reign of Siddharaj Jaysimha. Some of them bear the name of his mother—Minal Devi. The Meenal stepwell at Bhalej village of Anand, Meenal Vav at Virpur in Rajkot district, and Meenal Vav of Dhandhalpur—all in Gujarat—belong to this period and owe their creation to King Siddharaj and his mother Meenal Devi. Mata Bhawani stepwell and Ashapura Devi stepwells of Ahmedabad were also built during this period. These stepwells have wonderful sculptures and beautiful architecture. They are made of stones. The Ganga stepwell at Wadhwan was built during the reign of Kumarpala in 1168 AD. In Gujarat, during the reign of Bhimadev-II (1178-1242 AD)—also known as pre-Vaghela period—construction activities were slowed down, due to the prevailing political unrest and uncertainties. Ra' Khengar stepwell at Vanthali was constructed during this period in 1230-35 AD. The Saptamukhi Vav at Dabhoi, which is contemporary to the Hira Gate—ascribed to King Visaldev—might have been built in 1255 AD. The Madha stepwell at Wadhwan was built in 1350 in Vikram Samvat i.e. 1294 AD towards the end of the Vaghela period by a Nagar Brahmin namely Madha, who was a minister in the court of the Vaghela king. The Batris Kotha stepwell of Kapadvanj could also belong to the 13th century, due to its similarities with the Madha stepwell in the style of architecture. During this period, i.e., the 11th to 13th century, the stepwells were mostly built under the patronage of Hindu kings, and therefore,

these were full of sculptures of the Hindu deities like Sheshshayi Vishnu, Lord Shiva, Lord Brahma, Lord Ganesha, Lord Indra, Lord Kuber, etc., and the sculptures of various animals and birds, like elephants, rats, cows, crocodiles, lions, and peacocks. People used to take bath in these stepwells and then perform religious rites to worship these deities. The stepwells featured niches that housed these sculptures.

In Rajasthan, Pipar Vav, Jaital Vav, Chor Baodi of Salemabad, Gangodbhav Kund of Udaipur; stepwells at Nadol, Baijnath Mandir Baodi of Dausa, Jind Baba ki Baodi of Manch, and Sagar-Sagari stepwells of Mandalgarh Fort were built during this period. In Nadol—earlier known as Naddula—a number of stepwells are said to have been built, but no record of the years of their construction is available in the public domain.

From the 14th to 18th century, during the Muslim rule, stepwells continued to be built due to their utility for the caravans on the trade routes and for military campaigns, but the architecture of these stepwells underwent a significant transformation. Due to Muslim traditions, the sculptures were not built in the stepwells. The figurative motifs and panels were replaced with floral and geometric patterns in the stepwells of the 15th and 16th century, during the Sultanate period. Even in those stepwells which were commissioned by Hindu nobles, these sculptures were not allowed. Thus, in the stepwells constructed during Muslim period, the sculptures of the Hindu deities disappeared completely. Similarly, the sculptures of animals and birds also disappeared. However, the niches continued to be made in the walls, perhaps for keeping lamps and clothings, but the sculptures of deities were replaced by floral designs with framed niches. This can be witnessed in the Rudabai stepwell at Adalaj and Dada Harir stepwell of Ahmedabad. The Rudabai stepwell, though constructed in 1500 AD by Queen Rudabai of the Vaghela king Virsimha, was funded by the Muslim king who defeated and killed Virsimha. Similarly, Dada Harir or Bai Harir stepwell at Ahmedabad was built by the harem lady of Sultan Mehmud Begada in 1499 AD. Even though both stepwells have excellent carved beams, columns, niches, and roofs, but they are bereft of any sculpture. The fusion of both Hindu and Islamic architecture can be seen in these stepwells. The third stepwell of similar kind is the Ambapur stepwell at Budthal, built in the 16th century, during the Sultanate period. New architectural elements, such as toda, flanking the stepwells, were introduced at this stage. The non-figurative elements, like floral motifs and geometric patterns replaced the figures of the Hindu deities. One more important observation about the stepwells of this period is that while Muslim invaders and rulers destroyed the temples, they did not damage the stepwells, which existed when they invaded India. The main reason for this was the utility of these stepwells for the rulers and the Muslims people. The functions of the stepwells helped the rulers for providing drinking water and shelter from scorching heat to their horses and armies. The religious importance of the stepwells as worshipping and sacred places lost its significance during the Muslim rule. Of course, the stepwells which were built nearby or within the precincts of a mosque still served their religious purpose. It is said that there were 1200 mosques and the same number of stepwells in Chanderi in Madhya Pradesh. Most of the stepwells of Chanderi were constructed during the 15th century, when it was under the rule of the Khilji dynasty—a Muslim reign. Later on, Chanderi was under the ruler of Malwa, Medini Rai—an ally of Rana Sanga—and was taken over by Babur after

the Battle of Chanderi in 1528 AD. There is no sculpture in any of the stepwells in Chanderi, even in the Chandai Baodi, which was built by a Hindu trader.

The famous Rudabai stepwell at Adalaj was also built by the wife of Virsimha, a Vaghela ruler in 1500 AD. However, the Sultan who wanted to marry Rudabai, the queen of King Virsimha, after defeating him, constructed the Adalaj stepwell on the condition of the queen to marry him. This stepwell also has no sculptures of any deities.

By the end of the 16th century, a distinct Muslim identity, as desired by the Muslim patrons, could be seen. Arches and domes were introduced in the structures, along with enclosed pavilions for women. This introduction of arches by the Muslim designers brought an architectural revolution in the spaces of the palaces, temples, and public buildings. These arches allowed longer spaces in comparison to beams, and gave a feeling of empty spaces as compared to the structures with beams, columns, and brackets, which looked massive. The domes along with arches aroused a feeling of imposing and higher spaces. Due to the advent of arches, there was no need to have brackets. The brackets were only used to support the extensions of the capitals of a column, and were an integral part of column's structural system. These brackets were the most ornate and most visible element in stone architecture. They helped in reducing the span of beams. Spiral staircases also began to be added near the well shaft as a secondary access in the stepwells of this period.

A large number of stepwells were built in Rajasthan during this period. Except of some distinct area, whole area of Rajasthan was directly ruled by the Hindu Rajput kings and thikanedars, even though many of them had accepted the subordination of the Mughal Empire. These kings built several stepwells for the welfare of the public. Perhaps, three-fourths of the stepwells of Rajasthan were built during this period, from the 14th to the 18th century. The main centres of construction of the stepwells were Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Bundi, and Kota, covering the kingdoms of Jaipur, Mewar, Marwar, Hadoti, Jhalawar, and Alwar, spread over the whole of Rajasthan. Most of the stepwells covered in this book were built during this period. Chand Baodi, Jalap Baodi, Tapi Baodi, Gorinda Baodi, Navlakha Baodi, Toor ji ka Jhalra, and Mahila Bagh Jhalra of Jodhpur; Sarai Baodi, Panna Meena ka kund, Maaji ki Baodi, Naku ki Baodi, Rukmani Baodi, Kale Hanuman ji ki Baodi, and Sura ki Baodi of Jaipur; Bhana Ganesh ki Baodi, Sagasji Bavji Baodi, Trimukhi Baodi, Debari Gate Baodi, Sundarbai ki Vav, and Sultan Singh Baodi of Udaipur; Rani ji ki Baodi, Bhawalde ki Baodi, Nahar Dhoos ki Baodi, Manohar Baodi, and Pradhan ji ka kund of Bundi; Rajlani Baodi; Sathin Baodi; Mahant ji ki Baodi of Rajgarh; Stepwells of Ghanerao, Bhinder, and Narlai; Devra kund, Devra Baodi, and Neelkanth Mahadev Mandir stepwells of Begun; stepwells of Lavera, Tasing, Tehla, Bhandarej, and Nayla, etc., are some of the examples of the stepwells built in this golden period of the construction of stepwells.

After the 18th century, the pace of the stepwell construction decreased, and a lesser number of stepwells were built in the 19th century. However, most of the johadas of the Shekhawati region were built during this period. The stepwells built in this period include Bissau ka Johada, Anantram ka Johada at Ramgarh Shekhawati, Ghadwa ka Johada, and Beed ka Johada of Fatehpur Shekhawati;

Royal stepwells of Dhaulpur, and Karauli; Nagar and Sagar kunds of Bundi; Banidas ki Baodi of Dausa; and Raghunath ji ki Baodi of Jodhpur.

During the British period, from 1857 AD up to the independence, the stepwells lost their importance because the British discouraged their use, due to the spread of tapeworm disease. The latest examples of stepwells constructed during the British period are Jethabahi stepwell at Isanpur, Ahmedabad, which was built for the irrigation of agricultural fields and orchard, and the stepwell of the Wankaner Palace, which was constructed in 1934 AD for pleasure and cool retreat of the royal family of Wankaner. The royal families and local patrons continued with the tradition of construction of stepwells, despite being prohibited by the British. Alooda ki Baodi, Untwalia ka Johada in Churu, Panna Baodi of Anwana, Pratap Vav of Bhinmal, and Badi Sadri kund were built in the 20th century, before the independence.

Stepwells in Rajasthan: An Overview

Topographic Information: Rajasthan is the largest state of India by area, covering 10.4 % of its geographical area, measuring 342,239 sq. km. in the north-western part, between 23°03' and 30°12' north latitudes, and 69°30' and 78°17' east longitudes. It has a population of around 69 million in 50 districts, making it the seventh largest state of India by population. It is one of the best tourist destinations of the country, due to its forts and palaces. It consists of the most inhospitable region of India, known as the Thar Desert, where the temperature reaches 52° centigrade during summers and -1° centigrade in winters. Rajasthan borders India's most bitter rival, Pakistan in the west, and the states of Punjab in the north, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh in the northeast, Madhya Pradesh in the southeast, and Gujarat in the southwest. The state has a population density of 165 persons per sq. km. The district of Jaisalmer has the least population density of 13 persons per sq. km., whereas Jaipur district has a population density of 471 persons per sq. km. The average elevation of the entire state is 225 m, with the highest elevation of 1722 m at Guru Shikhar peak in Mount Abu. The state consisted of 19 princely states before independence, such as Mewar, Marwar, Jaipur, Kota, Bharatpur, and Alwar—collectively called as Rajputana, during the British rule. After the independence, the state of Rajasthan was formed on 30th March 1949. Rajasthan means 'the land of kings.' The Aravali Mountain range crosses the state in the northeast-southwest direction, dividing the state's area into 60% in the northwest region and 40% in the southeast region. The northwest region is mostly dry, and consists of sandy desert with very little water, while the southeastern region is more fertile, having hills and thorny forests, and higher population density. The only perennial rivers are: the Mahi River in the southwest and Chambal in the southeast, whereas other major rivers viz. Banas, Gambhir, Bedach, Parvati, and Banganga are seasonal rivers. The ruins excavated at Kalibangan indicate the presence of the Indus Valley civilisation. The East Rajasthan receives an average of 650 mm rains annually, while the West Rajasthan receives merely 330 mm rains. The Jaisalmer district receives the least rainfall in the state, at around 160 mm annually. The state experiences three distinct seasons: summers from March to June, monsoon from July to October, and winters from November to February.

Brief History: The excavations carried out at Kalibangan show that the Indus Valley civilisation flourished in this area, during the 3rd and 4th millennia BCE, similar to Dholvira and Lothal. The mythical river Saraswati flowed through Rajasthan around 200 years BCE. The region was known as Brahnavarta—the land created by Gods. Matsya Desh of Vedic period (1500 to 600 BCE) comprised of the present-day Jaipur, Alwar, and Bharatpur districts, with its capital at Viratnagar, now known as Bairat, located in the Jaipur district. This region was ruled by king Virat of Mahabharat, who fought on the side of the Pandavas. The Pandavas spent one year of anonymity in Virat's kingdom. From 600 to 300 BCE, the region was controlled by various Mahajanpadas and tribal kingdoms. Around 300 BCE, Chandragupta Maurya established the Mauryan Empire in this

region. The first three Mauryan kings: Chandragupta Maurya, Bindusara, and Ashoka extended the empire, but later, it faded due to weak kings. After the Mauryan dynasty, the region came under the control of Sakas or Scythians, who were a nomadic Iranian tribe and came from Persia, i.e., Central Asia. They ruled from the 2nd to the 4th century. Their rule extended from Afghanistan to the north-western Indian subcontinent, including the present-day Gujarat, parts of Rajasthan, Malwa in Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, with their capital in Ujjain. The title of Mahasatrap or the Great Satrap was given to the ruling satraps. They are known as Shakas to the Indian historians and as Western Kshatras to western historians. They were contemporaries of the Satvahans in the Deccan and Kushans in the North India. Kanishka, a shaka ruler, founded Shak Samvat (Saka Era) in 78 AD. Rudradaman-I was the greatest Shaka or Western Kshatrap ruler.

Chandragupta-II defeated the Shaka king, Rudrasimha-III, and took the title of Vikramaditya, adding Gujarat and Western Malwa to the Gupta Empire, which continued from the mid 3rd to the late 6th century. At their peak, they controlled whole of the north, west, and east India. They were succeeded by the Maitrak Dynasty from the 5th century to the 8th century AD. Maitrak dynasty was founded by Bhattarak, a general of the Guptas, who made Vallabhi (modern day Vala) as his capital, near Bhavnagar port in Gulf of Khambhat or Cambay. Vallabhi was the seat of the famous Vallabhi University, which was destroyed because of the Arab invasion in the 8th century. In fact, Maitraks were the tributary chiefs under Guptas, and the first two rulers were initially called as Senapati (general).

Dhruvsena-II, the most important king of the Maitrak dynasty, was a contemporary of Harshavardhan of Kannauj and married his daughter. The name Maitrak was suggested by the scholars as they were worshippers of the Sun (Mitra). Dhruvsena-II was defeated by Harshvardhan and became a vassal to him. After the death of Harshvardhan, Maitraks revived their rule for a short period, but they were invaded by the Arabs in the late 8th century and their capital, Vallabhi and the university were completely destroyed by them, killing the last Maitrak king, Shiladitya-VI. Thereafter, Gurjar-Pratihars, also known as Pratihars, or Parmars of Kannauj controlled the area from the 8th to the 10th century, followed by the Solanki or the Chaulukya dynasty, who built their capital at Anhilwad, or modern-day Patan. Solankis ruled from 940 to 1244 AD. The Chahamanas of Naddula or the Chauhans of Nadol controlled Marwar from the 10th to the 12th century, with their capital at Naddula (present-day Nadol). The Chahamanas or Chauhans of Jalore ruled the south-west Rajasthan from 1160 to 1311 CE, and the Chahamanas of Shakamhari, the Chauhans of Sambhar, or the Chauhans of Ajmer ruled from the 6th to the 12th century. Afterwards, they fell to the Delhi Sultanate. Around 1200 CE, Rajasthan came under the control of the Muslim rulers. It was ruled by various kings—most of whom had accepted the control of the Delhi Sultanate, and later on Mughal kings. The British had several treaties with these kingdoms, and allowed them to rule their princely states. After the independence in 1947, these princely states were integrated into the state of Rajasthan in various stages. The present-day Rajasthan came into being on 1 November 1956.

The Evolution of Stepwells in Rajasthan: Rajasthan experiences the least annual rainfall than any other state in India. The construction of stepwells is a response to such geographical conditions, and prevailing climate in the particular region. Due to the lack of required rainfall and poor availability

of water for irrigation and domestic needs, a large number of stepwells were built by the kings, queens, nobles, rich traders, and vanzaras in Rajasthan. These are found all over Rajasthan from Dhaulpur in the east to Jaisalmer in the west and from Bikaner in the north to Udaipur in the south.

The timeline of the construction of various stepwells in Rajasthan, as available in different references, is as illustrated below:

1. Abhaneri-Chand Baodi: 8th/9th century
2. Osian Baodi: 8th century
3. Bhinmal-Chandinath Baodi: 8th century
4. Dhaulpur-Muchkund kund: 8th century
5. Khandela-Songiri Baodi: 8th century
6. Pipad Kund: 9th century
7. Salemabad-Chor Baodi: 924 AD
8. Sewari-Jaital Vav: 944 AD
9. Udaipur-Gangodbhav kund: 950 AD
10. Nadol-Maharao Lakhansi Baodi: 10th century
11. Basantgarh Baodi: 10th/11th century (950-1050 AD)
12. Dausa-Baijnath Mandir Baodi: 12th century
13. Mandalgarh-Sagar Sagari Stepwell: 12th century
14. Karauli-Manch-Jind Baba Ki Baodi: 1250 AD
15. Jodhpur-Chand Baodi: 15th century
16. Sawai Madhopur-Alanpur Baodi: 15th century
17. Machadi-Rani ka Kua: 15th century
18. Sukhwas kund: 15th/16th century (1451-1526 AD)
19. Allapur-Bazaar kund: 15th/16th century
20. Jhunjhunu-Lohargal-Chatan Das ki Baodi: 16th century
21. Bhinder-Hijron ki Baodi: 16th century
22. Bhinder-Bai ji ki Baodi: 16th century
23. Jaipur-Panna Meena ka Kund: 16th century
24. Jaipur-Sarai Baodi: 16th century
25. Merta-Bum Baodi: 16th century
26. Rajlani Baodi: 16th century
27. Rajgarh-Mahant ji ki Baodi: 16th century
28. Sakat-Baba Khaqnath Baodi: 16th century
29. Sathin-Bheru ji ki Baodi: 1511 AD
30. Ransigaon-Bhoton ki Baodi: 16th century (1551-52 AD)
31. Jodhpur-Jalap Baodi: 1552 AD

32. Neemrana Baodi: 1570 AD
33. Sadri-Tarachand Baodi: 1597 AD
34. Behror Baodi: 16th century
35. Khandela-Kali Bai ki Baodi: 16th century
36. Rolsabsar Johadi: 16th century
37. Mandawa-Alakhiya Johada: 17th century
38. Udaipur-Ayad-Mahasatiya kund: 17th century
39. Udaipur-Bhana Ganesh ki Baodi: 17th century
40. Udaipur-Sagasji Bavji Baodi: 17th century
41. Udaipur-Debari Gate-Raj Rajeshwar Mahadev Baodi: 17th century
42. Udaipur-Debari-Trimukhi Baodi: 17th century
43. Jodhpur-Suraj kund Baodi: 17th century
44. Jodhpur-Tapi Baodi: 17th century
45. Binota ki Baodi: 17th century
46. Jaipur-Maaji ki Baodi: 17th century
47. Jaipur-Sura ki Baodi: 17th century
48. Jaipur-Naku Baodi: 17th century
49. Jaipur-Rukmani Baodi: 17th century
50. Narlai-Amba Vav: 17th century
51. Narlai-Da Vav: 17th century
52. Narlai-Baba ji ki Baodi: 17th century
53. Ghanerao-Dhimri ki Baodi: 17th century (approx)
54. Toda Raisingh-Hadi Rani ka kund: 17th century
55. Bassi-Gosaiyon ki Baodi: 17th century
56. Naraina-Gauri Shankar Baodi: 17th century
57. Mandawa-Alakhiya Johada: 17th century
58. Begun-Devra Baodi: 17th century
59. Fatehpur Shekhawati-Nawab Alaf Khan ki Baodi: 1614 AD
60. Bundi-Somaniyon ki Baodi: 1622 AD
61. Bhapura ki Baodi: 1637 AD
62. Balunda Stepwell: 1643 AD
63. Bundi-Dhabhai ka kund: 1654 AD
64. Jodhpur-Gorinda Baodi: 1659 AD
65. Udaipur-Sundarbai ki Vav: 1660 AD
66. Lavera Kalan stepwell: 1663 AD
67. Bundi-Nahar Dhoos ki Baodi: 1664 AD

68. Jodhpur-Janana Bagh Baodi: 1673 AD
69. Sirohi-Ratan Vav: 1675 AD
70. Bundi-Bhawalde ki Baodi: 1677 AD
71. Lavera Khurd Baodi: 1692 AD
72. Bundi-Naruka ki Baodi: 1692 AD
73. Begun-Devra Kund: 1697 AD
74. Bundi-Rani ji ki Baodi: 1699 AD
75. Begun-Neelkanth Mahadev Baodi: 1702 AD
76. Chhan ki Baodi: 1711 AD
77. Kota-Jamuna Baodi: 1715 AD
78. Udaipur-Sultan Singh Baodi: 1717 AD
79. Bundi-Manohar Baodi: 1724 AD
80. Nadol-Dua Baodi: 1726 AD
81. Jaipur-Kale Hanuman ji ki Baodi: 1727 AD
82. Bhandarej-Badi Baodi: 1732 AD
83. Bundi-Pradhan ji ka kund: 1732 AD
84. Jaipur-Nahargarh Fort stepwell: 1734 AD
85. Ghanerao-Brahmapuri Baodi: 18th century (1757 AD)
86. Kanore-Indra Baodi: 1766 AD
87. Jodhpur-Mahila Bagh Jhalra: 1780 AD
88. Jhunjhunu-Mertani Baodi: 1783 AD
89. Salamandara ki Baodi: 1786 AD
90. Nayla-Bohron ki Baodi: 18th century
91. Bundi-Hira Lal ji ki Baodi: 18th century
92. Sawai Madhopur-Ram Dwara Baodi: 18th century
93. Sawai Madhopur-Hatkeshwar kund: 18th century
94. Sawarda-Gurudwara baodi: 18th century
95. Ghanerao-Suraj kund: 18th century according to legends
96. Ghanerao-Maili Vav: 18th century according to legends
97. Khandar-Banzara ki Baodi: 18th century
98. Tasing Baodi: 18th century
99. Tehla-Gopinath Mandir Baodi: 18th century
100. Bikaner-Phoolnath Sagar Baodi: 18th century
101. Hindaun City-Jachcha ki Baodi: 18th century
102. Jodhpur-Navlakha Baodi: 18th century
103. Jaipur-Vidyadhar ka Bagh Baodi: 18th century

104. Jodhpur-Toor ji ka Jhalra: 18th century
105. Jodhpur-Raghunath ji ki Baodi: 18th century
106. Jodhpur-Kharbooja Baodi: 18th century
107. Jhunjhunu-Bissau ka Johada: 1843 AD
108. Ramgarh-Shekhawati-Anantram Poddar ka Johada: 1845 AD
109. Karauli-Royal Bath: 1850 AD
110. Fatehpur Shekhawati-Poddaron ka Kua: 1851 AD
111. Fatehpur Shekhawati-Ghadwa ka Johada: 1854 AD
112. Lakshmangarh-Akam ka Kua: 1869 AD
113. Bundi-Nagar and Sagar Kund: 1871-75 AD
114. Dhaulpur-Royal Stepwell: 19th century (1873-80 AD)
115. Udaipur-Jas Kund: 1892 AD
116. Fatehpur Shekhawati-Beed ka Johada: 1899 AD
117. Dausa-Banidas ki Baodi: 19th century
118. Dhaulpur-Chopda Kund: 19th century
119. Ghanerao-Dungaria Baodi: 19th century
120. Udaipur-Gulab Bagh-Navlakha Hanuman ji ki Baodi: 19th century
121. Jodhpur-Eidgah Baodi: 20th century
122. Shahpura-Kali Mandir Baodi: 20th century
123. Badi Sadri- kund: 1904 AD
124. Bhinmal-Pratap Vav: 1925 AD
125. Anwana-Panna Baodi: 1926 AD
126. Jodhpur-Satyanarayan ki Baodi: 20th century (1927 AD)
127. Narlai-Botia Baodi: 1936 AD
128. Churu-Untwalia ka Johada: 1940 AD
129. Alooda ki Baodi: 1941 AD

If we examine the timeline of the construction of various stepwells in Rajasthan, the stepwells of Abhaneri, Osian, Bhinmal, and Songiri Baodi of Khandela belong to the 8th century, and can be considered as the earliest stepwells of Rajasthan. In fact, the stepwells at Bhinmal, Chand Baodi of Abhaneri, and Katan Baodi of Osian are all kund-type stepwells, with steps on three sides. Most importantly, these three are located by the side of the famous temples. The Chand Baodi of Abhaneri is located adjacent to the ancient temple of Harshat Mata. The ruins of the temple and the sculptures found there verify that the temple was an architectural marvel. The Katan Baodi of Osian is located behind another architectural wonder: the Sun Temple. Similarly, the stepwell at Bhinmal is situated within an ancient temple complex. The Songiri stepwell of Khandela is the only proper stepwell in definition, with a stepped corridor leading to the well shaft. It might have been built for private use,

perhaps, for agriculture, as there is no fort or palace in the vicinity. However, all these stepwells have been built with stone blocks and stone masonry, without use of any plaster. The stone blocks have been joined by metal connectors and male-female connections. Though the Muchkund tank at Bharatpur is also said to have been initially constructed in the 8th century, but it cannot be classified strictly as a stepwell.

Following the above stepwells, Pipar kund (9th century), Gangodbhav kund of Udaipur (950 AD), Jetal Vav of Sewari (944 AD), stepwell at Nadol (10th century), and Basangarh Vav (10th century) can be said to have been constructed in the 10th century. Most of them, such as the stepwell at Pipar, Gangodbhav of Udaipur, and Basantgarh Vav have kundtype construction, and are attached to the temples nearby. The Chor Baodi of Salemabad was also built in the 10th century (924 AD) and is located near the famous temple of Nimbark Teerth. Considering the construction type of Katwari stepwell at Nadol, it certainly appears to have been built in the 9th or the 10th century. The Chahamanas or Chauhans of Naddula or Nadol ruled from the 10th to the 12th century. Thus, most of the stepwells at Nadol would have been built in that period.

The third period, from the 15th to the 18th century can be termed as the golden period for the construction of stepwells in Rajasthan. In fact, this is true for whole of India, especially Gujarat, where the number of stepwells—built and existing—is close to Rajasthan. Most of the stepwells were built during this period in Rajasthan. This was also the time when Muslims came to India, and their arrival changed the design and construction of the stepwells in Rajasthan, as everywhere else in India. Muslims brought the elements of domes and arches into the construction of stepwells, much like in the case of other buildings. Before their arrival, Hindus were using trabeated method of construction with beams and columns as horizontal and vertical elements to bridge the spaces. The stepwells at Jaipur, Bundi, Toda Raisingh, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Bhinder, Kanore, Ghanerao, Lakheri, Kota, and Bharatpur were all built during this period. Chand Baodi of Jodhpur, Alanpur Baodi of Sawai Madhopur, Rani ka Kua of Machadi, Sukhwas kund, and Allapur kund in Sawai Madhpur district (all built in the 15th century); Hijron ki Baodi and Bai ji ki Baodi of Bhinder, Panna Meena ka Kund and Sarai Baodi of Jaipur; Bhooton ki Baodi of Ransigaon, Neemrana Baodi, Behror Baodi, Chetan Das Baodi of Lohargal, Kali Bai ki Baodi of Khandela, Mahant ji ki Baodi of Rajgarh, Bheru ji ki Baodi of Sathin, Tarachand Baodi of Sadri, Suwa Baodi of Merta, Jalap Baodi of Jodhpur, and Rajlani Baodi (all built in the 16th century); Rani ji ki Baodi, Dhabhai ka kund, Nahar Dhoos ki Baodi, Bhawalde ki Baodi, Naruki Baodi of Bundi; Mahasatiya kund and Bhana Ganesh ki Baodi, Raj Rajeshwar Mahadev Baodi, Trimukhi Baodi of Debari, Sagasji Bavji Baodi, Sundarbai ki Vav of Udaipur; Nawab Alaf Khan ki Baodi of Fatehpur Shekhawati; Maa ji ki Baodi, Naku ki Baodi, Sura ki Baodi, and Rukmani ki Baodi of Jaipur; Gosainyon ki Baodi of Bassi; Hadi Rani ka kund of Toda Raisingh; Tapi Baodi, Suraj Kund Baodi, Gorinda Baodi, Janana Bagh Baodi of Jodhpur; Devra kund and Devra Baodi of Begun; Balunda Stepwell; Amba Vav, Da Vav, and Bab ji ki Baodi of Narlai; Binota ki Baodi, Ratan Baodi of Sirohi, and Stepwells of Lavera Khurd and Lavera Kalan (all built in the 17th century); Indra Baodi of Kanore, Kale Hanuman ji ki Baodi, Nahargarh stepwell, Bohron ki Baodi of Nayla; Pradhanji ka kund, Manohar Baodi of Bundi; Toor ji ka Jhalra and Navlakha Baodi of Jodhpur, Dua Baodi of Nadol, Tasing stepwell, Kotputli Baodi, Jachcha ki Baodi of Hindaun

City; Ramdwara Baodi of Sawai Madhopur; Banzaara Baodi of Khandar; Salamdara ki Baodi, Jamuna Baodi of Kota; Neelkanth Mahadev Baodi of Begun, Sultan Singh Baodi of Bedla; Meratni ki Baodi of Jhunjhunu, Gurudwara Baodi of Sawarda; Brahmapuri baodi, Suraj Kund and Maili ki Baodi of Ghanerao; Chhan ki Baodi and Gopinath Mandir Baodi of Tehla (all built in the 18th century) are examples of this period.

After the arrival of the British, the construction of the stepwells was discouraged due to their poor maintenance and uncleanliness, which lead to spread of diseases like Guinea-worm. Some stepwells were used by dacoits to hide. It is said that some of these stepwells were closed by filling them up with earth during the British period. There is nothing on record to suggest that the British encouraged or sponsored any stepwell. Though, the British collected donations for constructing churches and clubs, the number of stepwells built after the arrival of the British declined due to such reasons. The Nazar ji ki Baodi of Jodhpur; Navlakha Hanuman ji ki Baodi of Udaipur; Banidas ki Baodi of Dausa; Nagar and Sagar Kunds of Bundi; Royal Stepwell and Chopda Kund of Dholpur; Royal Bath of Karauli; Jas Kund of Bedla; Beed ka Johada, Ghadwa ka Johada, and Poddaron ka Kua of Fatehpur Shekhawati; Anantram ka Johada of Ramgarh Shekhawati; Bissau ka Johada; and Dungaria Baodi of Ghanerao (all built in the 19th century); Pratap Vav of Bhinmal, Kund of Badi Sadri, Alooda ki Baodi, Untwalia ka Johada, Kali Mandir Baodi of Shahpura, Botia Baodi of Narlai, Panna Baodi of Anwana, (all built in the 20th century) were built during this period.

Pratap Vav of Bhinmal (1925 AD), Panna Baodi of Anwana (1926 AD), Botia Baodi of Narlai (1936 AD), and Alooda ki Baodi (1941 AD) are the ones which have been built in the 20th century, when the construction of stepwells had lost momentum and their utility had become doubtful.

The British were not aware of the technology, because of the absence of any construction drawings of the stepwells and the prevalent cultural practices. Therefore, new construction as well as the maintenance of the existing stepwells suffered heavily. Post-independence, no new stepwell has been built. After this period, when we attained independence, the arrival of the era of the modern technology with tools, such as diesel and electric pumps, tube wells, water storage tanks, and piped water supply, the stepwells lost their significance. People forgot their existence and lost their interest in the maintenance of stepwells, as they were getting the supply of water through pipelines. This change in technology brought great changes in the social scene of the villages and the society. The people who thronged the stepwells in the evenings—especially during summers—to exchange views and discuss about the problems being faced by the villagers and the society, stopped communicating amongst themselves. The bond between them brought about by the stepwells started breaking, and the society at the village level started disintegrating. The women, who came singing songs to stepwells to release their frustration and pent-up feelings, lost the inter-communication. The vibrancy and the liveliness of the society vanished to a great extent.

However, with the advent of diesel and electrical pumps, people started pumping water recklessly, so much that the water table depleted tremendously. In Rajasthan, where no farming took place throughout the year, farmers started doing agriculture and reaping two to three crops in a year. I found during my visit to the villages in Rajasthan that the water table is around 1000 to 1500 ft below

ground level now. The farmers in many villages have gone back to reaping only one crop every year during monsoon, since it is very expensive to pump water from such depths. Therefore, in my opinion, the times of stepwells and their importance in our lives must return. We need the stepwells much more now, at least, as a major means of storing water. The area surrounding most of the stepwells is so heavily built up that no ground water trickles into the well shafts, since there is no recharging. We will have to stop building concrete structures, at least, around those stepwells which are still active and surviving. This must be done immediately for the stepwells, existing at the periphery of the villages and within the agricultural fields or forests. I hope that many of the stepwells can return to their old glory.

Prevailing Conditions of the Stepwells and Kunds in India

While writing this book, I visited around 500 stepwells and kunds in twelve states of India. I experienced mixed feelings while visiting them. But my pleasant experience is limited to the stepwells that can be counted on my fingers and are managed by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) like Rani ki Vav at Patan; Adalaj ki Vav at Adalaj, Ahmedabad; Agrasen ki Baoli in Delhi; Bai Harir Vav at Ahmedabad; Chand Baodi at Abhaneri; and Panna Meena ka kund at Jaipur. Even at these places, there were many shortcomings from the angle of tourists. Most of the stepwells are in such a deplorable condition that it pains the heart of any heritage lover. First of all, except for a few well-known stepwells, as mentioned above, which are known to the public and tourist guides, there is no information available on the state tourism department's web sites about the location of most of the stepwells. It is very difficult to find them and visit them as even the local taxi drivers are not aware about their location. In fact, even the residents of that locality are not aware about the existence of stepwells or kunds in their locality. There are no sign boards indicating their direction. Neither the ASI nor the State Archaeological Departments maintains any list of such monuments in a state or the country. No census of stepwells and kunds has ever been carried out in the country. Many of them are under the control of local bodies like local municipalities or panchayats, which are not bothered about their upkeep, mainly due to the lack of funds.

Once reaching the destination with great difficulty, one finds that the gates of the stepwell or the kund are locked, and there is no information about the availability of the key. One has to spend a handsome amount of money in reaching the stepwell, but can't see it from inside as the gates are locked. I have experienced this at many locations of stepwells. To my surprise, at very few stepwells, such as Amritvarshini stepwell at Ahmedabad, it was written at the gate that the key is available with the pujari of the nearby temple. This happens because of the shortage of the staff and shortage of funds for maintenance with the local bodies responsible for it.

Most of the stepwells—even though they were locked—were full of garbage, thrown by the local residents living in the vicinity. In case of the stepwells without any boundary wall or gate, the public and the visitors, including the vagabonds, freely threw plastic bottles and other waste into the stepwell. Consequently, the water—if any—became polluted. Most of us, do not value our Indian heritage.

Since most of the stepwells are deserted and out of use, they have become the den of thousands of bats, wasps, and pigeons. Because of these new inhabitants of the stepwells, one can't visit the stepwells minutely and appreciate their architecture.

It is a well-known fact that the ASI, the State Department of Archaeology, and the local bodies get very meagre funds for the upkeep and maintenance of the monuments entrusted to it. Most of the funds are utilized on the famous monuments and the balance funds are spread thin over the remaining monuments. The stepwells, perhaps, come last in the priority. The number of stepwells entrusted to the ASI for maintenance is very small, approximately 20, and they are definitely well maintained as far as cleanliness and structural maintenance are concerned. A large number of stepwells fall under the control of the State Archaeological Departments, which have much lesser funds at their disposal and hence, their physical condition is unsatisfactory, except for a few stepwells, which have been renovated by the state governments. The stepwells under the control of temples and mosques are also kept well maintained, though their structural maintenance is not so good. The remaining stepwells, including those that fall under the control of the local municipalities and panchayats, are falling apart and have been taken over by uncontrolled growth of vegetation. Many of these stepwells and kunds are slowly disappearing because the public is filling them with waste. Some like the Badshahpur Baoli in Sector-66 of Gurgaon was about to disappear when I visited it, as it was getting filled with earth to make way for a road. The Bansilalpet stepwell in Hyderabad, which has been renovated recently, received appreciation from the PM, Shri Narendra Modi. This stepwell which was once renovated, as per information available, in 1985, got covered with garbage again, and the state government of Telangana has spent Rs. 10 crores for clearing the garbage and renovating the stepwell. This is a huge amount of money which could have been used for renovating many other stepwells. Similarly, Sultan Singh stepwell of Udaipur, which was mentioned by the Prime Minister in his 'Mann ki Baat' programme while appreciating the community for cleaning it through social service, was found littered with plastic bottles and garbage soon after, at the time of my visit. The uncontrolled growth of vegetation and thorny bushes and consequently getting infested by wasps, bats, and snakes threaten the structural stability of these stepwells. Urgent action to find a workable solution is required.

Since no census has been carried out either by the State or Central Government authority, no detailed information about the stepwells is available. No historical, architectural, and technical information is available. They have not been listed as a tourist attraction on the web sites of various tourist departments. The inscriptions are available at many stepwells, but they have not been translated into Hindi, English, or regional languages. Slowly, these inscriptions are also getting damaged and lost due to vandalism. We will be losing our cultural heritage. Urgent action is required to be taken by the concerned authorities to preserve these inscriptions and translate them from Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit to Hindi, English, and other regional languages for the benefit of the public and tourists. At many sites of these stepwells, like Bada Bagh Baoli at Bhopal and Khetan Baodi of Jhunjhunu, the information boards erected have been disfigured, rusted, and weathered so much that it is difficult to read them. This only shows the apathy of the concerned authorities towards our heritage.

Since there is no protection of most of the stepwells and kunds, except those under the control of the ASI, they are prone to unauthorised encroachment over their land. Some stepwells like the ones at Fatehpur Sikri and Dholpur are unauthorisedly getting converted into mosques and temples,

depending upon the religious group which gains control at the site. Once the stepwell is converted into a religious place, its access becomes restricted to the people of the other religious groups specifically, and to public generally. There is an urgent need to control this menace.

The sites of the many of the stepwells and kunds are away from the habitation, and there is no arrangement of lighting and potable water. Since they are located on the outskirts of the cities and towns, they are prone to vandalism and encroachment, among other nefarious activities. Many stepwells have no approach road.

All the problems enumerated above need urgent, practical solutions so that our heritage is preserved for posterity.

Measures for Improvement

Before we decide what should be done to preserve the stepwells, we must first convince ourselves about the need to preserve them. Is it worthwhile to invest our time, efforts, and money in these stepwells? The stepwells, as we have discussed earlier in this book, are historical monuments, and they have witnessed history of the area where they exist. Each stepwell has a story behind its construction. It has witnessed changes in the society. The architecture of the stepwells has been specific to the region, society, and their patrons. Many of them are engineering and architectural marvels. They have been an inseparable part of many temples and mosques. In short, the stepwells are important historical monuments, just like the forts, palaces, temples, and mosques. Many of them have become major tourist attractions, such as Rudabai stepwell at Adalaj, Rani ki Vav at Patan, Bai Harir Vav at Ahmedabad, Chand Baodi at Abhaneri, and Agrasen ki Baoli in Delhi. There are many more dozens waiting to attract the attention of tourists, but the problem is that either nobody knows about them or their condition is such that the people are not attracted to visit them. The stepwells can be a big money spinner through tourism. While earning money, we would also be protecting our heritage and culture by preserving them. Let me, now enumerate the steps that are required to be taken in this direction.

1. **Survey and documentation of the stepwells:** The first and the foremost thing to be executed is the documentation of the stepwells and kunds in all the states of India. Here, I am including all the kalyanis and pushkarnis as well. No body is aware about the number of stepwells and their locations. During my visits to the stepwells in various states, I found that even the local people were not aware about the stepwell, which exist in their locality. If we don't conduct a census soon, many stepwells and kunds will vanish because of encroachments and dumping of waste into them. This job must be entrusted with the state departments of archaeology and museums, who can get it done through private organisations. Advertisements and notices in the local and national newspapers should also be published to attract the attention of the public to give the details of the stepwells and kunds in their region. Thus, a data bank about the stepwells is required to be prepared. After preparing the list of the stepwells and kunds, an extensive survey must be carried out about their condition and engineering, architectural and historical details, which will form the basis for their renovation.
2. **Division of responsibilities for maintenance of stepwells:** After the documentation of the stepwells, the responsibility of their upkeep and renovation must be divided between the centre (represented by the ASI) and the states (represented either by the department of archaeology or by various municipal administrations or panchyats). The most important stepwells (category-A), considering their magnitude, grandeur, architectural splendour, and tourist potential, should be assigned to the ASI—irrespective of their locations. The less

important ones (category-B) should be entrusted with the State Departments of Archaeology. The stepwells (category-C), which are simple in design and architecture—without any decoration—require small funds for their maintenance. They are located far away from the cities, within the limits of village panchayats and town municipalities, and thus, must be assigned to the local municipalities or panchayats for their upkeep and maintenance. Then, there are some stepwells, which are located inside forests, and are difficult to access. These can be assigned to the State Forest Departments. However, the ASI must help the departments of archaeology, the local municipalities, and the forest departments to cull out the historical details of the stepwells, so as to prepare the plan for their renovations and preparation of tourist brochures.

3. **Allocation of sufficient funds:** Sufficient funds for proper survey, initial renovation, and regular annual maintenance should be allocated by the central and state governments. An entrance fee could be levied to make many stepwells self-sufficient. The entrance fee for foreigners for all categories could be enhanced suitably, in line with their historical and architectural importance. The permission to use the MP/MLA funds and MGNREGS funds for the renovation and maintenance of the stepwells should be granted. This will help the local panchayats and small municipalities in the maintenance of the stepwells within their jurisdiction.
4. **Information on the web sites:** All the stepwells documented above must be mentioned in the itineraries for tourists—both foreigners and Indians. All tourist agencies must be taken into confidence in this regard. The tourist information about these stepwells should be available on the web sites of the State tourist departments and districts. Our embassies abroad should also know about the important stepwell shaving tourist potential. Different attractive pamphlets and brochures must be made for distribution.
5. **Provide direction signboards:** The direction boards indicating directions leading to the stepwells must be provided at all vantage points nearby, because I have noted during my visits that even the people living in the same locality are not aware about the existence of stepwells in their vicinity.
6. **Provide easy access:** There is no access to many of the stepwells like Jachcha ki Baodi in Hindaun City of Rajasthan, where I had to place a number of stones in the mud to get to the stepwell. A large number of stepwells are located inside the heavily inhabited areas, which have small and narrow streets leading to the stepwells, and you can only ride a bicycle or motor cycle to reach the stepwells. This absence of direction boards makes the task much more difficult. I had to either take the help of a motor cyclist or walk on foot to visit such stepwells. It was very difficult to access the Sultan Singh Baodi in Bedla, Udaipur, due to narrow and winding streets. The Prime Minister had mentioned about this stepwell in his 'Mann ki Baat' programme. If possible, a new convenient road should be constructed to access the stepwell in such cases. No parking should be allowed on such streets, as it makes driving difficult. Such streets can be made one way to make the traffic smooth and flowing. If we want the tourists—both domestic as well as foreign—to visit our stepwells, we would have to provide easy access.

In fact, there is encroachment in the area surrounding the stepwells on both sides of the access road, in case of many stepwells located in old cities. The removal of encroachments will allow easy access to them.

7. **Desilting and removal of waste by one-time cleaning:** Most of the stepwells and kunds are filled with garbage, thrown by the residents nearby. Apart from the waste, wind-blown dust has also filled up many of them. Uncontrolled growth of vegetation has taken roots in the masonry of the stepwells due to which cracks—sometimes very serious—have damaged the masonry. The water is full of organic waste. A large number of stepwells have become the den of thousands of bats, apart from innumerable hives of wasps and bees. Snakes have also made these stepwells their home. All this has to be cleared, both mechanically and manually. Suction devices may have to be deployed to remove the silt. This should be a one-time endeavour because after the initial cleaning and renovation, not much effort will be required, if these structures are maintained well. Around 500 tonnes of trash and silt were excavated and removed from the Bansilalpet stepwell of Hyderabad within six months, in 2022. In fact, I came to know that the stepwell was also cleaned in 1985, but it had filled up with waste again. Here, I would suggest that locals must be engaged under MGNREG scheme to clean the stepwells of vegetation and waste on a regular basis. This can be done by local panchayats and municipalities for the stepwells under category-C, located in small villages and away from cities. Several CCTV cameras must be deployed around the stepwells to prevent their misuse, defacing, and disposing and dumping waste in them.
8. **Prevention of garbage falling into the stepwells:** After a one-time cleaning of the stepwells, arrangements must be made that would deter the visitors and residents nearby from making them dirty again, such as imposing heavy penalties for littering. The provision of mesh to prevent disposal of organic waste, such as tree leaves, and also providing boundary walls, wherever needed. CCTV cameras could be installed to prevent vandalism. Enough lighting should be provided to prevent any misuse during night.
9. **Removal of encroachments:** During my field visits to around 500 stepwells and kunds, unauthorised construction and encroachments were observed. In most of the cases, the residents nearby have raised walls of their houses beside the side walls of the stepwells. Consequently, the repair of the side walls becomes cumbersome. The visitors cannot see the stepwells properly. In addition to it, these residents were seen throwing garbage into the stepwells. The state governments must remove these unauthorised encroachments in accordance with the relevant legislations to preserve these heritage monuments. The vicinity of the stepwells must be maintained in such a way that the visitors feel welcome and enjoy the surroundings. There should be a proper arrangement for their rest and essentials. Because of the built-up area surrounding the stepwells, the water table cannot be recharged.
10. **Sensitisation of neighbours:** The people living in the neighbourhood of the stepwells need to be sensitised about the importance and heritage value of the stepwells and kunds, with a view to prevent them from throwing garbage into the stepwells. A sense of attachment should be developed through awareness campaigns.

11. **Prevention of religious encroachment:** During my visits to various stepwells, encroachments by different religious communities could be noticed. Through visible signs of a particular community, it was portrayed that the stepwell has been used for religious purposes, exclusively by that community. These new encroachments on the basis of religions must be prevented, since this would restrict the use of stepwells for the members of the particular community. The existing unauthorised encroachments by religious groups must be vacated. If not done now, it would be very difficult at a later stage.
12. **Maintain the original function of the stepwells:** Stepwells have been basically a source of water for domestic uses and agriculture. In some cases, the stepwells were constructed and used for religious purpose. These stepwells and kunds, which were constructed by the side of temples and mosques, had religious purpose. The stepwells were also meant for providing shelter, and to take rest during the scorching heat. It is suggested that the original functions of the stepwells must be maintained, if the stepwells are alive today. Any other use of the stepwells should be avoided. The entrance to the Bansilalpet stepwell—after renovation at a huge cost of Rs. 10 crores—has been restricted to the visitors at a cost of Rs. 50/- per head. In my opinion, the local public belonging to the Bansilalpet area should be able to use the stepwell for their water needs or for social gathering without any entrance fee. An identity card or Aadhaar card may be used to differentiate between local people and tourists. Even after charging an entrance fee, the visitors can't enter inside this stepwell and are restricted to view it from the gate. We should not make a showpiece out of the stepwells. They should become a lively place. Furthermore, if they are used to fulfil domestic needs of water for cleaning, landscaping, and gardening, the stepwells would be regenerated and re-energised. Water can be supplied to the households in the vicinity through pumping. Of course, these should not be allowed for religious events which may make them dirty due to the offerings of coconuts, mango or banana leaves, and other organic waste. Washing of clothes and utensils inside or around the stepwells must not be allowed. Various cultural activities, on payment of requisite charges, may be allowed, while asking the users to clean the place after they leave it.
13. **Raising additional revenue:** The space around stepwells can be used to hold small handicraft exhibitions, puppet shows, and for selling local food delicacies to the visitors and tourists. Stringent measures to keep the area clean will have to be taken.
14. **Repairs and renovation of the stepwells:** The stepwells requiring urgent necessary repairs to preserve their architecture and structural stability must receive the immediate attention. These should be repaired and renovated with their architecture in mind. For example, the Chor Baodi at Salemabad is an architectural marvel, but one of its pavilion-tower requires urgent repairs, otherwise it is likely to fall soon, resulting in expensive conservation measures. The repairs have to be carried out in line with the architecture of the stepwells. We have to avoid the use of cement and bricks, if the stone masonry and lime mortar have been used in its construction. The Rajlani stepwell has been supported in such a way that it appears as an eye sore.

Stepwells of Rajasthan

1. Champawati Baodi

Sirohi, Rajasthan

24° 52' 50" N, 72° 51' 46" E

Period: Unknown



Sirohi-Champawati-Ram Jharokha Mandir Baodi- View towards the well shaft

Sirohi city is a district headquarters in the southern Rajasthan. According to Col. Tod, the name 'sirohi' was derived from sir (head) of the rohi (desert), as the city lies at the southern end of the Thar Desert in Rajasthan. Another legend says that the name 'sirohi' has been derived from the word sword as the Sirohi rulers were famous for their bravery and swords.

There are a few stepwells inside Sirohi city. The Champawati Baodi is situated inside Ram Jharokha temple complex. The complex houses many temples, dedicated to Lord Krishna and other deities.

The stepwell is just by the side of the temple, and also has an entrance from the main road, which is permanently closed. The family living by the side of the baodi keep the keys of the small gate to the stepwell.



Sirofi-Champawati-Ram Jharokha Baodi-view from the eastern entrance

The stepwell has been built in the Jaya style, having three entrances from the north, the east, and the west. The well is in the south. The well is semi-circular in the plan. Nearly fifty steps have been provided to reach the normal water level in the well. The well and the walls have been built in the coursed rubble masonry. Vegetation has taken roots at the southern end and tree leaves are falling inside the stepwell. It is disheartening to see the water inside the stepwell. The stepwell was cleaned by the residents of the city in 2018. There is an inscription in the stepwell, showing a cow with its calf and some details written on it, which have not been translated. There is a need to renovate the stepwell, and take action to prevent people from throwing garbage in the baodi.

Another stepwell at a distance of about 500 m from this exists, inside Revnath ji ka Akhada, which is located near the State Bank of India branch, and District Ayurved Hospital. This stepwell is L-shaped, with 40 steps to reach the well, which has been covered on the top with stone slabs. The well has been built with random rubble masonry, while the walls are in coursed rubble masonry.

One more stepwell at the latitude of 24° 52' 58" N and longitude of 72° 51' 57" E exists in the Badi Brahmapuri area at the tri-junction of roads near the Ganapati temple. These two storeyed, L-shaped stepwells, built in coursed rubble masonry must have been constructed by an individual.

2. Sarja Baodi

Sirohi, Rajasthan

24° 52' 52" N, 72° 51' 37" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: Unknown



Sirohi-Sarja ki Baodi-view from the entrance



Sirohi-Sarja ki Baodi-view of the last ardh-koot and the openings in the well shaft connecting the stepped corridor



Sirohi-Sarja ki Baodi-showing the second ardh-koot and the third koot



Sirohi-Sarja ki Baodi-view of the first half pavilion and the second pavilion tower

This baodi is the most protected one in the Sirohi city. However, no information about its name and other details is available. When I asked some people, they mentioned that it is called 'Sarja Vav'. Hence, I am describing it with the same name.

The stepwell is three storeyed and its columns, beams, and roofs have been built with stones, while the side walls are built in coursed rubble masonry. The baodi contains water, but it is quite dirty and full of garbage. The column capitals are beautifully carved. However, the remaining stepwell is simple in design. The stepwell has been built in the north-south direction with the well shaft at the southern end. The whole stepwell has been covered on all sides with mesh. There are three koots (pavilions) and three ardh-koots (half-pavilions) in it. In each flight between landings, there are 15 steps. It would be a positive move, if the archaeological department displays history of this stepwell, which is among the best available in Sirohi.

3. Meera Bai ki Baodi

Ayad, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 35' 14" N, 73° 43' 2" E

Period: 10th–11th century



Udaipur-Meerabai ki baodi-view of the well shaft and water drawing arrangement in the east



Udaipur-Meerabai ki baodi-view of the first pavilion from the entrance

The name of this baodi has not been displayed anywhere. I am calling it so, because it is located next to the Meera Temple, Ayad or Ahar, Udaipur. The temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu but has been

named as the Meera Temple. Meera Bai was a Rajput princess who was born in 1498 in Pali. She spent her childhood in Merta and was married to prince Bhojraj, son of Rana Sanga of Mewar. She dedicated her whole life to Lord Krishna. The Meera temple at Ayad is an excellent example of temple architecture of the 10th–11th century,¹ as mentioned in the inscription provided by the tourism department at the temple. The west facing temple is ornamented with beautiful sculptures of Brahma–Savitri, Shiv–Parvati, and Laxmi–Narayan, on the three sides, i.e., east, north, and south. We can assume that the stepwell was also built at the time of the construction of the temple.



Udaipur-Meerabai ki baodi-trough for animals



Udaipur-Meerabai ki baodi-Meerabai's temple near the stepwell



Udaipur-Meerabai ki baodi-sculpture on the outside of the temple



Udaipur-Meerabai ki baodi-sculpture in a niche

¹ Inscription provided by the state government at the temple and stepwell site

The baodi is located just in front of the temple. It is built in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the west and the well at the east end. The baodi is built in the Nanda style with a single entrance. There are 40 steps to reach the well. Its width is approximately 10 ft. The Brahma-Savitri's sculpture is provided in the east wall of the rectangular well shaft. An arrangement for animals to drink water has also been provided on the southern side. Despite the beautiful architecture, a lot of waste has been thrown inside the baodi.

4. Gangodbhav (Gangu) kund

Ayad, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 35' 17" N, 73° 43' 07" E

Period: 950 AD



Udaipur-Gangodbhav Kund

About 100 m further east from the Meera Temple, on the same side of the road, lies the Ahar area which houses around 371 cenotaphs of nobles, including those of Maharanas of Mewar, which were built over a period of nearly 400 years. The Gangodbhav kund or Gangu kund is a sacred place where the stream is known to be flowing from the holy river Ganga. In fact, it is said that it is the origin of holy river Ganga. According to legends, Guhil or Guhilot kings worshipped Goddess Ganga after which she appeared from this kund. The Shiv temple of the Gangu kund is believed to

have been built by Maharawal Allat in 950 AD. It is said that the Guhil ruler Maharawal Allat was expelled from Chittorgarh by Munja Raja—the Parmar king of Malwa—after which he established his new capital at Ahar or Ayad. He built many temples in Ayad region to commemorate his victory over Devpal, a king of the Pratihar dynasty. Ayad is known by several names like Ahar, Aitpoor, Anandpura, Aghatpur, and Gangodbhav Teertha.

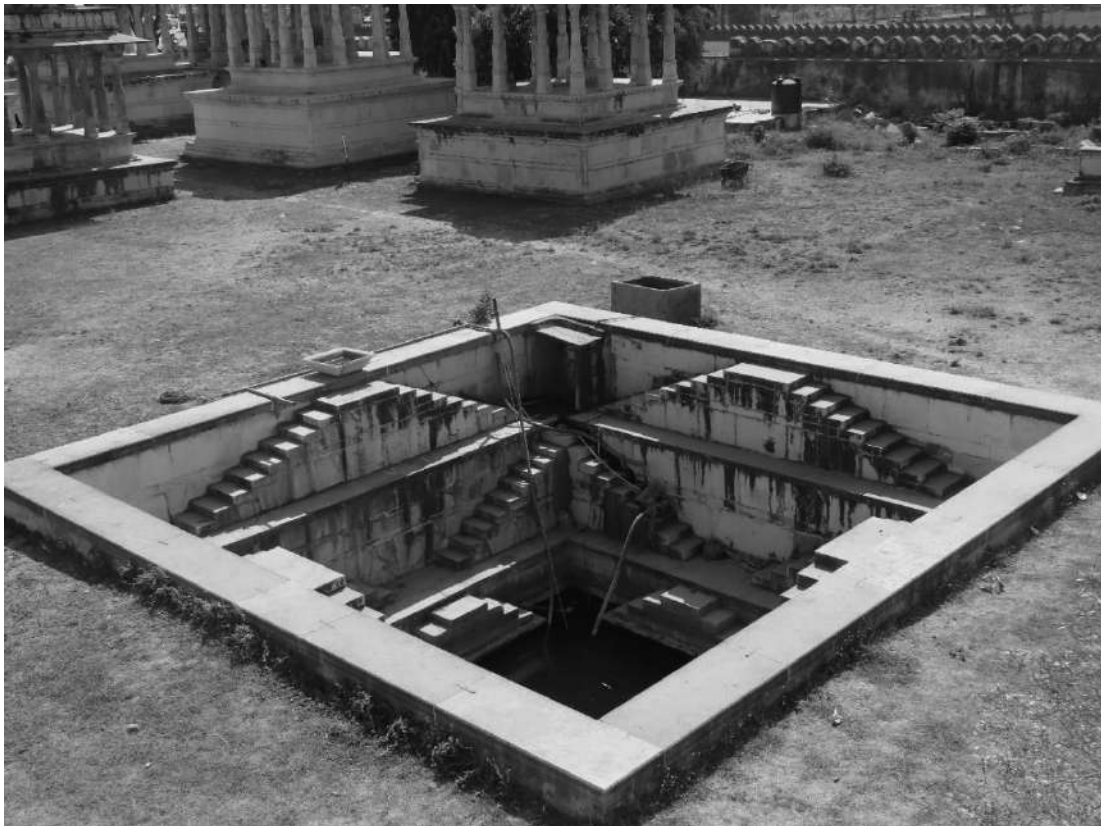
The Gangu kund is a stepped tank—square in shape—having beautiful sculptures of various deities in the niches made in the walls of the tank. Alternate niches are left empty, perhaps for lighting lamps at nights. The water in the tank is very clean. People come to visit the cenotaphs and have bath in the kund. However, they dry their clothes on the parapet railing of the kund, giving it a shabby look. There is a small temple dedicated to Lord Shiva—having four faces—in the middle of the kund, built on a high platform, which is also known as Chhatra of Raja Gandharva Sen.

5. Mahasatiya kund

Ayad, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 35' 14" N, 73° 43' 13" E

Period: 17th century



Udaipur-Mahasatiya Kund-Distant View

In the same compound of the Gangodbhav kund, separated by a wall with a separate entrance, are cenotaphs (chhatris) of various kings, Maharanas of Mewar kingdom, which include cenotaphs of

Maharanas Amar Singh-I & II, Sangram Singh, Karan Singh, Jagat Singh, Bhim Singh, Sardar Singh, Swaroop Singh, Shambhu Singh, Sajjan Singh, Fateh Singh, Bhupal Singh, and Bhagwat Singh. It is the royal cemetery or the cremation ground where the chhatris have been erected at the place of the cremation of a particular Maharana, according to his stature. Most of them have Lord Shiva's statue and Shivlinga in the middle of the cenotaph under the dome or chhatri, which depicts their belief in Shaivism. The oldest chhatri (cenotaph) is that of Maharana Amar Singh-I, the foundation of which was laid in 1620 AD. We can assume that the kund had been constructed at the time when the oldest chhatri was built in the 17th century. Some of the cenotaphs have beautiful architecture and carvings. Surprisingly, the cenotaph of Maharana Amar Singh-II does not have a chhatri or dome over it. It is said that he was killed in a war and his head could not be found. Since he was cremated without head, the chhatri or the dome was not provided in his cenotaph.



Udaipur-Mahasatiya Kund

In the middle of these cenotaphs, Mahasatiya kund has been built, where people used to take bath after cremation. It has three levels of steps. In the top level, the steps have been provided in the middle and they descend on both sides. In the second level from top, corner steps have been provided. In the third level again, the steps have been provided in the middle of from the four sides.

6. Bhana Ganesh ji ki Baodi

Ayad, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 35' 14" N, 73° 43' 13" E

Period: 17th century



Udaipur-Bhana Ganesh temple Baodi-view of the entrance from the south



Udaipur-Bhana Ganesh temple Baodi-view of the well shaft in the north



Udaipur-Bhana Ganesh temple Baodi-sculpture in the north

This baodi is located beside the temple of Bhana Ganesh, exactly in front of Mahasatiya. It has been built in north-south direction, with the well at the north end. The baodi is nearly 8 ft wide, and has 25 steps up to the well with one landing in between. The baodi has been constructed in the Nanda style with a single entrance. There is a beautiful sculpture of a deity in the north wall niche of the rectangular well. Since this baodi is also maintained by the Ekling ji trust of the royal family of Mewar, which maintains the Mahasatiya, it can be said that the baodi would have been built by the royals of Mewar, at the time when Mahasatiya came into being about 400 years ago. According to Dr. Ojha, it was built during the reign of Maharaja Karan Singh from 1620 to 1628 AD.²

7. Raj Rajeshwar Mahadev Baodi

Debari Gate, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 36' 23" N, 73° 48' 19" E

Period: 17th century (1659 AD)



Udaipur-Rajrajeshwar Mahadev Baodi-view of the second pavilion tower

²Ojha, Pashchimi Bharat mein Jal Prabandhan page 135



**Udaipur-Rajrajeshwar Mahadev
Baodi-entrance pavilion**



**Udaipur-Rajrajeshwar Mahadev
Baodi-steps in the well shaft**



**Udaipur-Rajrajeshwar Mahadev
Baodi-view towards the well shaft**



**Udaipur-Rajrajeshwar Mahadev
Baodi-sculpture in a niche**

The Raj Rajeshwar Temple and stepwell is situated on the Udaipur-Chittorgarh highway, near the Debari gate. The gate at Debari was the entry point of Udaipur from Delhi side. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple was built by Bakht Kunwar ji, the mother of Maharana Raj Singh-I, who reigned from 1652 to 1680 AD, in the memory of his son after his death. Bakht Kunwar was the daughter of Karan Singh, the ruler of Ranchhodpuri of Kathiawad, Gujarat. The baodi was built by Maharana Raj Singh in 1659 AD along with the Debari gate and the boundary wall of the fort.³

³ Ojha, Pashchimi Bharat mein Jal Prabandhan page 135

The stepwell is built in the Nanda style with a single entrance. It has 48 steps, three levels, and two pillared pavilions. There are 29 niches in the walls in which statues of various deities are placed. Most of the sculptures are missing now. The remaining sculptures include the statues of Lord Vishnu, Goddess Gajalakshmi, Lord Ganesha, Lord Hanuman, Goddess Kali, and Lord Kartikeya. The stepwell along with the temple is maintained by the Ekling ji Trust, City palace, Udaipur. The Debari Gate was built in 1674 AD. Beside the temple, there are three cenotaphs: the central one belongs to Gaura Singh Rathore (Ballu Dasot), who died while fighting the war with Aurangzeb's army on 14 December 1679. Since the temple is visited by a very few devotees these days, the importance of this stepwell has also diminished. Perhaps, that is why it is kept locked.

8. Trimukhi Baodi

Debari, Udaipur, Rajasthan

23° 35' 52" N, 73° 47' 38" E

Elevation: 560 m

Period: 17th century



Udaipur-Trimukhi Baodi-view of the eastern entrance from the second pavilion tower



Udaipur-Trimukhi Baodi-view towards the north

The Trimukhi Baodi is located in Debari village, which is 13 km away from Udaipur city. It was earlier known as Jaya Baodi and was built in Vikram Samvat 1732 (1675 AD)⁴ by Parmar Rani Ramrasde of Maharana Raj Singh-I, who reigned from 1652 to 1680 AD. The cost of construction amounted to Silver Rs. 24,000/-⁵. The stepwell is called Trimukhi because it has been built in the Jaya style, having three entrances. Tri means three and mukhi means faces. There are very few stepwells having three faces. Therefore, this stepwell is of great importance.

⁴ Solanki, Bhartiya Bavdiyan, page-71

⁵ Ibid



Udaipur-Trimukhi Baodi-Scuplture of Lord Ganesha in the niche on the left side wall of the eastern entrance



Udaipur-Trimukhi Baodi-view towards the western pavilion



Udaipur-Trimukhi Baodi-view from the eastern entrance

A community hall has been built in 2002 AD, near its eastern entrance. It has even included one of the side walls of the stepwell inside its platform. No care has been taken to preserve the heritage value of the stepwell. The stepwell is already surrounded at its rear by a mosque. Thus, entries from the three sides have been reduced to one direct entry.

The baodi is two storeyed and its entrances are approximately 20 ft wide. There are two pavilion towers in each entrance which are supported on eight columns, out of which two columns are embedded in the side walls. The first pavilion is single-storeyed, while the second pavilion tower, at the edge of the well shaft, is two-storeyed. The columns are beautifully sculpted, especially their capitals. There are two niches in each pavilion, one on each side wall. Apart from this, there are two niches on each side wall on the upper level, between the first and the second pavilion towers. Thus, there are six niches in each direction. Three such niches are visible on the wall at the west end of the well shaft. All these niches are framed and have a temple shikhar type pediment on the top. There might have been idols of deities inside these niches earlier, but hardly two niches are left with idols, with Lord Ganesha's idol inside one of them. The west end of the stepwell has a pavilion with stone benches, having carved back rests with geometrical patterns. This pavilion has a separate small entry from the rear. The stepwell's lower storey is full of water—though dirty. Moreover, grass and other vegetation are also growing on the walls, thus requiring urgent attention.

This stepwell, with three faces, holds significant heritage value and must be preserved.

9. Toran Baodi

Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 34' 40" N, 73° 41' 54" E

Elevation: 580 m

This stepwell is called the Toran Baodi because of the beautifully carved toran (archway or gateway) existing above the entrance. The stepwell is located on the Udaipur City railway station road, in the heart of the city. There must have been fields around the baodi initially, but now it is surrounded by commercial buildings and shops. This is, perhaps, the most beautiful baodi architecturally and well maintained, except of the fact that the stepwell is full of garbage thrown by people. Surprisingly, idols in most of the niches in the stepwell are still available. The stepwell is lined with marble and has been built in the east-west direction, with well shaft at the eastern end.

The toran is supported by two columns and a beam, all of which have exquisite carvings. Many bells with chains and kirtimukhs, apart from the flowery patterns have been carved on these columns. The beam is also sculpted with flowery pattern, apart from kirtimukh in the middle, as well at both the ends, on each side. The toran has six kirtimukhs engraved on each side with a sitting lion at the base on both ends. The capitals of both the columns are elegantly carved.

The stepwell has 27 steps to reach the landing. It has a pavilion with one niche on each side. However, there is a lot of garbage in the pavilion and the well. There are three niches on each side wall of the stepwell, before the pavilion. The three side walls of the rectangular well shaft also have three niches each with idols on the higher level, and one empty niche each on the lower level. The

idols are mostly intact. They are of different Hindu deities, including Lord Ganesha, Lord Vishnu in the form of Varah and Narsimha incarnations, Lord Kartikeya with his vehicle-peacock, and Goddess Durga in the form of Kushmanda, carrying kamandal and rosary.

Nowadays, the water from the stepwell is mostly used by the Fire Department for emergency.

10. Sagasji Bavji Baodi

Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 34' 30" N, 73° 41' 48" E

Elevation: 580 m

Period: 17th century



Udaipur- Sagasji Bavji temple baodi-view of the pavilion tower

This stepwell is located in the compound of the Sagasji Bavji temple. Bhimsingh ji Sagasji Bavji was the son of Maharana Raj Singh-I, who reigned from 1652 to 1680 AD. Maharana Raj Singh built this stepwell⁶. Sagasji Bavji was so brave that he never lost a war in his lifetime, and in this temple, he is

⁶ Dr. Ojha, Pashchimi Bharat mein Jal Prabandhan page135

worshipped for his bravery. His wife, Maharani Kunwar prada, committed sati after his death. Every year, his birthday is enthusiastically celebrated by thousands of devotees.



Udaipur-Sagasji Bavji temple baodi-view from the entrance

This step well is two-storeyed and is full of water. However, the stepwell is full of garbage thrown by people. The niches have been provided in the walls, but no idol exists. The baodi has been built in the east-west direction, with the well shaft at the western end. A banyan tree has completely encased the western side of the well. Although the authorities have installed a cover over the entrance to the stepwell, it still needs to be cleared of the garbage.

11. Navlakha Hanuman ji ki Baodi

Gulab Bagh, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 34' 24" N, 73° 41' 29" E

Elevation: 590 m

Period: 19th century

The Gulab Bagh Garden is spread over 100 acres of land, out of which nearly 66 acres has been used for various types of plants. It is called Gulab Bagh due to the abundance of rose flowers. It is also called Sajjan Niwas Garden as it was built by Maharana Sajjan Singh in 1881. It also houses one of the four oldest zoos of India. A horticulturist named T.H. Story from Madras was hired by the Maharana on a monthly salary of Rs. 300/- (in those days) to look after the garden and to grow medicinal plants. He worked here from 1882 to 1920. It is said that the Victoria species of lily flower, planted in the water works pond here, was so big and strong that it could hold a child sitting on a chair.



Udaipur-Navlakha Hanumanji Baodi-View of the Entrance from the East



**Udaipur-Navlakha Hanumanji Baodi-View
of the Stepped Corridor**



**Udaipur-Navlakha Hanumanji
Baodi-View of the Well Shaft**

The foundation of the Victoria Museum was laid by Maharana Sajjan Singh on 2 November 1890, and it was inaugurated by Lord Lansdowne—the Viceroy of India. A statue of Queen Victoria was also erected in its compound, which was replaced with that of Mahatma Gandhi after independence.

The Navlakha Mahal or the Navalakha Palace is situated at the centre of the garden. It is one of those places where Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, stayed during his lifetime. He edited his book 'Satyarth Prakash' and published its second edition in Vikarm Samvat 1939 (1882 AD). It is said that Swami Dayanand Saraswati inaugurated the Navalakha Palace in August 1882.

The stepwell is located just beside the Navlakha Palace and Navlakha Hanuman ji temple. The stepwell is built in the east-west direction, with the well at the western end. The baodi has three levels, with three landings and a single pavilion having two big arches. The niches in the side walls are provided at three levels. The idols in these framed niches are left only in some places, at the second and the third levels. These idols include Lord Ganesha, among others. The beautifully carved corbels still remain, though the platform they were supporting for drawing water from the tank, no longer exists. The water from the stepwell is currently being used for gardening. The stepwell has been built in the Nanda style, with random rubble masonry.

There is another stepwell just in front of the temple, which is being used for supplying water to the garden, but it is kept locked.

12. Chhatri Wali Baodi

Kamal Talai, Gulab Bagh, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 34' 18" N, 73° 41' 32" E



**Udaipur-Chhatri Wali Baodi-View
from the Entrance**



**Udaipur-Chhatri Wali Baodi-View of
the Well Shaft And The Pavilion**

There is no official name displayed for this stepwell, but the local people call it as the Chhatri Wali Baodi, i.e., the stepwell with a dome due to a beautiful chhatri or dome at the western end of the stepwell. This stepwell, situated near Kamal Talai, is also built in the east-west direction, with a single entrance and is being used for watering the garden. A pavilion has been built just below the dome. The niches exist in the side walls and the well, some of which have idols, like Lord Ganesha. Recently, a wall has been built at the second landing, which has marred the beauty of the stepwell as it prevents the full view of the stepwell. The stepwell is nearly 18 ft wide. A stone railing has also been erected at all the three prominent stepwells of the garden, including this one.

13. Gulab Bagh Baodi

Gulab Bagh, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 34' 18" N, 73° 41' 32" E

Elevation: 580 m

This two-storeyed stepwell is known as Gulab bagh Baodi due to its proximity to the rose garden. This is also a single entrance stepwell, built in the east-west direction, with the square well shaft at the eastern end. The stepwell is nearly 18 ft wide, and the well is approximately 30 ft x 30 ft. A two-storeyed pavilion tower has been provided in the middle of the stepwell, separating the flight of steps from the square well.



Udaipur-Gulab Bagh Baodi-View of the Well Shaft With Water Drawing Arrangement



Udaipur-Gulab Bagh Baodi-view from the entrance

The pavilion on the upper storey is supported on eight columns, out of which four are pilasters, embedded in the side walls. The statues of two guards (dwarpal) have been carved on the pilasters in the pavilion. The carved and framed niches have been provided in the side walls, while simple niches have been made in the three sides of the well shaft.

14. Hijron ki Baodi

Bhinder, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 30' 24" N, 74° 11' 9" E

Period: 16th century

Bhinder is a tehsil town; 60 km away from its district headquarter of Udaipur. It is said that Bhinder was gifted by Maharana Pratap to his younger brother, Shakti Singh, after the Battle of Haldighati, when he saved Maharana Pratap from the Mughal sepoys, who were following him. The buildings, such as the palace and the stepwells were built after 1578 AD. The Bhinder royal family traces its lineage to Shakti Singh.



**Bhinder-Hijron ki Baodi-view in the
east-west direction**



**Bhinder-Hijron ki Baodi-view from
the well shaft**



Bhinder-Hijron ki Baodi-two storeyed pavilion tower

The Hijron ki Baodi, also called Gatrada Baodi and Rani Sahiba ki Baodi, is located near the Temple of Ummed Swarup Bihari ji, which is looked after by Ved Samaj, who practices barber's profession. The stepwell is aligned in the east-west direction, with the well shaft at the western end. It is a two-storeyed stepwell, having a pavilion almost at ground level. The lower level has another pavilion, which was underwater at the time of my visit. The top pavilion is supported on eight columns with four pilasters, embedded in the side walls. The columns are architecturally carved and have beautiful capitals. The people living nearby said that a tunnel joins the stepwell with the palace, at a distance of about 100 m. and it was used by the queen in olden days.

While the houses have been raised just on the side walls of the stepwell, the residents living behind it have made a passage on the baodi to approach their houses. The stepwell is lined with stone slabs, the columns are made of stones, and the pavilion roof is also constructed with stone slabs.



Bhinder-Hijron ki Baodi-well shaft and water fetching arrangement in the west

15. Bai ji ki Baodi

Bhinder, Udaipur

24° 30' 13" N, 74° 11' 18" E

Elevation: 500 m

Period: 16th century



Bhinder-Baiji Raj ki Baodi-view of the well shaft and water drawing arrangement in the south



Bhinder-Baiji Raj ki Baodi-view of the pavilion tower from the entrance

Merely about 500 m away from Hijron ki Baodi, another stepwell known as the Bai ji ki Baodi exists inside the Suraj Pol-the Sun Gate or the Sun Pol. This stepwell is built in the north-south direction, with the well at the southern end. The arrangements to draw water, with the help of pulleys, were made at the southern end. A framed niche has been provided in each side wall, but there is no idol in them. A double-storeyed pavilion tower has been built in the middle of the stepwell. This pavilion tower has an exquisite pavilion with three arch openings on either direction, supported on eight sleek stone columns, on the upper storey while the lower storey consists of a single multi-cusped archway. Another small pavilion exists at the far end of the stepwell, over which a pulley arrangement to draw water, was provided. The water is still being used for gardening, but the stepwell is full of waste thrown by people. It is lined with flagstones and the same has been used in the roof of the pavilion.

16. Nayi Baodi

Kanore, Udaipur

24° 26' 53" N, 74° 15' 42" E

Elevation: 480 m



Kanore-Nayi Baodi-dried up well



Kanore-Nayi Baodi -view from the entrance in the west



Kanore-Nayi Baodi -stepped corridor



Kanore-Nayi Baodi -water drawing arrangement in the east

The village itself has been named after the stepwell: Nayi Baodi, i.e., the new stepwell. The stepwell is situated near Jawahar Vidyapeeth, just before Kanore town when coming from Udaipur. The stepwell is two-storeyed, with one landing and has been built in the east-west direction, with the

well at the eastern end. It has a double-storeyed pavilion tower, at the end of the stepped corridor. This pavilion tower has a multi-foil archway each on both the storeys. The sidewalks have been provided along both the side walls above the first level. It has been built in random rubble masonry with lime plaster. The ek-mukhi or single-faced stepwell is in fairly good condition, but without water. A new temple has been constructed beside the stepwell. The stepwell was, perhaps, used for drinking water and irrigating agricultural fields. Since both these purposes are being fulfilled through a piped water supply and electric tube wells, nobody cares for the stepwell, these days.

17. Bala Sahib ki Baodi

Kanore, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 26' 12" N, 74° 15' 54" E

Elevation: 480 m



Kanore-Bala Saheb ki Baodi- north-south leg of the L-shaped baodi



Kanore-Bala Saheb ki Baodi-east-west leg of the baodi with ardh-koot in sight

Kanore town is 75 km away from Udaipur. It was granted by Maharana Sangram Singh-II of Mewar to Maharawat Sarangdev-II in 1711 AD. The town is served by the Kanor railway station on the Mavli-Badi Sadri railway line. There are two myths about how the town got its name. The first is that a lady monk named Kani Meena meditated here, and the town got its name after her. The second myth claims that it was named after Kanha (Lord Krishna) as the town had many of his followers.

The stepwell is situated near the Balaji temple, and that is why the baodi is also called accordingly. It is located on the college road outside the gate. The stepwell, is simple in design and L-shaped, perhaps due to the shortage of space, and has been built in random rubble masonry, with steps made of flagstone. There are two niches in the sidewalls without any idol in them. The well is covered with foliage and moss.

18. Indra Baodi

Inside Gate, Kanore, Udaipur

24° 26' 8" N, 74° 15' 55" E

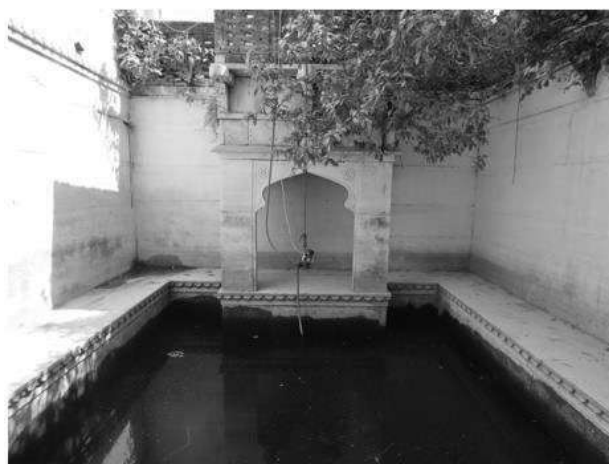
Elevation: 440 m

Period: 1766 AD

The Indra Baodi or 'Ander Baodi', i.e., the baodi inside the gate is the best maintained baodi at Kanore. It is in a neat and clean condition. This stepwell was built by Indra Kunwar, wife of the Rawat of Kanore, Prithvi Singh Sarangdevot in Vikram Samvat 1823 (1766 AD). According to the inscriptions, Rs. 4081/- were spent on its construction⁷. The names of the artisans involved in its construction have also been mentioned in this inscription. This stepwell is of single level. Built in the east-west direction, its well is at the eastern end. There is a two-storeyed pavilion tower in the stepwell. The pavilion, made of stone, is supported by eight columns, four of which are embedded in the side walls. There is a canopy (chhatri) above this pavilion, which has geometric patterns on it. There is another small pavilion on the eastern end of the well, above which some pulley arrangements are built for the purpose of drawing water. This arrangement of two pavilions is exactly similar to the Bai ji ki Baodi at Bhinder. The only eye sore at the baodi is the walls of the surrounding houses, raised beside the side walls of the stepwell, because of which it looks sandwiched between them.



Kanore-Indra Baodi-view towards the entrance



Kanore-Indra Baodi-view of the east end



Kanore-Indra Baodi- east-west orientation of the stepwell

Another stepwell exists near the Harvera Mahadev temple and Sri Radha Krishna temple at the location of 24° 26' 7" N, 74° 15' 54" E. However, the stepwell is full of waste and must be regained.

⁷ Ojha, Pashchimi Bharat mein Jal Prabandhan page 264 and 145

19. Shitala Mata kund

Kanore, Udaipur

24° 26' 5" N, 74° 15' 57" E

Period: Not Known

The Shitala Mata kund—a stepped tank—is dedicated to the Goddess of Small Pox (Shitala or Sheetala Mata). Although simple in design and smaller in scale, it is similar in design to the Akhaj Shakti kund in Gujarat and Mahasatiya kund of Ayad, Udaipur. It can also be compared to the Surya kund of Modhera, as far as the arrangement of steps is concerned. The steps are provided on the three sides,



Kanore-Sheetla Mata kund

as well as in the four corners of the tank. On the fourth side, the arrangement to draw water was provided—a part of which still exists. Some niches are present in each pair of the steps, but no idol exists in them anymore. A temple is built at one of the corners of the tank. However, open urinals, constructed by the municipality on one side of the tank, are likely to pollute the tank water through seepage. These must be dismantled immediately. Moreover, the devotees throw religious offerings into the tank, which makes it dirtier.

20. Charbhuja Mandir Baodi

Badi Sadri, Chittaurgarh, Rajasthan

24° 24' 57" N, 74° 28' 28" E

Period: Unknown

This stepwell is located behind the Charbhuja temple. It is sandwiched between the temple and the houses raised beside its side wall. The baodi has been built in stone masonry in two levels, lined with flagstones. It is a single entrance stepwell laid in the east-west direction, with the well shaft at the western end. It is nearly 30 ft wide. A two-storeyed pavilion-tower separates the stepped corridor from the well shaft. The band of geometric patterns runs at two levels of the side walls and the well shaft. Similar to other stepwells in the region, like the Indra Baodi at Kanore and Bai ji ki Baodi at Bhinder, a smaller pavilion has been provided at the western end of the stepwell, just below the ghat-yantra—the arrangement for drawing water from the stepwell.



**Badi Sadri-Charbhujia mandir
Baodi-stepped corridor**



**Badi Sadri-Charbhujia mandir
Baodi-well shaft**



**Badi Sadri-Charbhujia mandir Baodi-
upper storey of the pavilion tower**



**Badi Sadri-Charbhujia mandir Baodi-East-
west orientation of the stepwell as viewed
from the entrance**

A walkway is built along the side walls and on the three sides of the well shaft, in between the two levels of the stepwell. The lower storey of the pavilion-tower was underwater and could not be seen during my visit. The original stone columns of the pavilion at the upper storey of the pavilion-tower do not exist anymore, and the new supports have been provided which do not match with the old architecture. The archaeological department must oversee the repairs and renovation of such historical buildings, ensuring that the new portions are aligned with the old patterns. The water in the well is also full of filth and green algae.

21. Charbhuja Kharagli Baodi

Badi Sadri, Chittaurgarh, Rajasthan

24° 24' 54" N, 74° 28' 40" E

Elevation: 500 m

This stepwell is exactly opposite the palace of Badi Sadari at a road crossing. Approximately 25 ft in width, the stepwell has 52 steps leading to the well. It is lined with flagstone, like the Charbhuja Mandir Baodi. There is a two-storeyed pavilion-tower in the stepwell, separating the stepped corridor from the well shaft. The upper pavilion is supported on eight stone columns, out of which four are pilasters, embedded in the side walls. The top pavilion has three multi-cusped arch openings in each direction, while the lower pavilion has a big foliated archway with marvellous engravings with floral patterns. Lord Ganesha is engraved in the middle of the gate. The two niches, provided in the lower pavilion, do not have any idol at present.



**Badi Sadri-Charbhuja Kharagli
Baodi-two storeyed pavilion tower**



**Badi Sadri-Charbhuja Kharagli
Baodi-view from the entrance**



Badi Sadri-Charbhujia Kharagli
Baodi-view of the well shaft



Badi Sadri-Charbhujia Kharagli
Baodi-multifoil arch gate of the lower
storey of the pavilion tower

A part of the entrance has been encroached upon by the resident of the house beside the stepwell, converting one of the two framed niches in the side walls into an entrance to his house. The stepwell is well maintained; however, some vegetation is growing around the area.

22. Kapasiya Bazaar Baodi

Badi Sadri, Chittaurgarh,

Rajasthan

24° 54' 55" N, 74° 28' 48" E

Elevation: 490 m

Period: Unknown

As there are many Charbhujia temples at Badi Sadri, the stepwells have also been named by the locals accordingly. This one is situated at the junction of the two roads in Kapasiya bazaar, which must have been a trading place for cotton. Kapas means cotton; it is simple in design without any ornamentation. Though the stepwell is in good shape, it is covered in filth because of the waste thrown into it.



Badi Sadri-Kapasiya Bazar Baodi-
view from the entrance



Badi Sadri-Kapasiya Bazar
Baodi-well shaft

23. Shri Krishna Vatika Baodi

Badi Sadri, Chittaurgarh, Rajasthan

24° 24' 46" N, 74° 29' 01" E

Period: Unknown

It is a small L-shaped stepwell, just outside the gate of Shri Krishna Vatika Temple.



Badi Sadri-Sri Krishna Vatika
Baodi-view from the entrance



Badi Sadri-Sri Krishna Vatika
Baodi-another leg of the L-
shaped baodi

24. Kund

Badi Sadri, Chittaurgarh, Rajasthan

Period: 1904 AD

This stepped tank is located about 500 m away from the Shri Krishna Vatika Temple. It has two levels of steps provided in the middle of the three sides, with a niche in each pair of the steps. However, no idol is left in any of the niches. The stone inscription by the side of the tank mentions that it was built by the mother queen Sri Rathod ji of Kushalgarh, in memory of her son, Rana Rai Singh, during the reign of Rana Duleh Singh, at a cost of Rs. 1,000/- in Vikram Samvat 1961 (1904 AD)⁸. Another inscription shows the symbols of Sun and Crescent Moon, along with a cow and its calf, engraved on it. The two inscriptions fixed outside the tank are surrounded by a heap of waste and need to be preserved.



Badi Sadri-Kund

⁸ Inscription at the kund

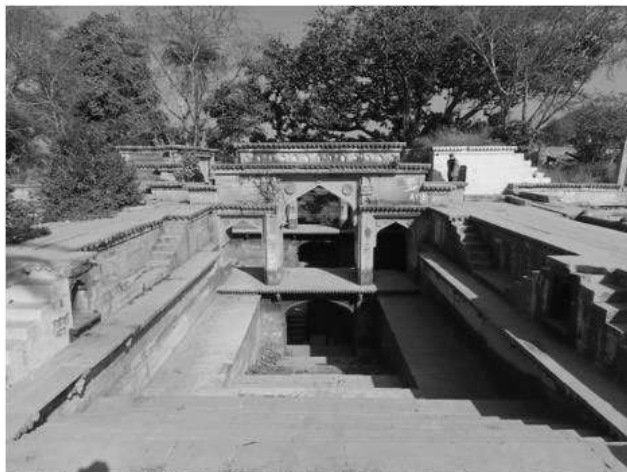
25. Binota ki Baodi

Binota, Chittaurgarh

24° 31' 53" N, 74° 34' 07" E

Elevation: 470 m

Period: 17th century



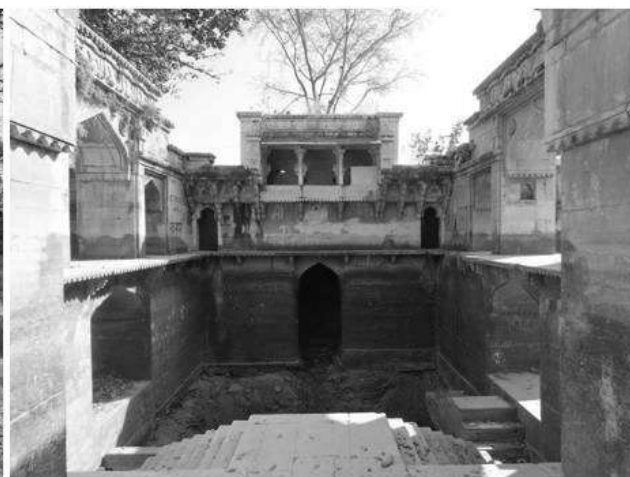
Binota ki Baodi-entrance from west



Binota ki Baodi-steps to go to the top of the entrance pavilion tower



Binota ki Baodi-entrance from the east



Binota ki Baodi-view of the pavilion and the well shaft on the south

Binota is a small town in Nimbahera Tehsil of Chittaurgarh district, located about 45 km south of Chittaurgarh. The Binota stepwell is three faced, i.e., trimukhi. This style of construction is called the Jaya style. It was built by Zagirdar Suraj Singh Shaktawat, around 350 years ago, somewhere between 1660 and 1670 AD. He was earlier the Thikanedar of Satola. When he was granted the zagir of Binota by the Maharana of Mewar, he built this stepwell. The three entrances are in the north, the east, and the west directions. In the north, there is big archway (ardh-koot) on the last landing, without any pavilion. It is called the Hathi Gate (elephant gate) because the royal elephant used to

drink water from this entrance. The water used to enter the stepwell through the gaumukh, fixed on the south side. There is a pavilion on top of the south side to sit and enjoy. The stone columns of this pavilion have been carved beautifully. The entrances on the east and the west direction are similar. There are two-storeyed pavilion-towers (koot) on the last landings, while entering from the east and the west. On the lower storey, there is a big pointed archway, while on the upper storey; the bigger arch is flanked by two smaller archways. Thus, there are two koots and one ardh koot on three entrances. When visited in the month of February, there was not a drop of water in the stepwell. The drinking arrangement for animals has also been provided separately on the side of the western entrance, like the Jethabhai Vav at Ahmedabad. Amongst the three faced stepwells in the region, this one stands at a higher pedestal, considering its beautiful architecture.



Binota ki Baodi-trough for animals on the west



Binota ki Baodi-inside view of the northern entrance

Another stepwell exists inside the compound of Shri Khakaldev ji Temple inside the Binota town. The stepwell is made of dressed stones and a series of steps have been provided. The stones of these steps have loosened, and currently it is dangerous to go down the stepwell, which is otherwise completely dry.

26. Kale Hanuman ji ki Baodi

Jaipur

26° 57' 08" N, 75° 50' 21" E

Elevation: 420 m

Period: 1727 AD

The foundation of the Jaipur city was laid by Sawai Jai Singh-II in 1727. It is said that he performed an 'Ashwamedh Yagna'⁹ on this occasion.

This stepwell is located near the Hanuman temple across the road. It is usually locked, and one has to work hard to get the keys to visit it. However, once you enter the gate, the beauty of the stepwell fills you with happiness. A pavilion tower separates the stepped corridor from the well shaft. Only the top pavilion with three foliated arch openings towards the entrance was visible as the rest was under water. The pavilions have also been built on the sides, with three openings on each side. The big arched niches are provided in the side walls, towards the entrance. The galleries have been built around the well shaft, with openings in the interior wall of the well shaft. The stepwell has been constructed in random rubble masonry with lime plaster in the east-west direction, with the well shaft at the eastern end. The pillars are made of stone. The octagonal well is seven-storeyed, but only two levels are visible as the rest are underwater. The size of the stepwell with steps is 52 ft x 32 ft. The rooms



Jaipur-Kale Hanumanji ki Baodi



Jaipur-Kale Hanumanji ki Baodi-well shaft

⁹ During this yagna, prayers were offered at this stepwell. Thus, it can be said that this stepwell was built in and around 1727 AD. This is said to be the last Ashwamedh Yagna of the world. The Ashwamedh yagna is a horse sacrifice ritual, and it was performed by the king to prove his sovereignty. A horse, accompanied by the army of the king, used to be released in the region. If no rival king captured the horse, it was brought back after a year and sacrificed. The king was then declared an undisputed sovereign. In the Mahabharat period, Yudhishtir had performed this yagna. Subsequently, there are references that Pareekshit, Janmejaya, Bharat, Pushyamitra Shunga, Pulkeshin-I & II, Samudragupta, Kumargupta, and Rajendra Chola also performed the ashwamedha yagna.

and arched pavilions exist on all sides, for resting and taking bath. A corridor has been made around the well shaft with stairs.

The stepwell was completely filled up with silt and garbage, and it was excavated and renovated recently with the assistance of M/s Hindustan Coca Cola Breweries Private Limited.

27. Nahargarh Fort Stepwell

Nahargarh, Jaipur

26° 56' 22" N, 75° 49' 02"

E

Elevation: 580 m

Period: 1734 AD

The Nahargarh Fort is one of the three forts of Jaipur, the other two being the Amber Fort and the Jaigarh Fort. Nahargarh means 'the fort of lions.' It was built in 1734 by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh-II, who founded the Jaipur city in 1727 AD. According to Morna Livingston, it was built in 1732 AD¹⁰. The fort is sitting atop the



Jaipur-Nahargarh Fort Stepwell

Aravalli Hills, and was never attacked and tested in war. It was extended in 1868 AD. The fort houses the Madhavendra Bhawan, the summer retreat of the royal family, which was built by Sawai Madho Singh. It has 12 bedrooms for the queens, along with a suite for the king. The fort is a tourist attraction and has been shoot locations for films like Sonar Kella (Bengali), Rang De Basanti, and Shudh Desi Romance (Hindi).

The huge stepwell was built to collect and preserve water through various channels, made along the hills. The asymmetric steps follow the contours and present a beautiful view. The stepwell is built in the north-south direction, with the deepest part being in the southern direction. Arrangement has been made to filter the water of its impurities through various chambers.

¹⁰ Livingston, Steps to Water.page 126

28. Panna Meena ka kund

Amber, Jaipur

26° 59' 29" N, 75° 51' 04" E

Elevation: 390 m

Period: 16th Century¹¹



Jaipur-Panna Meena ka Kund

This stepwell is on the other side of the Amber Fort, near Laxmi Narayan or Bihari ji's Temple. It is also called as Manna Miyan ka Kund. There is no information about its origin. As per a legend, Panna Miyan was a eunuch, who worked in the royal court of Amber Fort, during the reign of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh. He helped build this stepwell. Another legend connects it to Manna Meena, a Meena warrior chief who was killed in war with the Rajputs. The stepwell was built in his honour. There are eight levels of symmetrical step pairs, descending to the water level on three sides of the kund. A landing has been provided at each fifth step.

The kund is square, measuring approximately 81 ft x 81 ft, and is about 50 ft deep. The maze of steps presents a pleasing view of the kund. It has been built in random rubble masonry in lime plaster. Dhadhak, a Hindi film, was shot at this location.

¹¹ Information Brochure issued by the Department of Posts for stamps on 16 stepwells

29. Bund Talab Baodi

Amber, Jaipur

26° 59' 42" N, 75° 52' 5" E

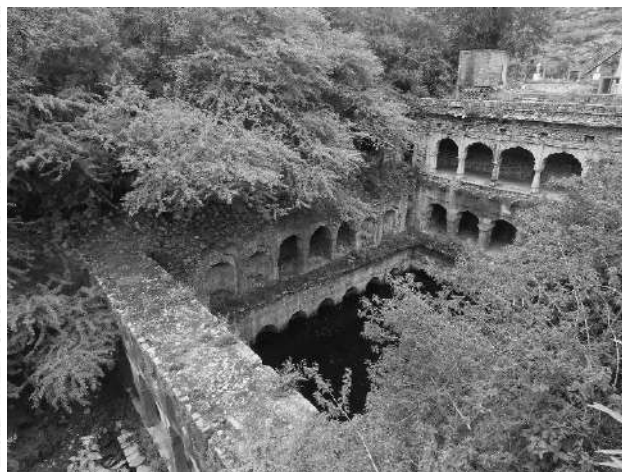
Elevation: 400 m

Period: Unknown

The Bund Talab—named because of the existence of the bund nearby—is a km away from the Amber-Delhi highway. It is also called the Van Talab stepwell, where the bund has been converted into a Van. The word talab means a tank. The land surrounding the stepwell is part of the Raj Bagh Palace Resort, and one has to enter the resort to get down the stepwell. The main entrance to the stepwell is blocked by thorny bushes. Furthermore, there is no direction board to reach the stepwell. It is in deteriorating condition, indicating that there is no one to look after it. The stepwell is built in the east-west direction, with its entrance on the west. The first pavilion tower is two-storeyed and constructed in the middle of the stepwell. While the lower storey of the first tower consists of a single archway, the upper storey has five pointed-arch openings in both directions. The second pavilion-tower, on the eastern end of the stepwell, is three-storeyed. The pavilion on the top storey has multifoil arch openings, supported on twin-pillared columns, towards the entrance. Its middle storey has pointed arch openings. The verandahs along the two side walls have three pointed-arch openings on the top storey, flanked by two big-arched niches on each side.



Jaipur-Amber-Bund Talab Baodi-showing the first pavilion tower and side pavilions



Jaipur-Amber-Bund Talab Baodi-showing the second pavilion tower and side pavilions

The lower storey has deep and wide arched niches on both the sides. It is built in random rubble masonry with lime plaster. However, the arches of the top pavilion of the second pavilion tower on the eastern end are supported on twin-pillared stone columns. The bottom storeys of the two pavilion towers were underwater at the time of my visit. The stepwell needs urgent repairs otherwise it will vanish from the scene in the near future.

30. Maaji ki Baodi

Amber, Jaipur

27° 00' 30" N, 74° 52' 21" E

Elevation: 410 m

Period: 17th Century



Jaipur-Amber-Maaji ki Baodi-four storeyed pavilion tower in the east

The word Maa means mother. This stepwell, probably, might have been built by some queen of Amber. Amber Fort¹² is around a km away from this stepwell, and this lies inside the reserved

¹² This fort, along with five other forts of Rajasthan at Chittaurgarh, Gagron, Jaisalmer, Kumbhalgarh, and Ranthambore, was declared a World Heritage by UNESCO in 2013. It is said that Amber Fort was initially built by a Meena King named Raja Alan Singh in 967 AD. Since the Meenas were devotee of deity Amba Mata, it was named Amber. The fort was later on captured by the Kachhwaha Rajputs. The fort, as it stands today, was built during the reign of Raja Man Singh-I, who was a trusted general of the Mughal king, Akbar. Most of the buildings were built during 1600s AD. Amber remained the capital until it was shifted to modern day Jaipur, which was established in 1727 by Sawai Jai Singh-II.

forest area of Amber. The words Amber and Amer are used interchangeably. The Amber Fort lies about 11 km away from Jaipur.

The Maaji ki Baodi also appears to have been built in 1600s AD, i.e., 17th century. All the stepwells in Amber area might have been built in the 17th century, and well before the capital was shifted to Jaipur in 1727 AD. This stepwell is four-storeyed and has been built in the RR masonry with lime plaster.



Jaipur-Amber-Maaji ki Baodi



**Jaipur-Amber-Maaji ki Baodi-view
towards the entrance in the west**

The upper two storeys of the pavilion tower in the east have three numbers of multi-cusped arch openings towards the entrance, while the third storey from the top has pointed arch openings. The bottom most storey has an arch opening connecting the well shaft with the stepped corridor. The Bangladaar or the Bengal roof—dome shaped curved roof with drawn-down corners—is provided on the top pavilion and is flanked by a circular dome on each side. Forty steps lead to the edge of a square tank dug into the rocky strata, which has 30 more steps to go down. The stepwell is constructed in the east-west direction with the well shaft in the eastern side. The baodi is at the foothills. Additional support to the side walls has been built in the middle of the stepwell. The walkways have been provided along the two side walls at each level. A staircase exists at the eastern end on both the sides. The niches have been made in the side walls. The main well shaft on the east end has been dug into rocky strata. The baodi is by the side of Sita Ramji and Hanuman ji temples. The stepwell is well maintained and painted with beautiful light-yellow colour. Some families still reside here, inside the deep jungle.

31. Sura ki Baodi

Nahargarh Biological Park, Amber, Jaipur

27° 00' 51" N, 75° 51' 50" E

Period: 17th Century



Jaipur-Amber-Sura ki Baodi-view of the pavilion tower from the entrance

The Sura ki baodi is situated in the Nahargarh Biological Park, behind the Nahargarh Fort. The entry to the park is located on the Jaipur-Delhi highway, from which the stepwell is around 2 km away. The Jaipur Zoo was also shifted to this park in the year 2016. It is not clear as to why this stepwell was built in the middle of a thick forest. Probably, this stepwell might have been built for the royal family members for taking rest, while hunting in this forest area. The stepwell has been constructed in the east-west direction, with entrance from the eastern side. It has three-storeyed pavilion tower, with the top two storeys having pointed arch pavilions. The arches of the top pavilion have double-pillared supports, which are beautifully carved and made of stone. The stepwell is a rectangle of 92 ft x 22 ft size. The staircase has been provided on one side, on the west to go down to each level. The 48 steps lead to the tank, with a landing after 16 steps each. The width of the steps gets narrower as we go deeper. The stepwell was renovated in the year 2007.

32. Naku Baodi

Amber, Jaipur

26° 59' 20" N, 75° 51' 50" E

Period: 17th Century



Jaipur-Amber-Naku ki Baodi-circular well shaft with openings into stepped corridor

The Naku Baodi is situated on the other side of the Jaipur-Delhi highway, opposite to the Maaji ki Baodi, Sura ki Baodi, Bund Talab stepwell, and Panna Meena ka kund, which are all on one side of the main highway. It is hardly 100 m away from the highway. Most of these stepwells, except Panna Meena ka Kund, have been built in the Nanda style, in the shape of the letter 'I' with a single entrance. The Naku Baodi or the Naku ki Baodi has been constructed in the east-west direction, with the well shaft on eastern end.



Jaipur-Amber-Naku ki Baodi-view of the third half pavilion tower connected with well shaft



Jaipur-Amber-Naku ki Baodi-view from the entrance

It is a three-storeyed stepwell, with three ardh-koots in it. A storey has been added later on by raising the height of the two side walls and the third ardh-koot. There is no pavilion tower in the stepwell but only half-pavilion towers. These ardh-koots are supporting the side walls of the stepwell at three places. As we go deeper, the number of the storeys increases. The first support, called the first ardh-koot, is single storeyed, having a single pointed-arch. The second support or the second ardh-koot is two-storeyed, having a pointed-arch on each storey, while the third support or the third ardh-koot is three-storeyed with a pointed-arch opening, connecting the well shaft with the stepped corridor in each storey. The third ardh-koot tower is a part of the well shaft itself. These arched supports are 6 ft wide. There are two small niches—one on either side of the arch on all the storeys. The side walls also have niches, perhaps for lamps. The stepwell is rectangular in shape, with the inside size of 93 ft x 25 ft, and built in RR masonry in lime plaster. The circular well shaft is also built in RR masonry. The baodi was renovated in the year 2003.

33. Rukmani Baodi

Amber, Jaipur

26° 59' 21" N, 75° 52' 11" E

Elevation: 400 m

Period: 17th Century



Jaipur-Amber-Rukmani Baodi-showing four storeyed pavilion tower in the west



Jaipur-Amber-Rukmani Baodi- looking down the well shaft

The entrance to the stepwell is through a double arched gateway, with an arched pavilion in the beginning of the stepwell. The stepwell has been built in the east-west direction, with the well shaft on western end. It has been built in RR masonry with lime plaster. The baodi is four-storeyed, with arched pavilions on the top three storeys on the west end, abutting the well shaft. The three multifoil arches of the top pavilion, opening towards the stepped corridor, are supported on double pillared columns made of stone. These columns have geometric figures, carved on the top and the bottom. The middle two storeys have pointed arch openings, supported on RR masonry columns. The bottom most storey has an arch opening, connecting the well shaft with the stepped corridor. The second and the third storeys of the side walls have big niches. The walkways have been provided along the side walls at all the levels. A staircase connects all the pavilions on one side. The well shaft is octagonal in shape on the top three storeys, but circular at the bottom. Fifty steps lead to the water level, with four landings. The growth of vegetation is taking place on the steps and side walls, which needs to be controlled by the concerned authorities.



Jaipur-Amber-Rukamani Baodi-looking towards the entrance in the east

34. Chheela Baodi

Hadipura, Amber, Jaipur

26° 59' 16" N, 75° 51' 34" E

Elevation: 406 m

Period: Unknown



Jaipur-Amber-Chheela Baodi-view from the west showing the first ardh-koot



Jaipur-Amber-Chheela Baodi-view of the second ardh-koot from the east

The Cheela Baodi is located very close to the Naku Baodi and the Teliyon ki Baodi. The origin of its name is unknown. The stepwell was renovated in the year 2003, and it appears that the main entrance, which was from the western side, has been shifted to south through a gate. A wall has been erected on the western end. The stepwell was built in the east-west direction, with the well shaft in the east. This stepwell is similar to the Naku Baodi in design. It has two ardh-koots, with one and two storeys in the first and the second ardh-koot respectively, having a pointed archway in each storey for supporting the side walls. The well shaft has arched openings in the second and the third storeys. Probably, the arch opening in the shaft on the top storey has been later changed to an open rectangular cut, up to the top. The water still exists in the well, and people said that the baodi gets filled up to the top during the rainy season. The people enjoy themselves during this time in the baodi. Similar to the Naku Baodi, small niches have been provided on the sides of the arches in

the ardh-koots and big niches in the side walls. The stepwell and the well shaft have been built in RR masonry with lime plaster. The stepwell is rectangular, with 93 ft x 28 ft in size.

35. Teliyon ki Baodi

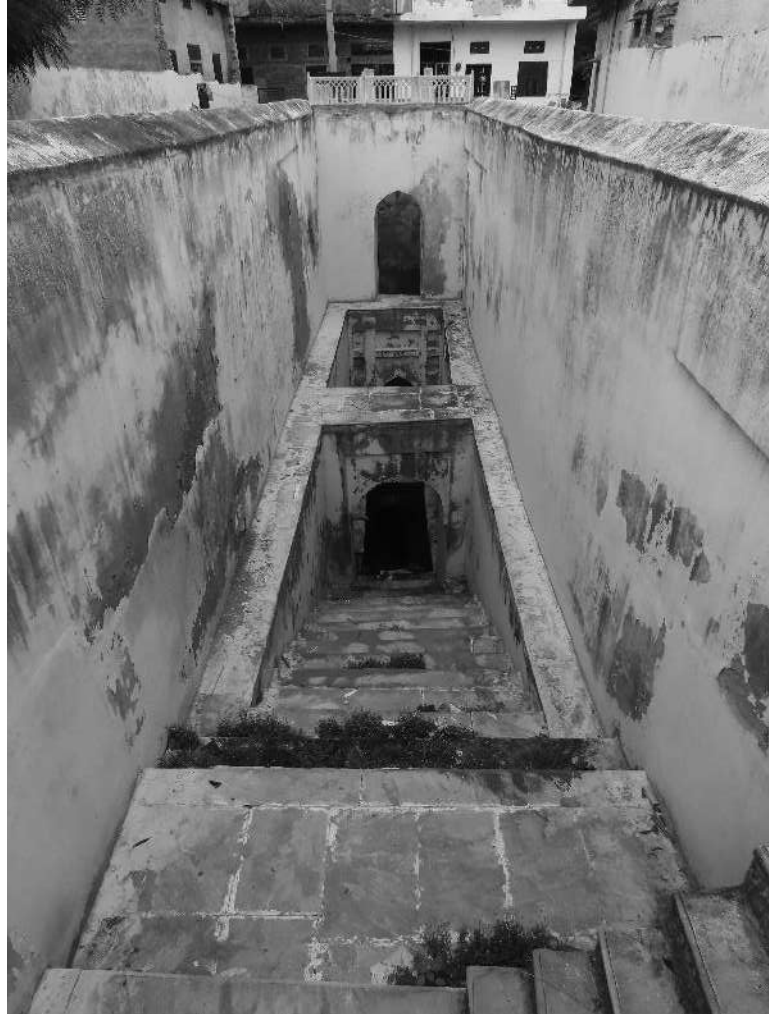
Amber, Jaipur

26° 59' 09" N, 75° 51' 45" E

Elevation: 400 m

Period: Unknown

The Teliyon ki Baodi is situated in the Pareekon ka Mohalla, near the Hidayat Mosque. It is similar to the Chheela and Naku Baodis in style and design, but a little narrower and smaller in scale. It is simple in design and has one koot in the middle with a single arch for supporting the side walls. The rectangular shaped and two-storeyed baodi is 60 ft x 12 ft in size. It has been built in the east-west direction, with the well in the east. The side walkways are provided in the middle of the height, along the side walls. It has been made in RR masonry and was renovated in the year 2006.



Jaipur-Amber-teliyon ki Baodi

36. Gangadas ki Baodi

Thaathar Colony, Amber, Jaipur

26° 58' 58" N, 75° 51' 60" E

Elevation: 400 m

Period: Unknown



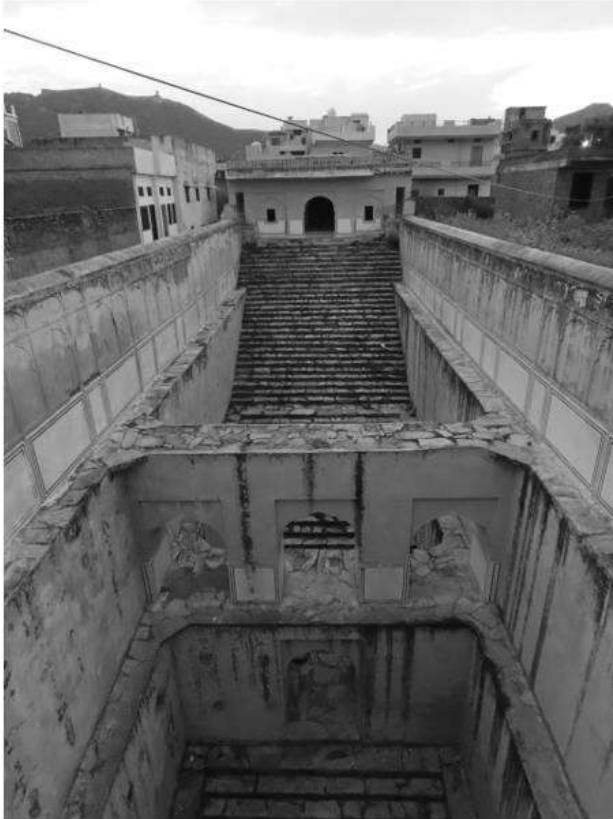
Jaipur-Amber-Gangadas ki Baodi -view from the entrance pavilion in the west



Jaipur-Amber-Gangadas ki Baodi -
view of the beautifully painted
entrance pavilion



Jaipur-Amber-Gangadas ki Baodi -view through the multifoil
arch opening of the top pavilion



Jaipur-Amber-Gangadas ki Baodi -view towards the entrance from the pavilion tower in the east



Jaipur-Amber-Gangadas ki Baodi -four storeyed pavilion tower in the east

The Gangadas ki Baodi is located in the Thaathar Colony, because of which it is also called as the Thaathar Baodi. The stepwell is built in the east-west direction, with the well shaft in the east. A pavilion exists at the entrance, which has been beautifully renovated recently. This beautiful stepwell is four-storeyed and constructed in RR masonry. The arched pavilions have been provided on the top two storeys of the pavilion tower at the eastern end, presumably for taking rest. The top pavilion has multifoil arch openings, while the second storey from the top has pointed arch openings. The lowermost two storeys have a single pointed arch opening each, connecting the well shaft with the stepped corridor. An ardh koot—having arched supports with an archway below and the two above—has been provided in the middle of the baodi, for supporting the side walls. The stairs are provided on both the sides of the pavilions. The walkways also exist in the side walls at all the levels. The well shaft is circular in the lower portion, while being octagonal at the top. The vegetation growth in the shaft may harm it, even though the baodi has been renovated in the year 2008.

37. Vijay Bagh Baodi

Amber, Jaipur

26° 58' 47" N, 75° 51' 58" E

Elevation: 400 m

Period: Unknown



**Jaipur-Amber-Vijay Bagh Baodi-
view from the well shaft**



Jaipur-Amber-Vijay Bagh Baodi-first ardh-koot

This stepwell is located in a park called Vijay Bagh. It has been built in RR masonry, just like all other stepwells of this area, and is constructed in the east-west direction, with its circular well shaft being in the eastern end. An arrangement for animals to drink water has also been provided in this stepwell. The baodi is four-storeyed. The remains of water-drawing arrangement can be seen in three directions at the top of the well. The two arched supports (ardh-koots) have been built in the stepwell to support the side walls. The well shaft has arched openings at all levels. An elephant's motif can be seen on the right-hand side wall.

38. Sarai Baodi

Amber, Jaipur

26° 57' 55" N, 75° 52' 07" E

Elevation: 390 m

Period: 16th century



Jaipur-Amber-Sarai Baodi

The Sarai Baodi was built along with kos minars in the 16th century by Maharaja Man Singh-I, during Mughal king Akbar's visit to this area between 1562 and 1590 AD¹³. People could not enter the Amber fort area after sunset, so they had to stay overnight in the Sarai (inn), constructed at a distance of 500 m. This stepwell served as the only source of water for them. It is said to be the oldest stepwell in the Amber area. The village, Sarai Baodi, got its name from this stepwell. The stepwell was rehabilitated in 2004-05 AD by M/s Hindustan Coca Cola Breweries Private Limited.

The stepwell has been built in RR masonry in the east-west direction, with the well at the eastern end. A pavilion tower with arched openings has been built in the east, near the well shaft, which is circular. The niches have also been made in the side walls.

¹³ Information provided by the state government at the stepwell

39. Vidyadhar ka Bagh Baodi

Jaipur

26° 53' 57" N, 75° 51' 16" E

Elevation: 440 m

Period: 18th Century



Jaipur-Vidyadhar ka Bagh Baodi

The Vidyadhar ka Bagh (Vidyadhar's Garden) is located at Ghat ki Guni, Jaipur. The garden was designed and built by Vidyadhar Chakravarty, Desh Diwan of Jaipur state in the 18th century. Vidyadhar is credited with the planning of the Jaipur city, which was established in 1727 AD. The garden has been built in the Mughal style, while integrating Rajput architectural elements, like the stepwell in it. At the upper end on the garden is the single storeyed palace of Vidyadhar. The baodi has a square plan, measuring 95 ft x 95 ft, and has pairs of steps to descend from all the sides. There is a circular well in the centre of the stepwell. Water from the hills was guided to the stepwell through channels. There were chambers to filter the impurities of water.

40. Bohron ki Baodi

Nayla, Jaipur, Rajasthan

26° 54' 55" N, 75° 58' 51" E

Period: 18th Century



Nayla-Bohron ki Baodi-view from the pavilion tower in the east



Nayla-Bohron ki Baodi-three storeyed pavilion tower in the east



Nayla-Bohron ki Baodi-view from the entrance



Nayla-Bohron ki Baodi-circular well shaft

Nayla is situated 20 km away from the district headquarter of Jaipur. It was a small territory under the Jaipur state. The Bohron ki Baodi is not in good condition, except the pavilion on the top storey on right hand side, where a temple has been created. The baodi has a three-storeyed pavilion tower in the east, with two storeys below ground level. The pointed arch openings have been provided on the top pavilion of the tower, while the middle storey has multifoil arch openings. The top storeys on the sides have pavilions with multifoil arch openings towards the stepped corridor. The big arched niches have been provided in the side walls on the middle storey. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the circular well shaft behind the pavilion tower in the east. The twin pillared octagonal stone columns support the arches in all the pavilions of the tower as well as on

the sides. A single storeyed ardh-koot, with a large pointed arch opening flanked by arched niches, supports the side walls in the middle of the baodi. The baodi is said to be about 250 years old.

The Bohron ka Bagh (the garden of Bohras) is located nearby, and the water from the stepwell is used to irrigate it. The remains of the water-drawing arrangement on three sides can still be seen in the well shaft. The well shaft was connected with the baodi at all levels, but now it is connected only at the bottom.

41. Kund ke Balaji

Toonga, Bassi, Jaipur

26° 46' 09" N, 76° 08' 56" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: Unknown



Toonga-Kund ke Balaji

The kund in Toonga village of the Bassi subdivision is located 45 km away from Jaipur. The kund has been built in the campus of the Balaji temple. The kund is architecturally similar to the Panna Meena Kund at Amber, Jaipur. The steps have also been arranged in the same manner, though at a smaller scale. The six pairs of steps descend to the rectangular water tank. These steps have been built on three sides of the kund, while water-drawing arrangement has been built on the fourth side. The niches have been provided in the pairs of steps to create space and save on the masonry, while giving it a beautiful look. No information about when and by whom was it built is available. There is no water now in the kund, and it is full of garbage thrown by people.

42. Gosaiyon ki Baodi

Chak Rajwadi, Bassi, Jaipur

26° 45' 55" N, 76° 09' 54" E

Elevation: 330 m

Period: 17th century

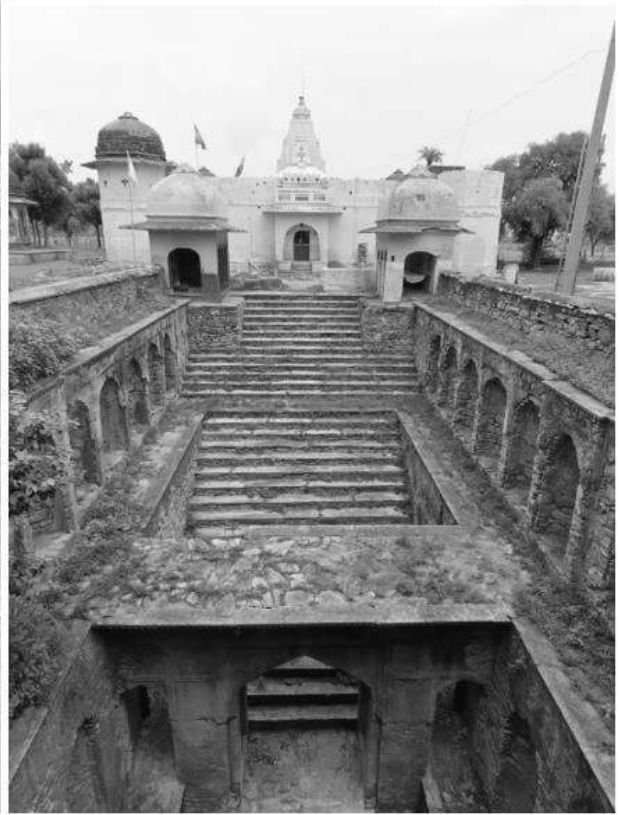


Bassi-Gosaiyon ki Baodi-view from the entrance

The Gosaiyon ki Baodi is located at Chak Rajwadi, a km away from the Madhogarh Fort. It is said that it was built by Goswami Hanut Puri, about 400 years ago. A temple of Lord Shiva exists in front of the baodi. The four-storeyed stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the well shaft on the western end. It has been built in RR masonry. There are two small domed pavilions at the entrance. The first pavilion tower of single storey with an archway has been built in the middle of the stepped corridor to support the side walls. The top three storeys of the second pavilion tower on the west have pavilions with multifoil arch openings. The columns supporting the arches are different on all the three storeys. On the second storey from the bottom, the support is in the form of a rectangular stone column, while on the third storey, the arches are supported on double octagonal pillars. The arches on the top storey are supported on four pillars. All these octagonal pillars on the third and the fourth storeys are tapered and beautifully carved.



Bassi-Gosaiyon ki Baodi-second pavilion tower



Bassi-Gosaiyon ki Baodi-view from the second pavilion tower

The arches on the second and the third storeys are made of rubble, while on the top storey, they are made of stone. The well shaft is circular in the bottom, but octagonal at the top. It is connected with openings to the baodi at all the levels. The second pavilion tower has a projected balcony in the centre of the top three pavilions, supported on brackets. The balconies are now damaged. The stepwell is an architectural marvel and needs to be preserved after carrying out necessary renovations. The family living nearby mentioned that the funds allotted for its renovation were diverted to Madhogarh.

43. Bavdi ka Bas Baodi

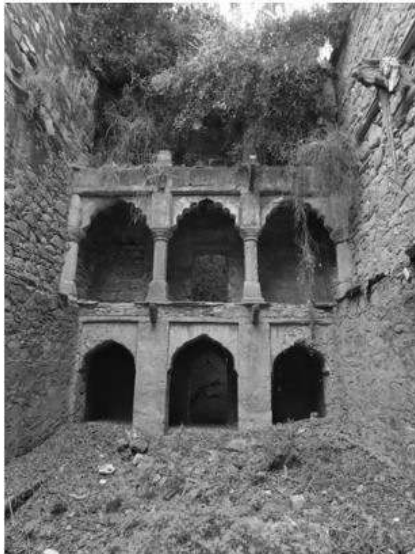
Bavdi ka Bas, Bassi, Jaipur

26° 47' 08" N, 76° 09' 33" E

Elevation: 340 m

Period: Unknown

The village itself has been named after the stepwell. Bavdi ka Bas means the 'place with baodi'. Here, the spellings of bavdi and baodi are used interchangeably. This stepwell is two km away from the Gosaiyon ki Baodi. The stepwell is in ruins and covered with vegetation and silt. The ruins indicate to its glorious past. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the well shaft in the west. The four-storeyed baodi has been built in RR masonry. The top three storeys of the pavilion tower were built with arched pavilions, but the top pavilion has almost disappeared now. The remains of the brackets indicate towards the existence of balconies on the top two storeys.



Bassi-Bavadi ka Bas-pavilion tower in the west



Bassi-Bavadi ka Bas-view of the half pavilion from the west



Bassi-Bavadi ka Bas-jal stambha outside stepwell

The multifoil arches of the top two pavilions were supported on octagonal stone columns. The pointed arches of the third pavilion from the top are supported on the columns of RR masonry. The fourth storey at the bottom, which might have only an opening connecting the stepped corridor with the well shaft, has been completely silted. The ardh-koot, with a large pointed archway, has been constructed in the middle of the length of the stepwell to support the side walls. It has two small openings on the sides to walk through the ledges, which were supported on the side walls, which are now missing. Such ledges were built on three levels along the side walls. The well has now run dry and filled with mud. At the entrance, one can see the pillar—jal stambha—with the statues of Lord Shiva, Lord Ganesh, Lord Brahma, and Surya (the Sun). It appears that people used to worship and offer water to deities on this jal stambha, after taking bath in the stepwell.

44. Balaji ki Baodi

Lawan, Dausa, Rajasthan

26° 46' 20" N, 76° 13' 11" E

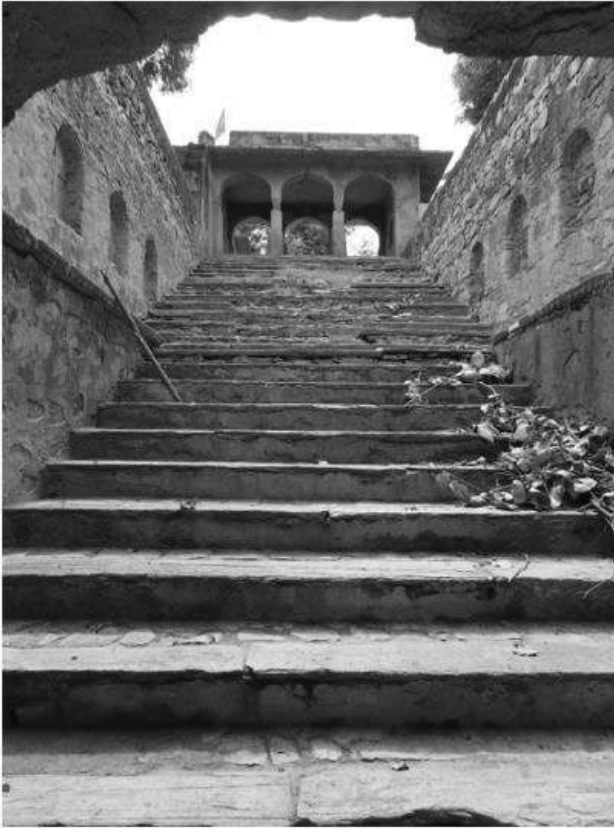
Elevation: 320 m

Period: Unknown

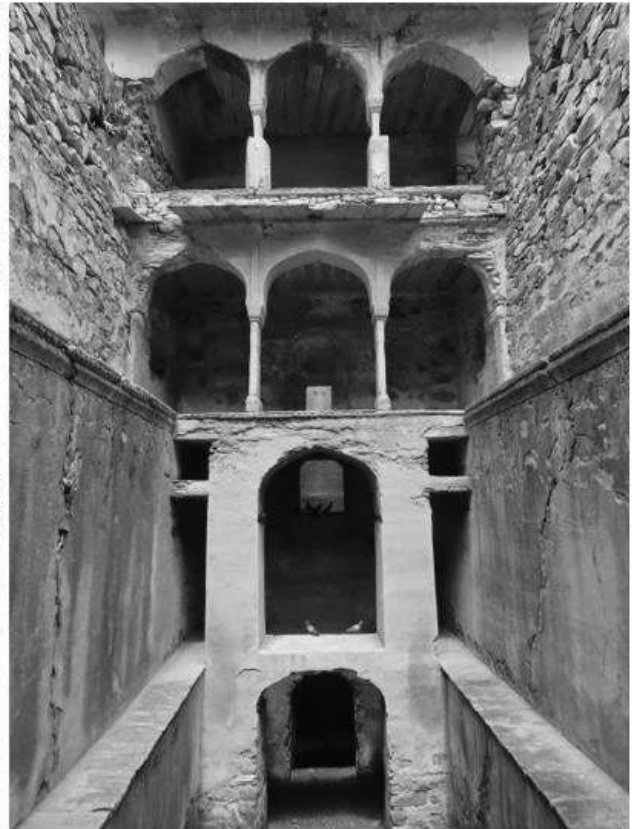
This stepwell is inside the campus of Balaji (Hanuman ji) Temple at Lawan, which was once ruled by the Kachhwaha Rajputs. Lawan is 18 km away from Dausa district town and 50 km away from the state capital, Jaipur. It has a fort called Lawangarh. The village is famous for dari udyog (Jute carpet industry). The stepwell is built in the east-west direction, with its circular well shaft in the east.



Lawan-Balaji ki Baodi-view from the entrance



Lawan-Balaji ki Baodi-view towards the entrance showing the entrance pavilion



Lawan-Balaji ki Baodi-second pavilion tower in the east

The stepwell is four-storeyed with the pavilions on the top two storeys, which have pointed arch openings supported on the sleek stone columns. The top storey is above ground level. The third and the fourth storeys of the tower from the top have an arched opening each, with a small opening on either side of the arch on the third storey from the top, to pass through on the side walkways. A double storeyed pavilion tower (koot) is provided in the middle of the stepwell to support the side walls. It has three arch openings on the upper storey and single archway on the lower storey. Another pavilion supported on the three arch openings in each direction exists at the entrance to the stepwell, the supports of which have been poorly restored, without considering the old stone columns. A number of niches have been provided in both the side walls. The walkways are available at two levels along the side walls.

45. Beenewali Dhani ki Baodi

Lawan, Dausa, Rajasthan

26° 46' 56" N, 76° 14' 09" E

Period: Unknown

Lawan is home to many stepwells, but no information is available to the public about them. The State Government as well as the ASI must make all the efforts to renovate them and bring them on the tourist map. The stepwell at Beenewali Dhani, though well maintained, is not known to the tourists. The direct road from Lawan to this stepwell is not motorable during rainy season. Our taxi driver refused to go on that road and we had to take a detour of nearly 13 km to reach the stepwell, with the help of a villager. In all likelihood, because of the lack of information and communication, such heritage is certain to be lost.



Lawan-Beenewali Dhani ki Baodi-view from the entrance



**Lawan-Beenewali Dhani ki Baodi-first pavilion tower
viewed from the east**



**Lawan-Beenewali Dhani ki Baodi-second pavilion
tower**

The three-storeyed stepwell, oriented in the east-west direction, has its well shaft on the eastern end. The first pavilion tower has been made in the middle of the stepwell to support the side walls and for taking rest. It is a double storeyed tower with three pointed-arch openings on the upper storey and a single parabolic arch opening in the lower storey.

The top pavilion of the second pavilion tower, near the well shaft, has three pointed-arch openings, supported on rectangular stone columns, towards the stepped corridor. The other two storeys below the top pavilion have an arch opening each, connected with the well shaft. The middle storey has an additional small opening on either side of the central arch, connected to the side walkways. The well shaft has openings in all the three storeys. A walkway has also been provided between the two lowermost storeys. The stepwell has been cement-plastered and white washed after renovations, due to which its original appearance has vanished, though the original shape is retained.

46. Alooda ki Baodi

Alooda, Dausa, Rajasthan

26° 48' 35" N, 76° 23' 04" E

Elevation: 330 m

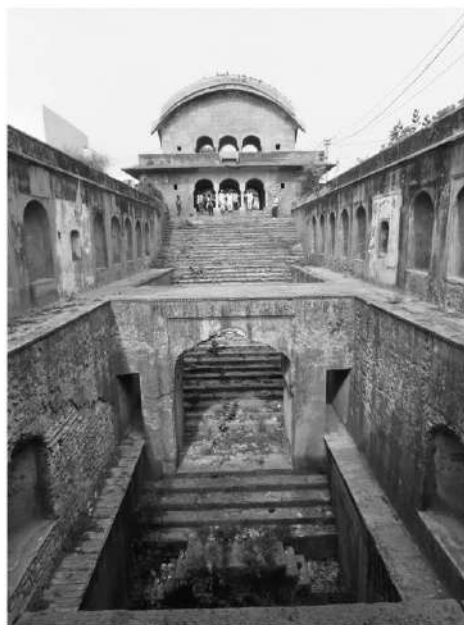
Period: 1941 AD



Alooda ki Baodi-view from the entrance



Alooda ki Baodi-entrance pavilion (mukhmandap)



Alooda ki Baodi-view of the
ardh-koot towards the entrance



Alooda ki Baodi- pavilion tower in the
west

Alooda is located 7 km away from Dausa and 65 km away from Jaipur. It is known as the place where the cloth for the first tricolour flag unfurled at the Red Fort was woven. Today, the weaving industry at Alooda has died. The three-storeyed stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the circular well shaft on the western end. With the grand entrance featuring a big Bengal roof—a

domed roof with drawn-down corners—on the first floor, and a pillared verandah on the ground floor in the mukhmandap, the stepwell is a well-known structure in the area. The plan size of the stepped corridor area is 100 ft x 32 ft. An ardh-koot (half-pavilion) with a large pointed archway is provided in the middle of the stepwell to support the side walls. The ledges supported on the side walls for walking through the length of the stepwell have been provided at two levels, taking them through the ardh-koot via small openings, built on either side of the archway.

The pavilion tower in the west is four-storeyed. The first storey below ground level has five pointed-arch openings towards the steps, supported on twin-pillared, octagonal, and tapered stone columns, while the pavilion on the second storey below ground level has three multi-cusped arch openings, supported on rectangular stone columns. The bottommost storey has an arched opening connecting the well shaft. The openings at all the storeys in the pavilion tower connect the well shaft with the stepped corridor. The awnings also exist in the top two pavilions built on the western end. The niches are provided in the side walls, where a person could either sit or rest or keep clothes. A special feature which I could notice is that a projected stone bench has been built in as an overhang, supported on two brackets on the backside of the first floor in front of the domed pavilion, which would have been used to sit and enjoy the cool environment of the stepwell in the summers. The inscription on a stone outside the stepwell across the road mentions Viram Samvat 1998, which means that the stepwell could have been built in 1941 AD. The baodi is a beautiful piece of architecture and must be preserved by carrying out urgent renovations.

47. Baijnath Mandir Baodi

Baijnath temple, Dausa, Rajasthan

26° 53' 24" N, 76° 20' 33" E

Elevation: 370 m

Period: 12th Century



Dausa-Baijnath Mahadev Temple Baodi-longer leg of the reverse-L shaped stepwell



Dausa-Baijnath Mahadev Temple Baodi-shorter leg of the stepwell

The stepwell by the side of the Baijnath Temple is located near Hathi Darwaza (Elephant Gate) of the Dausa Fort in Qila Maidan area. The entry to the stepwell has been closed and the baodi stays abandoned. The water is contaminated and polluted. This stepwell is different from the others as this has an asymmetrical shaped structure. It appears that the stepwell was built in the shape of a reverse-L. It is surrounded by two and three storeyed buildings with arched pavilions. The water-drawing arrangement has been provided opposite to the three-storeyed pavilion building. The steps have been provided on the three sides. There is no special decorative feature in this stepwell.

48. Banidas ki Baodi

Dausa, Rajasthan

26° 53' 19" N, 76° 20' 10" E

Elevation: 350 m

Period: 19th Century

The Banidas ki Baodi is, architecturally, the most beautiful stepwell at Dausa. The four-storeyed stepwell has been built in RR masonry with lime plaster. It is oriented in the northwest-southeast direction, with the well shaft on the northwest end. The well is circular in the lower part and octagonal in the upper portion. A peepal tree has taken roots in the well shaft, which is likely to damage it. The top three storeys of the pavilion tower have pointed-arch pavilions. There are arched pavilions on the second and the third storeys below ground level on the two sides. All these arches are supported on rectangular RR masonry columns.



Dausa-Banidas ki Baodi-pavilions on the left side



Dausa-Banidas ki Baodi-view towards the pavilion tower



Dausa-Banidas ki Baodi-view from the pavilion tower towards the entrance



Dausa-Banidas ki Baodi-showing the pavilion tower and pavilions on the two sides

The bottommost level of the pavilion tower has an arch opening, connecting the stepwell with the well shaft. However, the inside plaster has given way at most places. The pavilions on the top two storeys of the tower have been encroached upon by people from different religions. Since nobody appears to be in control of the structure, it is left free for all. Such unauthorised occupation of the stepwells has been noticed at many locations. The ASI, with the help of the concerned state governments, should take necessary steps to protect them. The walls of the stepwell facing the stepped corridor have been beautifully painted with village scenes and with the figures of elephants, horses, and camels. The main entrance to the stepwell is through an arched gateway, which is locked. We had to find out a small opening in the side wall to enter inside. The water tank is filled with garbage and dirty water. Furthermore, bats have infested the staircases. Day-to-day maintenance of the stepwell needs to be improved in order to make it a viable tourist attraction.

49. Bari Baodi

Bhandarej, Dausa, Rajasthan.

26° 52' 54" N, 76° 25' 16" E

Elevation: 300 m

Period: 1732 AD



Bhandarej- Badi Baodi-view towards the well shaft

The Bari Baodi, literally meaning the big stepwell, is located at Bhandarej, which is 11 km away from Dausa. Bhandarej has been mentioned in Mahabharat as Bhadravati, after the name of king Bhadrasen of Mahabharat period. The stepwell, built by Kumbhani rulers Deep Singh and Daulat Singh in Vikram Samvat 1789 (1732 AD),¹⁴ is oriented in the north-south direction, with its well shaft on the northern end. The stepped corridor, rectangular in shape, has 150 steps and is 70 ft wide. It has been built in RR masonry with lime plaster in the Mughal and Rajput style of architecture, belonging to the late medieval period. Although beautifully painted and well maintained, the stepwell is now silted and abandoned as there is no water in it. The baodi is actually three storeyed—one storey above and two below ground level. A chhatri has been built on top of the third

¹⁴ Information put up by the State Government at the stepwell

storey in the rear, so it is assumed that the stepwell is four-storeyed. The first pavilion tower, double storeyed with archways on the both storeys, is provided before the square shaped secondary tank, for providing the support against the earth pressure from the sides. On the ground level, arched pavilions are provided on all the sides. At the entrance, a big arched pavilion has been built with twin-pillared octagonal and tapered stone columns as supports. Similar columns are supporting the arched pavilions on the ground level on the two sides and in the pavilion-tower. The niches have been made in the side walls on the storeys below and above the ground level pavilions. On the northern end, a small pavilion with Bengal roof, having drawn-down corners has been built on the top storey flanked with circular domed chhatris. The same arrangement of the Bengal roof, flanked with domical chhatris, has been made above the arched pavilion at the entrance in the south. The staircases have been provided on all the four corners. The space called 'andheri-ujala' on the fourth storey at the northern end, covered with jali has been built, which was perhaps used by royal ladies for privacy. The stepwell is full of beautiful foliated and pointed arches, carved awnings, ornamental pillars, artistic chhatris, and attractive finials. Enough rooms for worship and changing cloths have also been provided. The water from this stepwell was also used for animals and irrigation.



Bhandarej- Badi Baodi-view towards the entrance



Bhandarej- Badi Baodi-entrance pavilion



Bhandarej- Badi Baodi-view of the pavilions and

It was painful to see the unauthorised religious occupation of the stepwell, which needs to be removed immediately.

50. Chand Baodi

Abhaneri, Dausa, Rajasthan

27° 00' 25" N, 76° 36' 23" E

Altitude: 280 m

Period: 8th / 9th century



Abhaneri-Chand Baodi-view from the south

Considered to be one of the largest and deepest stepwells in the world, the Chand Baodi was built in the 8th- 9th century¹⁵ by king Chanda (or Chandra) of the Nikumbh dynasty, and is more than 1000 years old. It is located near Harshat Mata temple, where architectural marvels in the form of destroyed sculptures are lying scattered, which indicates towards the rich history of Abhaneri. It is said that the Muslim regime destroyed the architectural grandeur of Abhaneri in the 11th century. The baodi has a perfect and precise geometrical pattern of stairs on three sides. Double flights of steps, 3500 in number, have been provided on thirteen levels or landings. The fourth side has multi storeyed pavilions supported on pillars, with intricately carved jharokhas (windows), projecting balconies and galleries. The lowermost storeys on the north have two projecting niche-shrines which have beautiful sculptures of Goddess Mahishasurmardini on the east and Lord Ganesha on the west. There is a small room known as 'Andheri-ujala', where people used to perform their socio-

¹⁵ Pamphlet issued by the ASI, Jaipur Circle, 2019 on Abhaneri Dausa and Inscription by ASI at the stepwell

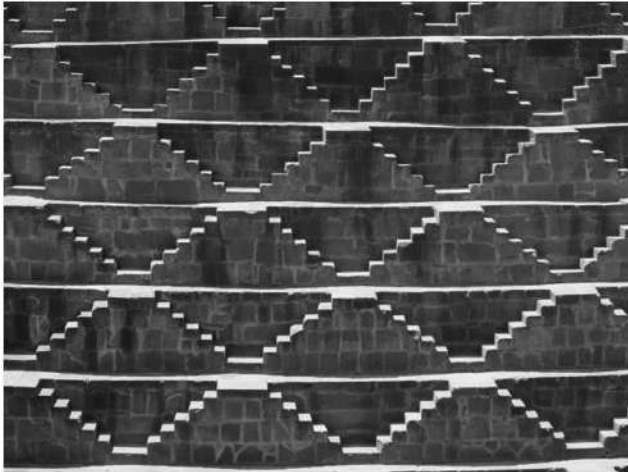
religious rituals after taking bath in the stepwell. There was arrangement to provide water to animals through an outlet from the kund. It is, however, filled up with soil now. The stepwell is 19.5 m deep. The arched arcade runs on three sides of the stepwell, currently stocked with beautiful statues found in the surroundings.



Abhaneri-Chand Baodi-view from a corner

The upper storeys on the north were added by the Mughals in the eighteenth century in the style of a palace, along with the arcade with pointed arch openings on the four sides. The effect of Muslim architecture can be seen in the form of the arches on the ground floor, and the first and the fourth storeys below the ground level. Most of the niches inside the pavilions are empty. It is assumed that the Muslim invaders might have destroyed and removed the sculptures of Hindu deities from these niches. As soon as we get down from the ground level to the pavilion on the east, images of Lord Krishna with a flute in hands and a cow by his side, is witnessed in the niches. Another image also depicts Lord Vishnu with Brahma on a lotus, coming out of his navel. Most of the niches at this level are bereft of sculptures. There is a pavilion in the centre with verandahs on three sides, supported on twin pillared columns, which was perhaps used by the Mughal nobles for taking bath. The niches in these pavilions are empty. These pavilions have three multi-cusped arch openings in three sides. These arches have floral medallions in the spandrels. The pavilions on the fourth level below the ground level adjoining the central pavilion on both sides have columns profusely decorated with floral designs in the ghat-pallav style. The parapet of these pavilions, overlooking the southern direction, on which these columns are erected is carved with intricate floral designs.

Some Bollywood movies, like *Bhoomi*, *Bhool Bhulaiya*, and *Paheli* were partly shot here. It is said that the Hollywood movie, *The Dark Knight Rises*, though not shot here, was inspired from this stepwell. The temple of Harshat Mata—the Goddess of joy and happiness—of the 9th-10th century is situated next to the stepwell. The baodi is a must-see place on the itinerary of most of the tourists of the Golden Triangle: Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur.



Abhaneri-Chand Baodi-geometrical pattern of the steps



Abhaneri-Chand Baodi-intricately carved parapet of the pavilion



Abhaneri-Chand Baodi-decorated column of the pavilion



Abhaneri-Chand Baodi-image of Lord Krishna on the first storey below ground level

51. Ganesh ji ki Baodi

Pench ki Baodi, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 38' 12" N, 75° 27' 46" E

Elevation: 340 m

Period: Unknown

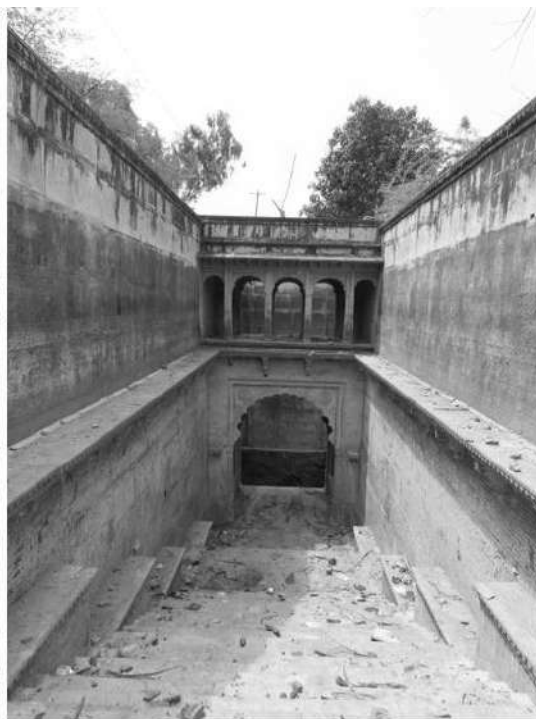
When I was travelling by road from Jaipur to Bundi to visit various stepwells there, I came across the small town, Pench ki Baodi, about 35 km before Bundi. Because of the name of the town, I thought, there would be a baodi here. On enquiry, it came out to be true. The Ganesh ji ki Baodi is approximately 200 m inside the town, from the old highway. The town has been named after a stepwell called, Pench ki Baodi, which existed inside the campus of the Government Senior Secondary School at the coordinates of 25° 38' 14" N and 75° 27' 42" E. This stepwell has now been filled up and a small temple exists in its place. A well shaft, however, still exists.



Pench ki Baodi-Ganesh ji ki Baodi-view of the entrance from the south



Pench ki Baodi-Ganesh ji ki Baodi-view of the well shaft



Pench ki Baodi-Ganesh ji ki Baodi-view of the stepwell towards the south from its entrance

The Ganesh ji ki Baodi is a two-storeyed stepwell, laid in the north-south direction, with the well shaft in the south. The stepwell is approximately 106 ft x 17 ft in size, excluding the well, which is 21 ft x 24 ft in plan. Beautiful corbels support the ledges on the side walls. In the second storey below ground level, a single multi-cusped archway leads to the well shaft. There is a small sitting place under this arch. Above this archway, a pavilion with three multi-cusped arch openings, with one small opening on either side, joining the walkways on the ledges along the side walls, looking towards the north and the three multifoil arches towards the well shaft on the south, has been built. All these arches are beautiful foliated arches. Lord Vishnu's image with a lotus coming out of his navel has been carved on the south wall of the well. A water-drawing arrangement, with five beautifully carved brackets having big circular holes to pull ropes, has been provided on the south side of the well shaft. Even a trough for animals for drinking water has been made at the ground level. A square well shaft has been dug into the rocky strata. The stepwell is still under use and well maintained. However, some garbage is still being thrown inside the stepwell.

52. Rani ji ki Baodi

Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 26' 26" N, 75° 38' 22" E

Elevation: 280 m

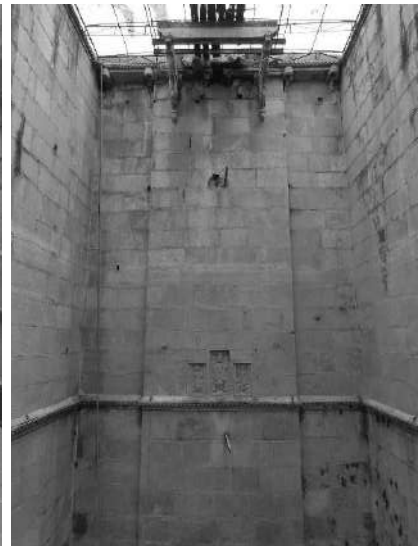
Period: 1700 AD



**Bundi-Rani ji ki Baodi-view
towards the entrance from the
second pavilion tower**



**Bundi-Rani ji ki Baodi-second
pavilion tower**



**Bundi-Rani ji ki Baodi-stepwell
with sculptures of deities**

Bundi is a district town of Rajasthan state, which is famous for valour of the Hada Rajputs. Rao Deva Hada was the first king of Hadoti—the land of Hada Rajputs—who laid the foundation of Bundi, after taking it from the tribal chief, Jaita Meena, in 1343 AD. Bundi was earlier known as Bunda-ka-Nal after Meena tribal chief, Bunda Meena. Bundi is known as the City of Stepwells, which has more

than 50 stepwells. It is famous for its impregnable fort. In 1901, Rudyard Kipling stayed here, while writing his book, *Kim*.



Bundi-Rani ji ki Baodi-first pavilion tower with toran gate openings

Rani ji ki Baodi means the Queen's Stepwell. It is located in the south of Bundi, outside the old fortification and across the Chaugan. It was built by Queen Nathawat ji, the wife of the king Anirudh Singh, during the reign of her son, Rao Raja Budh Singh in Vikram Samvat 1757 i.e., 1700 AD¹⁶. This is also converted by some writers as 1699 AD.¹⁷ Queen Nathawat was the youngest wife of Rao Raja Anirudh Singh. She gave birth to a son, which drew the jealousy of senior queen who was childless. Consequently, Queen Nathawat gave her son to the elder queen, and devoted herself to the welfare of the people. She constructed this stepwell. Situated between the Chaugan Gate and Lanka Gate, this stepwell was used as a shelter by the passersby, after the closure of the Chaugan Gate at nights.

¹⁶ Information put up by the state government at the stepwell

¹⁷ Gupta, Zilewar Sanskritik evam Aitihāsik Addhyayan page 15



Bundi-Rani ji ki Baodi-niches with temple shikhars in the side wall



Bundi-Rani ji ki Baodi-looking down the well shaft

The stepwell is the most beautiful stepwell in this area. It is 300 ft x 40 ft in size¹⁸. It has more than 100 steps to reach the water level¹⁹. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, facing west and the well shaft in the east. The stepwell is flanked by chhatris on either side of the main entrance on the west. Two Mughal style chhatris, supported on 12 pillars each, adorn the main entrance. In the niche at the bottom of the left side chhatri, Goddess Saraswati on her vehicle, swan, has been sculpted, while in the niche on the right side chhatri, sculpture of Lord Ganesh has been made. On the second landing, two other entrances from the north and the south directions have been provided, because of which the stepwell looks like a cross of Jesus. Two chhatris, supported on eight columns each, have been built at the north and south entrances. It has three beautifully carved toran gates on both sides of the first pavilion-tower, which is supported on eight ornate columns, with four pilasters, embedded inside the side walls. These toran gates are common in Rajasthan, and such gates have also been provided at the Toran Baodi in Udaipur and other places. A toran is an arch with S-shaped ogee curves. In Rani ji ki Baodi, one side of the toran arch consists of three ogee curves. On the eastern end, there is a two-storeyed pavilion tower with foliated and multi-cusped arch gates. The sculptures of elephants adorn the spandrels of the multifoil archways on both the storeys of the tower. The sculptures of Gods and Goddesses have been made in the niches of the walls. The column bases are well decorated. The ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu like Matsya, Varah, and Narsingh have also been sculpted. The niches on the side walls have temple-shikhara type pediment on the top and all the shikhars are different, but very beautiful and attractive. The stepwell has been built in stone masonry. It has exquisitely carved brackets, supporting the roofs and walkways along the side walls. Elephants have been sculpted in large number in the stepwell. The well has now run dry. The well shaft has the sculpture of Lord Vishnu resting on Sheshnag (the serpent God).

¹⁸ Vyas, Upadhyay & Purohit, Mahal Bagheechee evam Jal Shrot page 15

¹⁹ The information put up by the government at the stepwell

During the period of Bundi state, Kajali Teej rides were taken from the fort up to this stepwell, where the deities were given a bath.

The stepwell has been maintained well, perhaps, due to the entry ticket being levied, which prevents vagabonds from entering and defiling it. Similar action needs to be taken for all such stepwells.

53. Dhabhai ka Kund

Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 26' 12" N, 75° 38' 17" E

Elevation: 270 m

Period: 1654 AD



Bundi-Dhabhai ka Kund

This square-shaped gigantic kund—a stepped pond—is located 2 km away from Bundi bus stand on Lanka Gate Road, beside the Government Girls College. It is also known as Jail Kund. The kund has multiple pairs of symmetrical steps going down, just like many other stepwells viz. Panna Meena ka Kund at Amber, Chand Baodi at Abhaneri, and Toonga Stepwell etc. It is very near to the Rani ji ki Baodi. The word 'Dhabhai' is said to be originated from 'Dhai' meaning the foster mother. It was built by Rao Raja Bhao Singh (reigned 1658-1682) in 1654 AD (Vikram Samvat 1711) in the memory of his foster mother, Sabeera. Therefore, it was also called Sabeeran-Dha ka Kund. In the niche on the left side of the main entrance, water goddess (Jal-Devi) has been sculpted, while in the niche on the right side, the sculpture of Lord Ganesh has been made.



Bundi-Dhabhai ka Kund- Cenotaphs at the entrance



Bundi-Dhabhai ka Kund-pavilions opposite entrance

The kund, built of sand stone, is square in shape, with steps on three sides and double storeyed galleries opposite the entrance. The lower part of the galleries has three foliated arch openings, while the upper part is trabeated in design. The well is approximately 50 ft deep. Some unauthorised construction has also taken place over the old rooms. There are two cenotaphs in the complex, which have domes, supported on twelve pillars each, with beautiful and intricate carvings. One of these chhatris (cenotaphs) was built in the memory of Kanhiram, the foster brother (Dha-Bhai) of Rao Bhao Singh. Hence, the kund got the name of Dhabhai ka Kund. The kund has no water now and vegetation has taken roots at the bottom.

54. Nahar Dhoos ki Baodi

Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 26' 05" N, 75° 38' 37" E

Elevation: 270 m

Period: 1664 AD

The Nahar Doos ki Baodi, also called the Bhoot Baodi, is near the Lanka Gate. It was constructed by the Thakur of Rajgarh, Mr. Karan Singh, who was also cremated here. Due to this, the stepwell is a sort of a place of worship. The stepwell is two-storeyed and has a beautiful chhatri of Rajasthani style on the top level. There are two four-pillared chhatris at the entrance, one on each side, below which there are niches. Such niches usually have sculptures of Jal Devi (water goddess) and Lord Ganesh in other stepwells, like Bhavalde ki Baodi, but here, these are empty at present.

The stepwell was built by queen Sisodini, wife of Rao Raja Chhatra Sal or Shatru Sal, in Vikram Samvat 1721 (1664 AD)²⁰. It was built to provide shelter and water to the passersby, after the gate of the city was closed. According to the legends, a lion fell in the stepwell, while it was under

²⁰ Solanki, Bhartiya Bavadiyan, page 111

construction. It could not come out of the stepwell and died while roaring continuously. Therefore, it is called 'Nahar Dhoos' (roar of the lion) ki Baodi.



**Bundi-Nahar Dhoos ki Baodi- looking down
the well shaft**



**Bundi-Nahar Dhoos ki Baodi-verandahs
around the well shaft**



Bundi-Nahar Dhoos ki Baodi-view of the entrance with two chhatris

The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the kund and the well shaft in the east. The baodi has a rectangular plan. On the first landing, there are niches which have pediments in the shape of temple shikharas, one on each side. The niche on left side has a sculpture of Lord Brahma. Two projected balconies—jharokhas—on the side walls face each other in the main stairway on the second level. On the second landing, a three-storeyed pavilion tower has been built. The lowermost level of this tower has a large pointed archway in the entrance of the stepped kund. Above it, on the second storey, a multi-cusped foliated arch has been built, which is flanked by two small gates,

connected with the walkways on the side walls. On the topmost storey, a pavilion with Rajasthani style chhatri having six foliated arch openings on four columns, has been built. The stepwell is full of beautiful foliated or multi-cusped arches. The connected galleries or loggia with such foliated arch openings on each of the three sides of the kund are made on the second storey, where people could rest in private. The 25ft x 25 ft kund has stairs inside to go down. The water-hauling platform exists at the eastern end. The stepwell has been built of stone masonry in lime plaster with stone cladding. The steps are made of stone slabs. The well had no water at the time of the visit in July.

55. Sagar or Ganga Sagar Kund

Bundi

25° 26' 33" N, 75° 38' 25" E

Elevation: 280 m

Period: 1871-75 AD



Bundi-Sagar Kund-another view



Bundi-Sagar Kund -with water fetching arrangement on the north side



Bundi-Sagar Kund-water drawing arrangement and sculpture of Lord Indra on Airawat elephant below



Bundi-Sagar Kund-elephants_ carving

56. Nagar or Yamuna Sagar Kund

Bundi

25° 26' 32" N, 75° 38' 23" E

Elevation: 280 m

Period: 1871-75 AD



Bundi-Nagar Kund-Sagar Kund is visible in the background



Bundi-Nagar Kund-sculpture of Lord Vishnu

The Nagar and Sagar kunds is a pair of identical stepwells located near the Chaugan gate in the heart of the city market. Each of them has the dimension of 30 m x 21 m. They were constructed to store water, which could be used during famines. These twin stepwells were originally named as Ganga Sagar and Jamuna (Yamuna) Sagar, after the great Indian rivers, Ganga and Yamuna. According to the information put up by the government at the location, these were built by Queen Chandrabhanu Kumari in 1871-75, during the reign of Maharao Raja Ram Singh²¹. However, the inscription about these kunds mention the year as Vikram Samvat 1942 (1885 AD)²². Both the kunds are oriented in the north-south direction, facing south and are built of stone and brick masonry. There was a toran gate in the north of Yamuna Sagar, measuring 12ft in height and 15ft wide. However, the toran is missing at present and a stone beam has replaced it. Beautiful ornamental brackets with carved medallions and elephant images have been provided below the platform, to draw water from the kund, with the help of ropes. Below the water-drawing platform, images of Lord Indra sitting on Airawat elephant; winged elephants; and fairies giving bath to Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Vishnu have been carved. Lord Vishnu is resting on Sheshnag (the serpent God). The point worth noting is that Lord Vishnu's images in both the stepwells have been made in such a way that his legs are pointing towards each other. There are two chhatris on two out of the four corners on south side of each kund. These chhatris are exquisitely carved. Each kund has symmetrical steps on three sides for easy access. Decorated niches have been provided in the walls

²¹ Information provided by the government at the stepwell

²² Inscription at the stepwell

in each pair of steps, just below each landing of the stairs. A jal-stambha has been fixed outside the kund, for offering water by devotees, but it has been covered by the waste thrown by public. People are, unfortunately, throwing garbage into both the stepwells.

57. Pradhan ji ka Kund

Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 26' 38" N, 75° 38' 21" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: 1732 AD



bundi-Pradhanji ka Kund-another view



Bundi-Pradhanji ka Kund

The Pradhan ji ka kund is a private stepwell inside Chaugan Gate, approximately 200m away from it. It is so hemmed by the houses on all sides that it becomes difficult to find the stepwell, until and unless you are lucky to find a person who will get you there. Until then, you have to try to get into one of the side houses to have a look on to it. With great difficulty, I got into one of the houses. The kund was built by Shah Ganeshram Pradhan, during the reign of Maharao Budh Singh in Vikram Samvat 1789 (1732 AD). It was built near his haveli for private use. Later on, it was also opened for public. Since it was built by Pradhan ji, it is known as Pradhan ji ka Kund. The stepwell has two-storeyed pavilions on one side, which are home to a lot of pigeons. The houses have been built over these pavilions now. The steps have been provided to go down to the water level.

58. Bhawalde ki Baodi

Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 26' 47" N, 75° 38' 22" E

Elevation: 270 m

Period: 1677 AD



Bundi-Bhawalde ki Baodi-two storeyed second pavilion tower



Bundi-Bhawalde ki Baodi-sculpture of Lord Vishnu



Bundi-Bhawalde ki Baodi-Mural Painting

This stepwell, in the shape of reverse L, was built by Queen Bhawalde—the wife of Rao Raja Bhao Singh, who ruled from 1658 to 1682. It was built in Vikram Samvat 1734 or Shaka 1599 i.e. 1677 AD²³. The stepwell, surrounded by houses on all sides except its entrance, is situated near the haveli of the great poet, Raj Kavi (State Poet) Suryamal Misran, to whom the stepwell was handed over in the mid-19th century. It has two rectangular chhatris, supported on eight sleek columns each, with resting platforms on either side of the entrance. In the niches provided in the bottom of the entrance pillars called *todas*, sculptures of Lord Ganesh, and Jal Devi (water goddess) on her vehicle swan, have been installed on the right and left side respectively. An inscription has been provided in the framed niche on the right-side wall. The carvings on the niches have an effect of Jainism. These niches, between the entrance and the first pavilion tower, have toran pediments. The main axis of the stepwell is in the north-south direction, with the well shaft in the south. To get rid of the Vastu-dosh—as it was facing south—an L-shape was adopted with the entrance in the west. A portico or a pavilion, supported on beam and column have a foliated arch gate with toran having four ogee (S) curves on each side, has been built at the turn of the L-shape. The Bundi style paintings have been made on the gate. The toran is similar to that of Rani ji ki Baodi of Bundi and Toran Baodi in Udaipur. A two-storeyed pavilion tower, with double level of foliated arches exists at the edge of the well shaft. Niches, with upper part resembling the temple shikharas, exist on each side wall in

²³ Inscription at the stepwell

the main axis. Two domical chhatris have been built on top of the well shaft. Another pavilion with multi-cusped foliated arch openings, with twelve columns has been constructed on the second storey above the arched gate, at the junction of the two axes of the L-shape. It is said that the great poet Suryamal Misran (1815-1868 AD) used to work from this pavilion, and he composed 'Vansh Bhashkar' and 'Vir Satsai' here itself. Beautiful murals multiply the beauty of this stepwell. Many sculptures have also been fixed in the carved framed niches of the side walls. There are sculptures of Lord Vishnu riding Garuda in Jain style, and a four-faced Lord Brahma in the Mughal style, having pointed beard and moustache.



Bundi-Bhawalde ki Baodi-two chhatris at the entrance



Bundi-Bhawalde ki Baodi-toran gate of the first pavilion

The inscription inside the stepwell mentions about Vikram Samvat 1734 and Saka Samvat 1599, which correspond to 1677 AD²⁴. We can assume that it was built around 1677 AD rightfully, as Rao Raja Bhao Singh ruled from 1658 to 1682 AD. He was the youngest son of Rao Raja Chhatra Sal Singh, who died while fighting Aurangzeb in 1658 on the side of Dara Shikoh. The key to the stepwell is available in the house in front of it. However, one has to make lot of efforts, as no information to this effect is available.

59. Naruki Baodi

Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 26' 51" N, 75° 38' 32" E

Elevation: 280 m

Period: 1692 AD

This stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the well shaft at the eastern end. It has two chhatris in the Mughal style architecture, each supported on eight sleek columns on its entrance. It is learnt that there was a sculpture of Jal Devi (water goddess) in the niche at the bottom of the left side chhatra, which is now missing. The sculpture of Lord Ganesh still exists in the niche on the right

²⁴ Inscription at the stepwell

side. It is said that the stepwell is connected to the Naruka Haveli across the road through a small tunnel.



Bundi-Naruki Baodi-chhatris at the entrance on the west



Bundi-Naruki Baodi-showing first pavilion with corbelled arch and kund before the second pavilion tower

It was built by Queen Naruki, wife of Rao Raja Anirudh Singh, in Vikram Samvat 1749 (1692 AD). It is made of stone masonry in lime plaster. Beautiful foliated and corbelled-arch gates have been constructed in the stepwell. When visited, the stepwell was being repaired, and was full of filth.

60. Manohar Baodi

Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 26' 42" N, 75° 38' 34" E

Elevation: 280 m

Period: 1724 AD

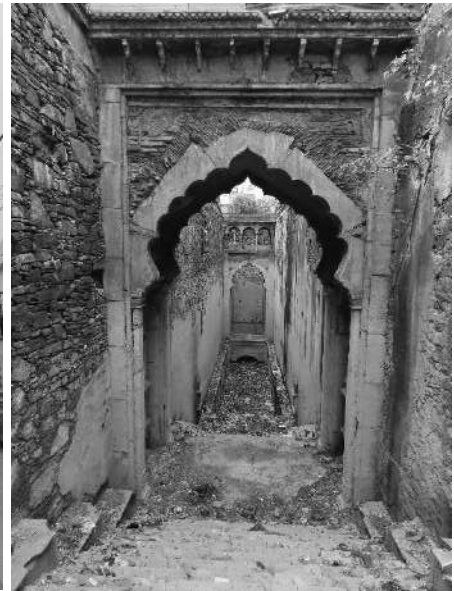
The Manohar Baodi, also known as Manohari Baodi, is situated one km away from the Bundi bus stand, and its locality is known as Mohalla Manohar Baodi. It was built during the reign of Maharao Budh Singh by Manohar Ram, the brother of Gurjar Ganga Ram in Vikram Samvat 1781 (1724 AD).

The stepwell has been built in the shape of reverse-L. The main axis is in the north-south direction, with the well shaft at northern end. The entrance is from the west, which has two domical chhatris, each supported on eight columns and have resting platforms. There exists a sculpture of Lord Ganesh in the niche at the bottom of the right-side pillar or chhatri. It is said that a sculpture of Jal Devi (water goddess) existed in the niche on the left side pillar (toda), but it is not visible due to unauthorised vending activities in front of it. Built of Random Rubble masonry and bricks in lime plaster, the main arches are made of stones. There are two pavilion towers in the main axis. The first

tower is single-storeyed with foliated arches on both sides. The second pavilion tower is three-storeyed, having single foliated archways in the two lower storeys. An eight-columned gallery or loggia, with three foliated arch openings on each side, to sit and enjoy the cool breeze of the stepwell, is built on top of the second pavilion tower at the entrance of the well shaft on the northern end. The stepwell is 165 ft long, 13 ft wide and 82 ft deep. The stepwell has a rectangular frame, carved corbels, beams decorated with geometric designs, and shrine niches with overhanging pediments as ornamentation.



Bundi-Manohar Boadi-entrance



Bundi-Manohar Boadi-view of the two pavilion towers

However, the stepwell is perhaps the filthiest among all the stepwells of Bundi. It has become the dump yard for garbage. The municipality of Bundi must take urgent care of this and other stepwells.

61. Somaniyon ki Baodi

Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 26' 44" N, 75° 38' 22" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: 1622 AD

Another reverse-L shaped stepwell, known as the Somaniyon ki Baodi, is 500 m away from the Manohar Baodi. It is also known as the Baodi Sri Krishna Bihari ji ki. It appears to be a private property and is under renovation. It was originally built in RR masonry in lime plaster. Cement plaster has been applied to replace the old lime plaster. The shape of arches has also been modified, and the stepwell has lost all its heritage value. It is a very simple stepwell. The main axis of the stepwell is in the east-west direction, with the well shaft in the east. The entry is from north. There is a temple inside the stepwell on the upper level. The small axis is 10 m long, while the longer axis

is 29 m long. Very narrow and steep stairs exist between the high side walls, which lead to the well. The two-storeyed pavilion tower, having pointed-arch gateways, is located at the entrance of the well shaft. The upper level of this pavilion tower is linked to the stepped corridor with a ledge along the side walls. The main architectural feature includes upper arches that project above the lower ones, creating a contrast between light and shadow. It's rectilinear in shape, and arches resembles Muslim architecture, like a mosque.



Bundi-Somaniyon ki Baodi-longer leg of the L-shaped baodi



Bundi-Somaniyon ki Baodi-entrance

This stepwell was built for public use by Mr. Leela Narayan, belonging to Somani clan in Vikram Samvat 1679 (1622 AD),²⁵ during the reign of Rao Raja Shatru Sal.

²⁵ Baolis of Bundi, INTACH page 68

62. Hira Lal ji ki Baodi

Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 26' 49" N, 75° 36' 44" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: 18th century

I would have missed this stepwell, had I not been vigilant while enjoying the countryside, when I started back from Bundi to Jaipur. Just 3 km away from the Bundi bus stand on Phool Sagar Road, the Hira Lal ji ki Baodi is situated—hidden behind a small restaurant on the side of the highway. The 18th century stepwell is two-storeyed and oriented in the east-west direction, with the well shaft at the western end.



Bundi-Hira Lal ji ki Baodi-looking up the well shaft



Bundi-Hira Lal ji ki Baodi-view from the entrance towards the well shaft

Three niches have been provided in each side wall. There are three landings and 60 steps up to the edge of the well shaft, where a pavilion has been constructed. A pointed archway in the lower storey and a foliated archway on the upper storey have been constructed in the pavilion tower. A walkway has been provided in both the side walls. Many horizontal platforms have been constructed along the way—from the entrance up to the landing—serving both as walkways and spaces for keeping water pots. From the landing, a continuous pathway starts along the side walls at the floor level of the upper storey. The stepwell is well-maintained and is in good condition.

63. Kingsi Baodi

Toda Raisingh, Rajasthan

26° 01' 26" N, 75° 28' 51" E

Elevation: 340 m

Period: Unknown

Toda Raisingh is a municipal town in the Tonk district of Rajasthan. Toda means settlement. The town is named after Rai Singh Sisodia, the ruler who founded this place in 593 AD (Vikram Samvat 650). Toda Raisingh is famous for four things: Ghatti, which is used in flour mills; Patti, a flagstone; Baodi, a stepwell; and Dawdi, which means beautiful girls.

A resident of the city, whom I met at this stepwell, told me that there are 365 stepwells in Toda Raisingh. Nothing is known about the period when this stepwell was built and who built it. There is no indication of its name as no name board is erected by the municipality. The stepwell, built of dressed stone masonry, is really beautiful. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the well shaft at the western end.



Toda Raisingh-Kingsi Baodi-view of the entrance in the east



Toda Raisingh-Kingsi Baodi-two storeyed ardh-koot in the middle of the stepwell

The double storeyed ardh-koot (half-pavilion tower) in the middle of the stepwell has been built to support the side walls against the earth pressure, with a large pointed arch in the centre of the lower storey. It is flanked by two smaller openings--a corbelled-arch below and a pointed arch above--on either side. There are three corbelled-arches on the upper storey, with three small niches in the middle support, for keeping lamps. The water, though still in use, is covered with moss.

64. Bhopat Baodi

Toda Raisingh, Rajasthan

26° 1' 27" N, 75° 28' 51" E

Elevation: 350 m

Period: Unknown

Opposite to the Kingsi Baodi—exactly on the other side of the road— at a distance of 50 m, there is another stepwell known as the Bhopat Baodi. This stepwell is also oriented in the east-west direction, with the well shaft at the western end—similar to the Kingsi Baodi. Comparatively, the Bhopat Baodi is more beautiful and in a better physical condition.



Toda Raisingh-Bhopat Baodi-View from the west towards entrance



Toda Raisingh-Bhopat Baodi-view of the first and the second pavilion tower from the entrance



Toda Raisingh-Bhopat Baodi-medallion with camel and elephant carved in the spandrel of the archgate



Toda Raisingh-Bhopat Baodi-steps at the entrance

There are two koots (pavilion towers) in the stepwell. The first koot has a pointed archway, with medallions along with human figures, camels, and elephants, engraved on marble and fixed in the spandrels. A pair of lions is also made on the left side of the pavilion. Elephants and lions, along with the medallions, have been engraved on the spandrels of arches of the two-storeyed pavilion tower, at the edge of the well shaft. The statues of Gods and Goddesses have been sculpted in the niches of the side walls. Lord Ganesha's sculpture has been made in the lower part of the well shaft at the western end. The water-drawing arrangement still exists, though the verandah under the water-drawing platform is closed now. The water was filled up to the top of the lower storey in the stepwell at the time of my visit. The government would do better, if it provides relevant information for the benefit of the tourists.

65. Hadi Rani Ka Kund

Toda Raisingh, Rajasthan

26° 01' 13" N, 75° 28' 43" E

Elevation: 350 m

Period: 17th century

The Hadi Rani Ka Kund, built in 17th century, is rectangular in plan and has double-storeyed corridors in the west. These corridors on both the storeys are flanked with seven foliated archways opening, towards the tank. On the other three sides, many zigzag steps lead to the water level in the kund. Overall, the kund is three-storeyed and built of dressed stone masonry. The sculptures of Lord Brahma, Lord Ganesh, and Mahishasurmardini, have been kept in the niches in the lowermost storey below the corridors. On the three sides, a double flight of steps is arranged in a set of 13 steps on the upper two levels and in a set of 5 steps on the lower storeys. It is said that the Bollywood film, Paheli was partly shot here.



Toda Raisingh-Hadi Rani ka Kund- view from the north



Toda Raisingh-Hadi Rani ka Kund-double storeyed corridors on the west

According to the legends, the Solanki Rajputs ruled this area. When Meenas defeated Hada Rajputs and annexed Bundi, the Solankis helped Hadas regain control of Bundi. In return, as a token of friendship, the Hada princess was married to Rao Rupal of Toda Raisingh. The princess, who was known as Hadi Rani, built this stepwell or kund for public.

66. Mahila Bagh Jhalra

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 48" N, 73° 01' 31" E

Elevation: 250 m

Period: 1780 AD



Jodhpur-Mahila Bagh Jhalra-view of a side showing pavilions at the corners

A Jhalra in native language means a broad well or a kund or a stepwell. The Mahila Bagh stepwell was built by Gulab Rai in 1780 AD, just across the Gulab Sagar tank. Mr. Y.D. Singh has mentioned its year of construction as 1775 AD. He has spelled its name as 'Maila Bagh'²⁶. Gulab Rai also constructed the Mahila Bagh (Ladies Garden) nearby, due to which this stepwell is called as the Mahila Bagh Jhalra. Mahila means 'woman'. Gulab Rai was a concubine of Maharaja Vijay Singh²⁷,

²⁶ Singh, Rajasthan ke Kue evam Bavadiyan page 268

²⁷ He was an excellent administrator and a scholar. He wrote many poems related to Holi, which are still popular and sung in the Marwar region. Because of this, he was also referred to as Rasile Raj--a romantic king. He constructed the Gulab Sagar tank in the name of his lover, Gulab Rai. His ministers did not like this and they told him that they would not bow before his concubine. He banned consumption of meat and alcohol.

who was born to Maharaja Bakhat Singh in 1729. He ruled over Jodhpur in two terms: the first from September 1752 to January 1753, and then from 1772 to 1793.



Jodhpur-Mahila Bagh Jhalra-view of a corner



**Jodhpur-Mahila Bagh Jhalra-chhatris at the corners
and a big pavilion in the centre**

The Mahila Bagh Jhalra is connected to the Gulab Sagar through a small tunnel, so as to ensure the availability of water in the stepwell. It is also called as the 'Chaumukhi Ghat ki Baodi' i.e. stepwell with steps on four sides. Soft rose sand stone has been used in its construction, and very intricate carvings and jali work (lattice) is made. The cost of construction was around Rs. 5 Lakhs. The famous fair of 'Lotiyon ka Mela' was started after the construction of this stepwell. The well-dressed ladies of Jodhpur city come here to take water in 'lotas'—a brass water container—during the annual fair. It is said that Maharaja Takhat Singh and Kunwar—later on Maharaja—Jaswant Singh also used to come here. Four domical chhatris have been built in four corners inside the stepwell. Apart from this, four pavilions were provided in the four corners of the upper platform, out of which only three exist now.

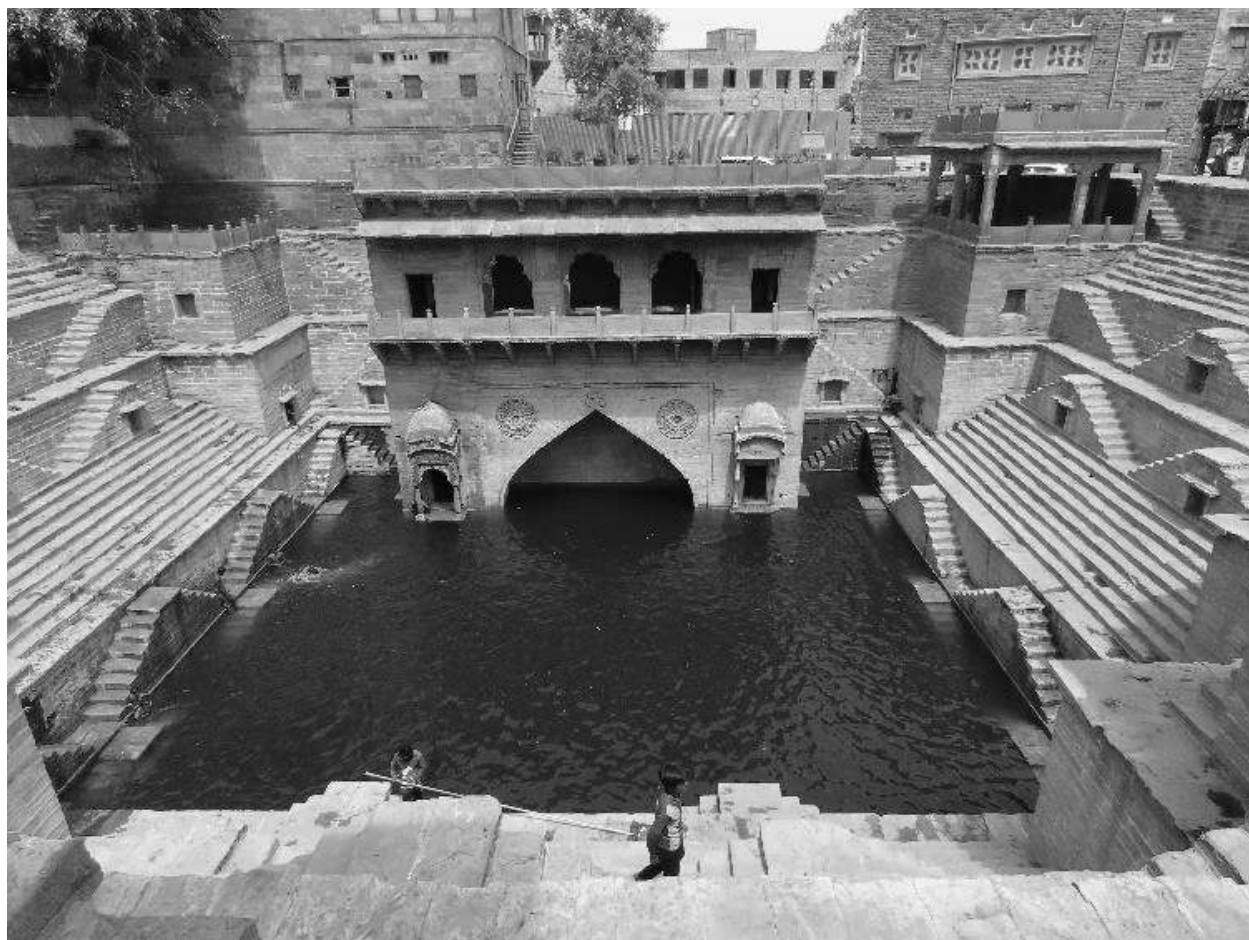
67. Toor ji ka Jhalra

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 49" N, 73° 01' 23" E

Elevation: 270 m

Period: 18th century



Jodhpur-Toor ji ka Jhalra

This stepwell was built by the Queen Consort or the main queen—Patrani—Tanwar ji/Toor Rani ji/Tunwar ji in 1740s²⁸ during the reign of Maharaja Abhay Singh, who reigned from 1724 to 1749. Mr. Y.D. Singh has mentioned its year of construction as 1748 AD.²⁹ The construction work was started in Vikram Samvat 1805. Its construction continued till Vikram Samvat 1806, when the queen was on her way to self-immolate herself (becoming sati) at the death of Maharaja Abhai Singh. While on her last journey, it is said that she directed the workers to provide drinking water arrangement

²⁸ Information put up by the State Government at the site of the Jhalra

²⁹ Singh, Rajasthan ke Kue evam Bavadiyan page 267

for animals.³⁰ This incident shows the commitment and commendable dedication of the royal Rajput ladies in those days, even in the face of their impending death.



Jodhpur-Toor ji ka Jhalra-another view showing unauthorised structure

The stepwell is made of rose sand stone. There are intricate carvings of dancing elephants, medieval lion, and cow-shaped spouts and niches, which have the sculpture of various deities, all of which have now disappeared. A Persian wheel, drawn by bullocks was fixed on the upper platform to lift water. There are four pavilions in the four corners of the Jhalra, out of which only two exist now, and an Islamic structure has come up in one of the corners, which does not match with the architecture of the Jhalra. There is a two-storeyed pavilion-tower on one side, which has a big pointed archway in the lower storey, flanked by a small projected window on either side while there are three foliated arch openings on the upper storey. Medallions have been carved on the spandrels of the pointed archway in the lower storey. Various niches have been provided under each pair of descending steps, which might have sculptures of different deities at one time. The stepwell is said to be 200 ft deep.

³⁰ Bhati, Rajasthan ke Paramparagat Jal Sansadhan page 79

68. Nazar ji ki Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 14" N, 73° 01' 01" E

Period: 19th century (1802 AD)



Jodhpur-Nazar ji ki Baodi-jal-stambha or Goverdhan outside the stepwell



Jodhpur-Nazar ji ki Baodi- showing two storeyed pavilion tower



Jodhpur-Nazar ji ki Baodi- view towards the entrance

The Nazar ji ki Baodi was built by a Nazar in Vikram Samvat 185931 (1802 AD), during the period of Maharaja Bhim Singh (r. 1793-1803 AD). It is located in the heart of the city, inside the Jalori Gate, near Narsingh Thada. In the native language, the word 'nazar' means a eunuch or hizra in Hindi. A Nazar used to be the care taker of the king's female quarters. The concerned nazar was, perhaps, a respectable person and was employed in the service of the Maharaja at that time. The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction, with its rectangular well shaft being in the south. It is a two-storeyed stepwell with a double storeyed pavilion tower, having foliated arches on both the storeys, just before the well. The medallions have been carved on the spandrels. The stepwell, made of dressed sand stone masonry, is well maintained. There is a stone post, called the jal-stambha or Goverdhan, outside the stepwell which has the sculptures of Lord Shiva, Lord Ganesh, and Lord Brahma, where people used to offer water after taking bath in the stepwell. It is similar to the stepwell at Bavdi ka Bas and Janana Bagh stepwell (Kesar Singh ka Jhalra) at Jodhpur. Bai ji ka Talab (Queen's Tank) is nearby at the coordinates of 26° 17' 10" N, 73° 01' 9" E, which is filled with garbage, with the knowledge of the government. According to the residents, this place might be converted into vehicle parking.

³¹ Bhati, Rajasthan ke Paramparagat Jal Sansadhan page 70

69. Jalap Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 18" N, 73° 00' 57" E

Elevation: 240 m

Period: 1552 AD



Jodhpur-Jalap Baodi

The Jalap Baodi was built by Mootha Jalap, during the reign of Maharaja Maldev Singh in Vikram Samvat 1609, i.e., 1552 AD³². It is oriented in the north-south direction, with the well at the southern end. It is made of sand stone masonry and has a pavilion with corbelled-arched openings. It is 150 ft long, 24 ft wide and 100 ft deep³³. It has been encroached upon and covered on top by private individuals.

³² Solanki, Bhartiya Bavadiyan, page 106

³³ Bhati, Rajasthan ke Paramparagat Jal Sansadhan, page 60

70. Tapi Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 27" N, 73° 00' 54" E

Elevation: 260 m

Period: 17th century



Jodhpur-Tapi Baodi-third pavilion tower



Jodhpur-Tapi Baodi- view of three storeyed pavilion tower, looking towards entrance



Jodhpur-Tapi Baodi-five storeyed pavilion tower



Jodhpur-Tapi Baodi-benches with carved back supports in the pavilion



Jodhpur-Tapi Baodi-showing four storeyed pavilion tower

The Tapi Baodi must have been the most beautiful stepwell at Jodhpur in its prime. It has been built in rose sand stone masonry, which has weathered to a great extent, rendering the stepwell

completely unsafe. It is said that gun powder used to be stored at this place, and a severe blast left a huge pit on this spot. Mr. Natho ji Vyas built this stepwell in the memory of his father, Mr Tapo ji Tejawat, during the reign of Maharaja Jaswant Singh (r. 1638-1678 AD), at a cost of Rs. 72,000/-, between Vikram Samvat 1671 and 1675³⁴. It took four years to build this stepwell. The stepwell is located at Hatadiyon ka Chowk in Bhima ji ka Mohalla. This is also said to be the longest stepwell in the city, and has been the main source of water for the residents for more than four centuries. Mr. Natho ji donated all the properties of his father to Lord Krishna for the welfare of the people.



Jodhpur-Tapi Baodi-intricately carved twin-pillared columns of a pavilion



Jodhpur-Tapi Baodi-another type of columns having various cross sections



Jodhpur-Tapi Baodi-close up of carved columns



Jodhpur-Tapi Baodi-beautifully carved capitals of the columns

³⁴ Bhati, Rajasthan ke Paramparagat Jal Sansadhan page 63

There is an interesting incident related to the Tapi Baodi. Maharaja Jaswant Singh used to roam about in the city in disguise during night to know about the problems of the people, and to find out whether his officials were working alright. One day, when he was passing by the Tapi stepwell, he saw his sepoy's coming in his direction. He hid himself in the stepwell lest they could recognise him. Legends say that there was a ghost in the stepwell who entered into the body of the Maharaja and he fell ill. It was announced that only when a person of the physique and stature of the Maharaja is sacrificed, he would become alright. Everybody then thought of Thakur Raj Singh, the Thikanedar of Asope, who was similar to the Maharaja in such aspects. When Thakur Raj Singh came to know about it, he came to the Maharaja and told him that he could sacrifice himself, if he wanted so. Thakur Raj Singh then took poison and left this world.

It is a five-storeyed stepwell, out of which four are visible and the fifth is under water. The stepwell is nearly 250 ft long and 40 ft wide. It is oriented in the east-west direction, with its well at the eastern end. There are five pavilion towers, which are one-storeyed to five-storeyed high. These koots support the deep side walls of the stepwell, and the pavilions were used to sit and enjoy the cool surroundings of the stepwell. The benches carved with geometric patterns, have been provided in the pavilions for sitting. The columns have been carved intricately. There are niches in the side walls in all the storeys. The stairs have been provided in the side walls to approach different levels. The stepwell needs protection from further weathering, if it is to be kept alive as our heritage. The water, though very clean, is a home to many fish.

71. Padamsar

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 54" N, 73° 00' 55" E

Elevation: 280 m

Period: 1520 AD

The Padamsar tank was built in 1520 AD (Vikram Samvat 1576)³⁵ by Queen Deori—Rani, Padmavati of Sirohi, who was married to Rao Ganga of Jodhpur. Rao Ganga ruled Jodhpur state from 1516 to 1532, and fought Mughal king Babur, alongside Rana Sanga of Mewar. The Padamsar tank is separated from the Ranisar stepwell, only by the fort wall.



Jodhpur-Padamsar

³⁵ Information put up by INTACH at the site.

72. Chand Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 50" N, 73° 00' 54" E

Elevation: 270 m

Period: 15th century

The Chand Baodi is said to be the oldest stepwell in Jodhpur. During Rao Jodha's reign from 1438 to 1489 AD, his queen, Songara or Chauhan Rani Chand Kunwar, built this stepwell on the down side of the Padamsar tank. It is fed by the filtered waters of the Ranisar and the Padamsar tanks. It had a Persian wheel, which was used to irrigate the nearby agricultural fields. The stepwell is considered very sacred as its water is used in religious rituals. There is a koot—a pointed arch pavilion tower on the longer axis of the well, which has medallions carved on its spandrels. At the entrance, there is an inscription in Arabic, which says that "Good news for the thirsty. Spring has been found. The nearby people drink its water. 1092." It is not clear as to what is depicted by the year 1092. It cannot be the Hizri year also, because there will be too much variance with the period of Rao Jodha.



Jodhpur-Chand Baodi-showing a pointed arch pavilion



Joshpur-Chand Boadi-entrance

The stepwell is reverse-L shaped, with the main axis being in the north-south direction, and the well shaft at the northern end. Its entrance is facing west.

73. Suraj Kund Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 59" N, 73° 00' 35" E

Elevation: 270 m

Period: 17th century

The most part of the Suraj Kund Baodi, located near Chand pole, is under the Rameshwar Mahadev temple, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva, built in the 12th century. The kund or the stepwell was built by Maharaja Sur Singh for offering water to Lord Shiva in the Rameshwar Mahadev temple. The construction of the stepwell was started in Vikram Samvat 1672 (1615 AD) and completed in Vikram Samvat 1676 (1619 AD)³⁶. Maharaja Sur Singh—also referred to as Suraj Singh or Surya Singh—ruled from 1595 to 1619 AD. He also renovated the Rameswar Mahadev temple. He was given the title of 'Sawai Raja' by the Mughal king, Akbar.



Jodhpur-Suraj Kund

The stepwell is made of sand stone and Lakhauri bricks. It had a Persian wheel, operated by bullocks, to draw water and irrigate the garden. All the residents living nearby used to drink its water. The baodi has two big halls, a small temple, a memorial of Maharaja Sur Singh, maze-like paths, and a tunnel. The square tank is surrounded by arches of thin Lakhauribricks. The inside of the stepwell is very repulsive as it is home to a lot of snakes, pigeons, and bats, and their excreta. The stepwell is normally kept locked, but its key can be obtained from the owner of the medical store nearby.

³⁶ Information put up by the State Government at the site of the kund

74. Raghunath ji ki Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 59" N, 73° 00' 33" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: 18th century



Jodhpur-Raghunath ji ki Baodi-looking towards the second pavilion tower from the first pavilion

The Raghunath ji ki Baodi is within 100 m of the Suraj Kund. It is oriented in the north-south direction, with well at the southern end. It is a beautifully maintained stepwell, used by the people to bathe after the rituals of a cremation, as the cremation ground is nearby. It was built by Raghunath Bhandari, Diwan of Maharaja Ajit Singh (r. 1679-1724 AD) in the 18th century³⁷. A 'jal stambh' or 'govardhan' (a stone post) with sculptures of deities has been provided just outside the stepwell to offer water. It is similar to many other stepwells, like Bavdi ka Bas, Kesar Singh ka Jhalra, and Nazar ji ki Baodi.

³⁷ Singh, Rajasthan ke Kue evam Bavadiyan, page 209



Jodhpur-Raghunath ji ki Baodi-jalstambh or Goverdhan outside the stepwell



Jodhpur-Raghunath ji ki Baodi-second pavilion tower

There are two pavilion towers in the stepwell. The first tower is single-storeyed, having only one pavilion with three multifoil arch openings. The second pavilion tower is two-storeyed with the lower storey immersed under water. The upper pavilion has three multifoil arch openings. The stepwell has been built in beautiful stone masonry, and has clean water in which people enjoy swimming.

75. Kriya ka Jhalra

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 18' 12" N, 73° 00' 51" E

Period: Unknown

As the name suggests, the Kriya ka Jhalra is the stepwell built for the rituals related to a cremation. It is also known as the Tiwari ka Jhalra after Sukhdev Tiwari, a businessman. It is said that it is seven-storeyed. However, only three layers of steps were visible, rest being under water. In each layer, two pairs of steps have been built, with a decorated framed niche provided in the wall inside each pair of steps. The steps have been provided on the three sides, while pavilions have been built on the fourth side. Against the



Jodhpur-Kriya ka Jhalra-another view

height of the three layers of steps, two pavilions exist, while the top pavilion above these two, appears to have fallen down. A pair of fighting elephants has been carved above some of the framed niches, while some others are carved with torans. The columns of the pavilions are beautifully carved. Birds and geometric patterns have been sculpted on the pavilions. The water was full of plastic waste. The surroundings of the Jhalra also need to be cleaned without delay.



Jodhpur-Kriya ka Jhalra

76. Nayi Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 18' 13" N, 73° 00' 35" E

Period: Unknown



Jodhpur-Nayi Baodi-main axis



Jodhpur-Nayi Baodi-jal stambha (goverdhan)

The Nayi Baodi means a new stepwell. It is situated near the Shiv Mandir Vidyashala and DIET. The stepwell is built in the shape of a reverse-L, with the main axis being in the north-south direction. While the entrance is from east, the well is at the southern end. The stepwell is said to be 350-400 years old. It is said that the-then Maharaja of Jodhpur built it and donated it to the temple. There are two pavilion towers in the stepwell. The first one is single-storeyed and at the junction of the two axes, while the second pavilion tower—perhaps two-storeyed—is located just before the square well shaft. A jalstambh or Goverdhan (a stone post) with sculpture of deities, like Lord Ganesh, has been fixed outside the stepwell for offering water. The stepwell was full of water at the time of my visit.

77. Kharbooja Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26.3108° N, 73.0124° E

Period: 18th century



Jodhpur-Kharbuja Baodi-as viewed from the north end



Jodhpur-Kharbuja Baodi-as viewed from the south end

Kharbooja means a musk melon. The name indicates that musk melons were grown in the fields nearby, and the stepwell was used to irrigate them. When I first visited the stepwell during the rainy season in July, water was overflowing, and nothing was visible. The photographs used here were taken in January. The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction and built of sand stone masonry. There is a koot (pavilion tower) with a large pointed arch in the middle of the stepwell, at the end of steps, to support the sides against the earth pressure. The water-drawing arrangement exists at the northern end.

It is said to have been built by Maharaja Abhai Singh (r. 1724-1749 AD) of Jodhpur in the memory of his Dhai-bai, Rawata. Hence, it is also known as the Rawata ki Baodi. Rawata died in the battle of Ahmedabad in Vikram Samvat 1787/38. In those days, the kings used to treat the sons of their foster mother as their brothers. This stepwell might have been built around that period in the 18th century.

³⁸ Bhati, Rajasthan ke Paramparagat Jal Sansadhan Page 68

78. Gorinda Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 31" N, 73° 01' 20" E

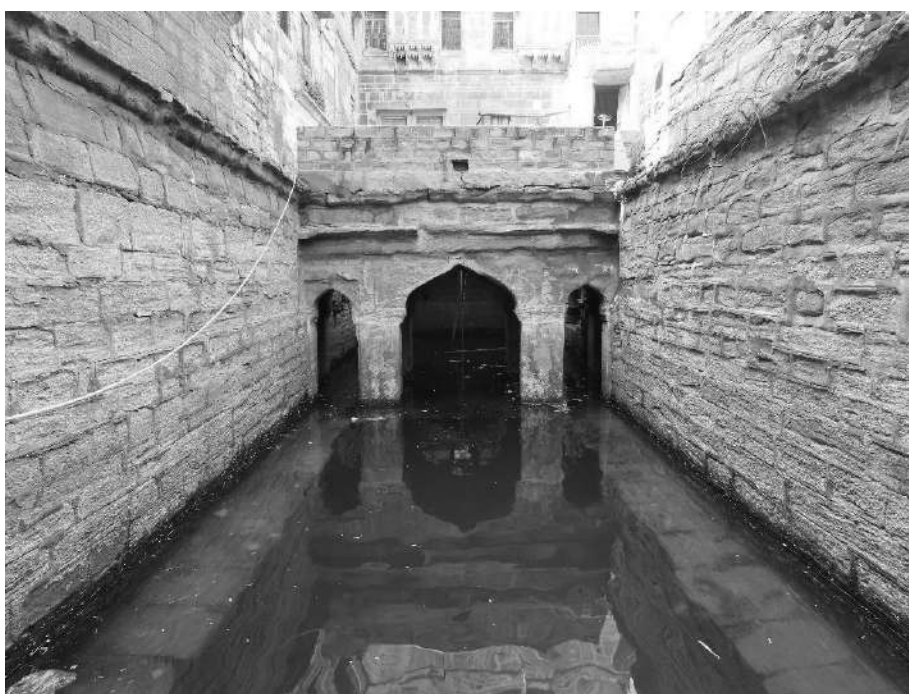
Elevation: 230 m

Period: 17th century

The Gorinda Baodi is situated on the way from the Tripoliya Bazar to the Sojti Gate. It was built by a woman called Goridha or Gora Dhai, who was the foster mother or wet nurse (Dhai Maa) of Ajit Singh, the son of Maharaja Jaswant Singh, and she saved Ajit Singh, the next Maharaja of Marwar, by smuggling him in a basket from Aurangzeb's clutches and leaving her own son in the bed. She built this stepwell in Vikram Samvat 1716 (1659 AD)³⁹ during Maharaja Jaswant Singh's reign. Over the period, Gora Dhai got transformed into Gorinda. The two-storeyed stepwell is constructed in the north-south direction, with its well at the southern end. The stepwell is around 60 ft deep, and still being used to supply water. The pointed arches have been used in the pavilion existing at the end of steps. It is said that Maharaja Man Singh and Col. Sutherland met for the first time at this stepwell.



Jodhpur-Gorinda Baodi-view of the entrance from the south



Jodhpur-Gorinda Baodi-view of the pavilion tower from the north

³⁹Solanki, Bhartiya Bavadiyan, page147

79. Satyanarayan ki Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 43" N, 73° 01' 32" E

Elevation: 250 m

Period: Unknown



Jodhpur-Satyanarayan ji ki Baodi-view of multi-cusped arches in the pavilions

This stepwell is also called 'Nazar ji ki Duji Baodi', which means the second stepwell built by Nazar ji. The baodi is oriented in the east-west direction, with the well shaft in the east. The stepwell pavilions have foliated or multi-cusped arch openings. The last pavilion tower or the koot before the rectangular well shaft has a large pointed archway. On the top level, there is a pavilion with five small four-centred arches. The water is very clean. I met Mr. Carom Rawnsley, an Irish person, who was swimming in the stepwell, which is not permitted. However, I came to know after discussion with him that he has a great interest in cleaning up the stepwells of Jodhpur. He is staying in a guesthouse and tackles such issues. A big tree has taken roots at the end wall of the well shaft, which may ultimately harm the stepwell.



Jodhpur-Satyanarayan ji ki Baodi-pointed archway

80. Eidgah Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 16' 57" N, 73° 00' 57" E

Elevation: 250 m

Period: 20th century



Jodhpur-Eidgah Baodi-view of the pavilion tower



Jodhpur-Eidgah Baodi- well shaft with water drawing arrangement

The Eidgah Baodi is located outside the Jalori Gate in the masjid compound. The stepwell is locked, though the key is available with the people living in the compound. The stepwell, built of sand stone masonry is oriented in the north-south direction, with the well shaft in the south. The inscription at the stepwell mentions the year 1348 Hizri, which corresponds to 1929 AD⁴⁰. There is a two-storeyed pavilion tower before the well shaft, having three foliated arch openings towards the stepped corridor as well as the well shaft. However, only the upper pavilion could be seen due to standing water. It has a smaller archway on either side of these openings towards the entrance, for people to walk over from the ledges, supported on brackets and fixed in the side walls. Various medallions have been engraved in the spandrels of the arches. The arrangement to draw water--now defunct--was provided on three sides of the rectangular well shaft. Its remains can be seen. There is an inscription fixed on the pavilion. The first two lines are in Arabic and the remaining is in Persian. It says "There is no God truly worthy of worship, except Allah and I bear the witness that Mohammad is the messenger of Allah. The waqf (mortmain property) is in the name of Allah (to be used for charity). Hatim promised in the name of Allah. Viewers wished its existence in the world. May Allah keep him happy, with the grace of Mohammad's family. My water tank is available all the time for the benefit of public. Nobody will remain forever in this world. When I tried to find him, I could not sense its fragrance, as if the spring of charity was filled with coolness. 1348 Hizri. 1889."⁴¹ It is not clear what does '1889' mean, as this does not convey any meaning. Garbage, thrown by the people into the well, has made it severely filthy.

⁴⁰ Inscription at the stepwell

⁴¹ Translation of the inscription at the stepwell

81. Navlakha Baodi

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17' 26" N, 73° 02' 01" E

Elevation: 240 m

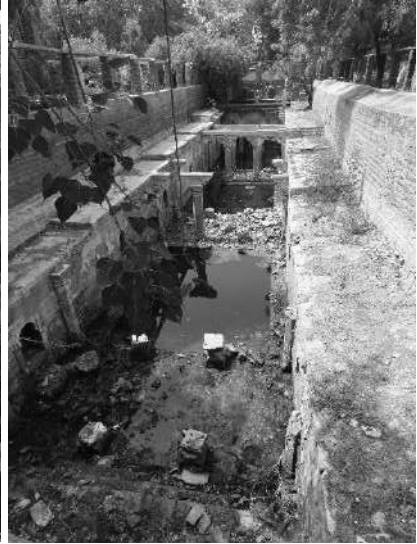
Period: 18th century



Jodhpur-Navlakha Baodi-pavilion
near the well shaft



Jodhpur-Navlakha Baodi- carved
column



Jodhpur-Navlakha Baodi-view
from the entrance

Maharaja Abhay Singh built the Navlakha Baodi during his reign from 1724 to 1749, in the public park near the Uday Mandir. It is said that its construction cost was nine lakh rupees, because of which it is called as the Navlakha Baodi. The stepwell, built of sand stone masonry, is oriented in the north-south direction, with the rectangular well shaft at the southern end. There were four koots (pavilion towers) in the stepwell; the first being towards the entrance in the north, which is completely gone. Only the top storeys of the remaining three pavilion towers are visible, since the remaining structure is under standing water. The top pavilion of the second tower is missing, except for a column, left standing alone. The top pavilion of the third tower is left only with some beams and columns, with its roof missing, while the fourth tower exists fully. The columns are beautifully carved. The pavilions had three corbelled-arch openings in each direction. A kund or a tank has been built in between two koots/pavilions. Beautiful niches have been provided in the side walls in the stepped corridor as well as in the pavilions. Each pavilion has a niche in both the side walls. The stepwell is still being used for gardening. The unique feature of this stepwell is the provision of the water-drawing arrangement on the side walls between the third and the fourth pavilion towers. The brackets, used for this purpose, can still be seen on the side walls. This allowed a higher number of people to draw water from the stepwell, simultaneously.

82. Janana Bagh Baodi/Kesri Singh ka Jhalra

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 17'26" N, 73° 01'55" E

Period: 17th century



Jodhpur-Janana Bagh Baodi



Jodhpur-Janana Bagh Baodi- stone post(jal stambh-goverdhan) to offer water

The Janana Bagh Baodi, also known as the Kesri Singh ka Jhalra, was built by Panchauli Kesari Singh, son of Ram Chand in Vikram Samvat 1730 i.e. 1673 AD⁴². He received the title of Desh Diwan in Vikram Samvat 1723 (1666 AD), during the reign of Maharaja Jaswant Singh-I (reign 1638-1678 AD). After the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh-I in Vikram Samvat 1735 (1678 AD), he was arrested by the Mughal king. He committed suicide in the jail by consuming poison.

The baodi is situated within a distance of 200 m from the Navlakha Baodi. A part of the stepwell is hidden, as it has been covered by the road passing over it. A jal stambh or goverdhan (stone post) with deities sculpted on it, has been provided at the beginning of the stepwell for offering water. A large pointed arch and water-drawing arrangement on the side walls can be seen.

⁴² Information put up by the State Government at the site of the jhalra

83. Bhooton ki Baodi

Ransigaon, Bilara, Rajasthan

26° 02' 39" N, 73° 44' 57" E

Elevation: 300 m

Period: 16th century

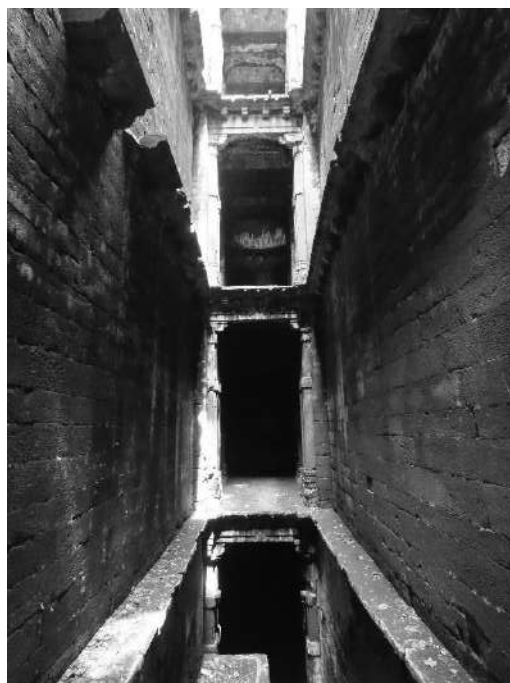


Ransigaon-Bhooton ki Baodi



Ransigaon-Bhooton ki Baodi-Corbelled arch of the first pavilion

Bhoot means a ghost. It is said that this stepwell was built by Thakur Jai Singh in 1551-52 AD, with the help of ghosts. There is an interesting story behind it. The legend says that Thakur Jai Singh, riding on a horse, got separated from his entourage. He stopped by a tank to drink water. As soon as he touched the water, a ghost appeared and asked him to quench his thirst first, as he himself could not do so. Jai Singh offered the water to the ghost, who became very happy and asked Jai Singh for a wish. Jai Singh asked a palace for himself and a stepwell. The ghost agreed on the condition that Jai Singh would not tell anybody about this. The ghost said that the work done by Jai Singh's workers would be multiplied 100 times. The workers were surprised to see the half-built stepwell next day. Jai Singh's wife also asked the reason behind this. Jai Singh first refused to tell anything, but he had to disclose it after his wife did not eat food for a few days. As the pact with the ghost was broken, the stepwell and the palace were left incomplete.



Ransigaon-Bhooton ki Baodi-view of the fourth pavilion tower

Ransigaon is about 90 km away from Jodhpur. This stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with well at the east end. It is built of dressed sand stone masonry. There are four pavilion towers which are one, two, three, and four-storeyed as we go from the first to the fourth tower. Two framed niches exist at the entrance in the side walls. The side walls are bulging out in a few places due to earth pressure, and brick supports have been provided. The stepwell is infested with honey bees. The pavilions are supported with corbelled-arches. The sidewalks, i.e., the ledges in the side walls have been supported on beautiful brackets. After visiting the stepwell, I had a cup of tea with Thakur Sawai Singh, the current Thakur, who is looking after his business of breeding famous Marwari horses.

84. Ashapura Mata Temple Stepwell

Ashapura Mata Mandir, Nadol, Rajasthan

25.3773219° N, 73.4670155° E

Period: 10th century



Nadol-Ashapura Mataji temple stepwell-second koot



Nadol-Ashapura Mataji temple stepwell- well shaft



Nadol-Ashapura Mataji temple stepwell-view of the stepwell from the entrance with first pavilion tower in the foreground

The Nadol village of Pali district is famous for the Ashapura Mata temple, which is more than 1000 years old. Ashapura Mata is known to fulfill the wishes of her followers. She is the deity (kuldevi) of Chauhan Rajputs. Nadol is a historic place, and it is said that the father of the great Rajput king, Prithviraj Chauhan died at Nadol, while fighting a war. Nadol was under the Chauhan kings until the end of the 13th century. The temple is 2 km away from Nadol.



Nadol-Ashapura Mataji temple stepwell-the third and the last pavilion tower



Nadol-Ashapura Mataji temple stepwell-carved columns

Nadol was established by the Chauhan king Rao Lakhansi in Vikram Samvat 1001 (944 AD), and the stepwell existing in its complex is also said to have been built during that time. The stepwell is also known as the Maharao Lakhansi stepwell. It might have been repaired and renovated, over the period of time. The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction, with the rectangular well shaft at the southern end. The stepwell is in a very good condition because of it being inside the temple complex and repairs carried out over the period. There are three koots (pavilion towers) in the stepwell. The first koot or the pavilion tower has a single storeyed pavilion; the second pavilion tower has two storeys, and the last pavilion has four storeys. Steps have been provided at the third landing in place of the pavilion. The columns are beautifully decorated with geometric patterns and kirtimukhs. Their capitals are also carved. The carvings on beams and columns are not uniform, because these might have been renovated over the period. Niches have been provided in the side walls, but the sculptures of deities are missing from them. Overall, the stepwell is in excellent condition and a pleasure to visit.

85. Katwari Stepwell

Nadol, Rajasthan

25° 22' 24" N, 73° 27' 22" E

Period: Unknown



Nadol-Katwari stepwell-Three storeyed first pavilion tower



Nadol-Katwari Stepwell

According to the legends, this stepwell was built by a couple, out of the earnings by spinning and hence, the name katwari. The stepwell is in the middle of an agricultural field, near the Prajapita Brahma Kumari Centre, Nadol. The entry to the field kept locked, and one has to jump over the wall-fencing to see it. The stepwell, oriented in the east-west direction, with the well shaft in the east, is built of very heavy and big, rock-cut stone blocks, rarely seen in any of the stepwells. How such heavy stones were brought to the site and put in place is a mystery to unravel. The entrance to the stepwell is full of thorny shrubs and vegetation. Many trees have taken roots in the side walls.

There is a risk of confronting snakes, if you go down. However, you will not be disappointed if you make it to the bottom.



Nadol-Katwari Stepwell-bottom of the circular well shaft



Nadol-Katwari stepwell-looking down the well shaft



Nadol-Katwari Stepwell-second pavilion tower



Nadol-Katwari Stepwell-five storeyed third pavilion tower



Nadol-Katwari Stepwell-decorated niche in the side wall

There are three koots in the stepwell. The first koot has three-storeyed pavilions; the second koot is four-storeyed; and the third one is five-storeyed at the edge of the well shaft. Carved and framed niches have been provided in the side walls. However, the sculptures of deities are missing from the niches. Steps have been built inside the circular well shaft, after the last pavilion tower too. Each pavilion is supported on four columns. The columns have three distinct parts--base, shaft, and capital, joined together, perhaps with metal connectors with no carvings. The benches carved with geometric and floral patterns have been provided on the top two storeys of the third pavilion tower. The back-rests of these benches are decorated with geometric patterns. Two columns from each of the four columns supporting the lowermost storey of the pavilion towers are joined together to act

in tandem. Ledges have been provided along the side walls at each level for walking. The stepwell was used to irrigate the fields apart from daily needs, as seen from the still existing water-drawing arrangement. Even now, the well has enough water, which is pumped out for irrigation purpose.

The Katwari stepwell is unique and different than the others in its construction, with very heavy stone blocks and needs to be restored and preserved, otherwise the day is not far when it will vanish. Huge vegetation growth can be seen all over the stepwell. At least, such vegetation can be removed and cleaned through MGNREG scheme by the local panchayat. This stepwell is the most gigantic I have seen in Rajasthan, in terms of the size of the building blocks of stones used in its construction.

86. Rani Baodi

Nadol, Rajasthan

25° 22' 26" N, 73° 27' 02" E

Period: Unknown



Nadol-Rani Baodi-looking down the well shaft

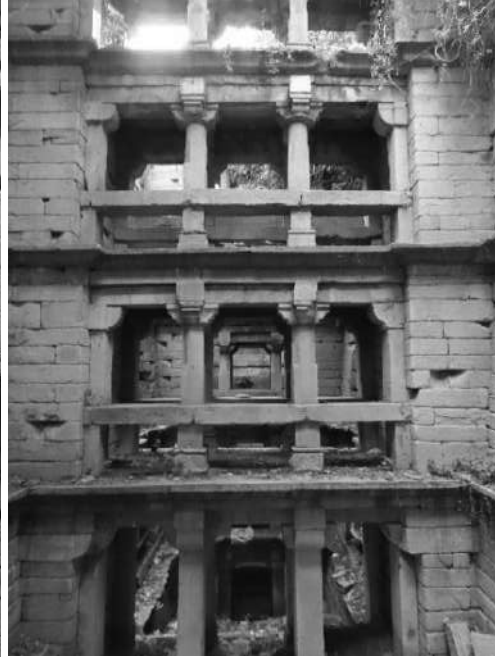


Nadol-Rani Baodi-circular mandap near well shaft

Like the Katwari stepwell, the Rani Baodi has also been built of big stone blocks. It has the orientation in the east-west direction, with its well shaft in the west. The stepwell is five-storeyed. The entrance to the baodi is full of filth, as it has become the dump ground for the area. Vegetation has also covered it to a big extent. Similar to the Katwari stepwell, the columns of this baodi also have three distinct parts--base, shaft, and capital--connected to each other. There is no pavilion on the first landing, which has only a niche on each side wall. There are three pavilion towers in the stepwell, similar to that in the Katwari stepwell. The first tower is three-storeyed, the second tower is four-storeyed, and the third tower is five-storeyed.



Nadol-Rani Baodi-upper part of the third pavilion tower



Nadol-Rani Baodi-second pavilion tower

The pavilions on each storey are supported on eight columns. Niches in the side walls are carved and framed. The sculptures of deities are missing from all these niches. Benches have been provided in the middle pavilion of the first tower, the two middle pavilions of the second tower, and storeys 2, 3, and 4 below ground level in the third tower. However, backrests of these benches are not carved like the Katwari stepwell. These backrests are on the west side, facing the entrance of the baodi in the east, and the back towards the well shaft. A circular enclosure or a mandap made of stone masonry exists on the western end of the stepwell. This would have been used by the nobles for taking bath, or resting in seclusion. Lord Ganesh has been sculpted on the entrance to this enclosure. A roof or a cantilever chajja might have existed in this enclosure, as can be guessed from the presence of the elegantly carved brackets projecting from the circular wall. This enclosure has water-drawing arrangements. Geometric patterns have been carved on the top ring of this enclosure on the outside. The Rani Baodi is worth some renovation, which will enhance its value as a tourist spot, to be visited at Nadol along with the Katwari stepwell.



Nadol-Rani Baodi- lower part of the third pavilion tower

87. Dua Baodi

Nadol, Rajasthan

25° 22' 07" N, 73° 27' 34" E

Period: 300 years old, 18th century



Nadol-Dua Baodi- collapsed side wall



Nadol-Dua Baodi

The Dua Baodi is just outside the village, near Ravla--the palace of the Rao, which is now in dilapidated condition. In the inscription at the sati's platform near the stepwell, Vikram Samvat 1783 (1726 AD) has been mentioned. The owner of the land on which the stepwell exists, told us that the land as well as this stepwell and the Charbhuj temple were given to his forefathers by Maharaja Ajit Singh, who ruled Jodhpur from Vikram Samvat 1735 to 1781. We can safely assume that this stepwell is nearly 300 years old. This is also built of big stone blocks, like the Katwari and the Rani Baodi of this village.

The stepwell is four-storeyed and oriented in the north-south direction, with the well shaft in the south. A large portion of the eastern side wall has collapsed, perhaps due to the absence of any koot to support such deep side walls. Only one four-storeyed pavilion tower exists at the edge of the circular well shaft. The pavilions are quite narrow, being nearly one meter wide. The remains indicate towards the existence of benches on the first and the second storeys below ground level. Framed and carved niches have been provided in the side walls. The well is still in use for irrigating the fields. However, it needs urgent repairs, otherwise it is likely to collapse and soon become history.

88. Moongbi ki Baodi

Nadol, Rajasthan

25° 22' 10" N, 73° 27' 45" E

Period: Unknown

Elevation: 320 m



Nadol-Moongbi ki Baodi

The Moongbi ki Baodi is situated in the Juna Kheda area of Nadol. The legends say that it was built out of the earnings of moong (pulse) grown in the fields nearby. The land on which it exists is owned by the Chaudharis. A large portion of the stepwell has been filled up with earth. Only a few steps at the entrance are visible and two koots with two-storeyed pavilions each can be seen. It is made of large stone block masonry. Thorny bushes prevent you from going down the stepwell. It is also said to be infested with snakes. The stepwell appears to be in good shape, except that it is filled up with soil. It can be excavated and brought back to past glory.

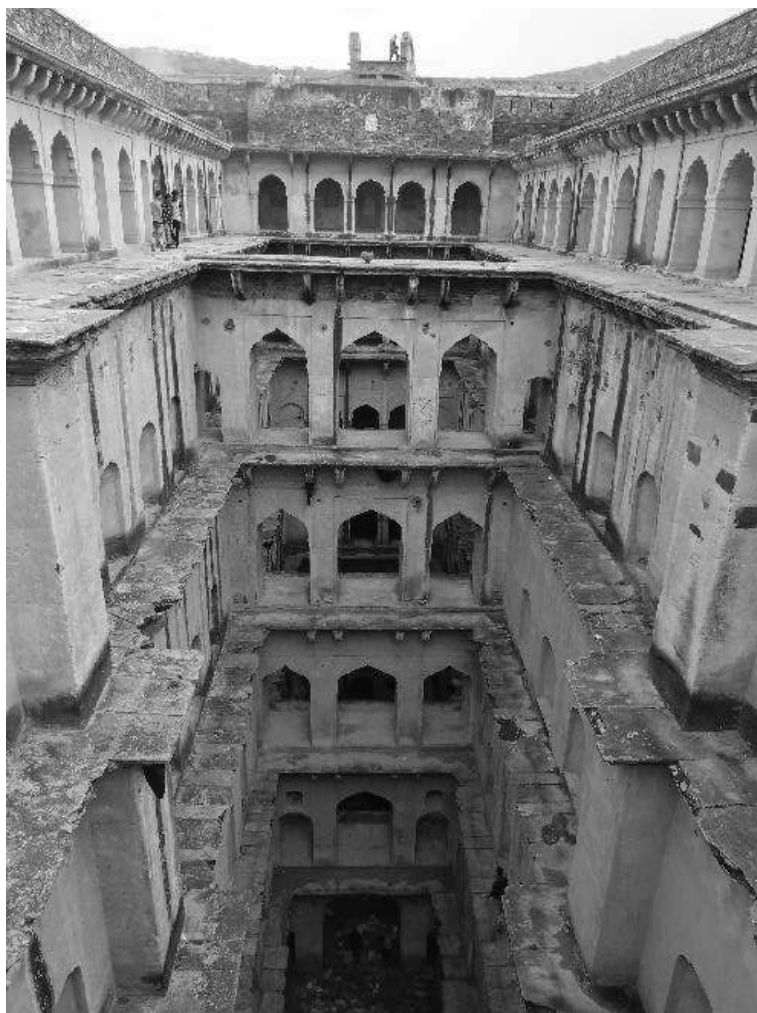
89. Neemrana Baodi

Neemrana, Alwar, Rajasthan

27° 59' 59" N, 76° 22' 57" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: 16th century (1570 AD)⁴³



Neemrana Baodi-second koot or pavilion tower

Though Neemrana, located 120 km away from Delhi, is known for its 15th century fort on hill slopes, but it's also famous for its stepwell, which is said to be the longest and deepest stepwell in India. The fort and the stepwell were built by the descendants of Prithviraj Chauhan. A few km from the Delhi-Jaipur highway, it is situated on the Baodi Road. It is a pleasant surprise that the road itself is named after the stepwell. It is one of those 16 stepwells on which some postage stamps have been issued by the Department of Post, Government of India.

⁴³ Livingston, Steps to Water... page 123



Neemrana Baodi-lower storeys of third pavilion tower



Neemrana Baodi-upper storeys of third pavilion tower

The stepwell is nine-storeyed, with the lowermost storey almost silted up. Oriented in the east-west direction, it is 250 ft in length, 80 ft wide and nearly 200 ft deep. The stepwell has been built in RR masonry. Each floor is about 9 ft high and at first sight, it looks like a fortress. On the top floor, verandahs with foliated arch openings have been built on three sides for travellers to rest. Large niches have been made in the side walls at all levels, perhaps to sit, take bath, or change clothes. There are three pavilion towers. The first tower has a pavilion on the upper storey and a big archway at the lowermost storey. These koots or the pavilion towers support the sides of the deep stepwell, and offer cool breeze to those sitting or resting in the pavilions. The first koot has been built on the fourth landing and has two storeys. The second koot exists on the sixth landing with five storeys, while the third koot is adjoining the well shaft and has nine storeys. The pavilions of the first and the second koots have pointed arch openings on both sides, while the verandahs have been built in the third koot on the top five storeys, where one could take rest. All the nine storeys of the third koot are connected to the well shaft, with an opening in the middle. The ledges, supported on brackets, have been provided at all levels along the side walls and on koots, so that one could walk from one place to the other inside the stepwell.



Neemrana Baodi- view at the ground level from the entrance



Neemrana Baodi-overview of the stepwell from the well shaft



Neemrana Baodi-view of the first pavilion tower or the first koot

At the time of the visit, the stepwell was under repair. The chhajjas (ledges) and the steps were all broken and most of them were dismantled, with a view to replace them with better ones. The top floor, which has verandahs, has been done up. The stepwell is on the list of wanderers and can be a good revenue-earner, if managed and maintained properly.

90. Behror Baodi

Behror, Alwar, Rajasthan

27° 53' 34" N, 76° 16' 48" E

Elevation: 320 m

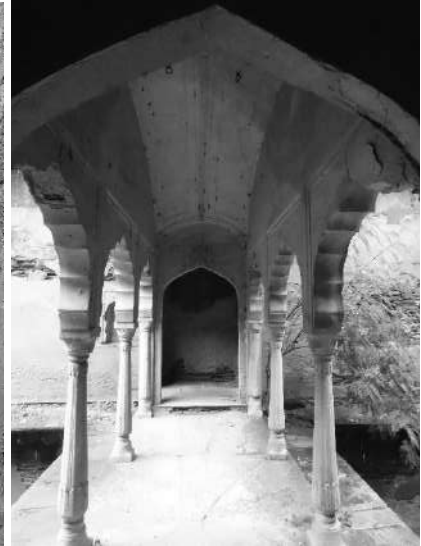
Period: 16th century



Behror Baodi-view of the first tower from the well shaft side in the north



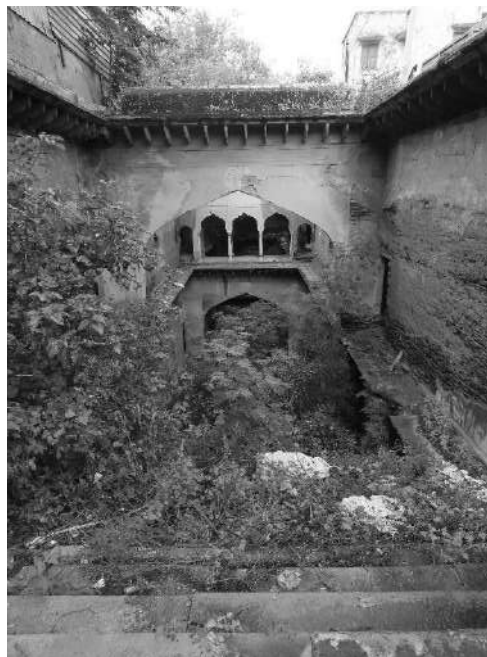
Behror Baodi-second pavilion tower



Behror Baodi-pavilion on second tower



Behror Baodi -filthy well shaft



Behror Baodi-view from the entrance

Behror is 16 km away from Neemrana on the Delhi-Jaipur highway. The stepwell at Behror is situated on the back side of the police station and in front of fire service centre, and is said to have been built by Dhoosar Bhargav around 400 years back. The complex has the temples dedicated to Lord Shiva and Lord Hanuman. It is oriented in the north-south direction, with the circular well at northern end. The baodi is three-storeyed deep and has ledges in the side walls at three levels. The stepwell has an ardh-koot (half-pavilion) and a koot (pavilion tower). The half-pavilion, consisting of a large pointed archway, is not on any landing and the steps continue through it. The pavilion tower, on the second landing adjacent to the well, has a pointed archway in the lower storey and a pavilion with foliated arch gallery, supported on sleek carved columns, on the upper storey. This pavilion on the upper storey has three foliated arch openings, flanked by a small opening on either side, connecting with the ledges along the side walls. The ledges along the side walls and through the koots have been provided at three levels, all supported on brackets. Niches have been provided at all levels in the side walls. The well is full of garbage with no water. The steps of the baodi are covered with vegetation. It appears that nobody cares for it. The stepwell has been built in course rubble (CR) masonry with lime plaster.

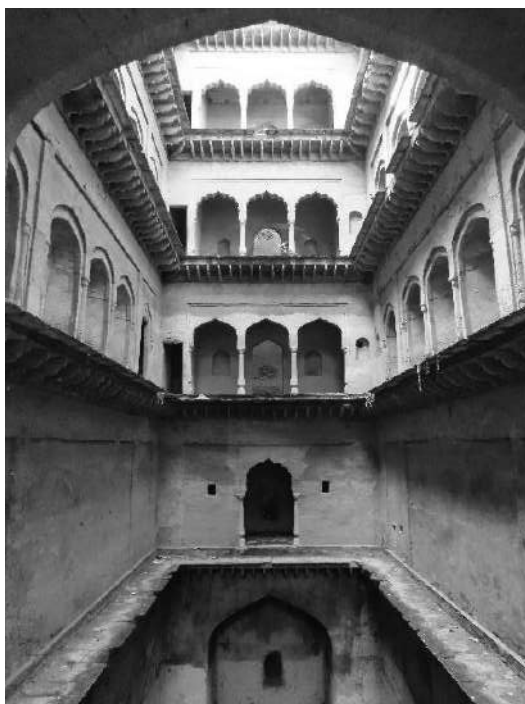
91. Tasing Stepwell

Tasing, Alwar, Rajasthan

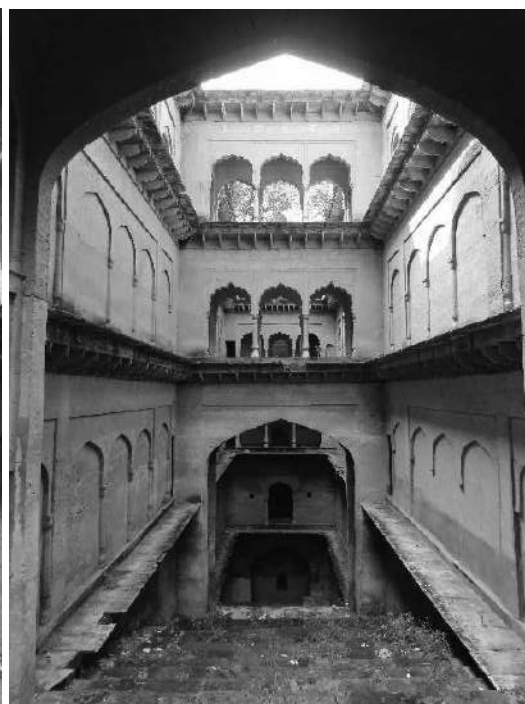
27° 53' 1" N, 76° 12' 54" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: 18th century



Tasing stepwell-five storeyed third pavilion tower/third kuta

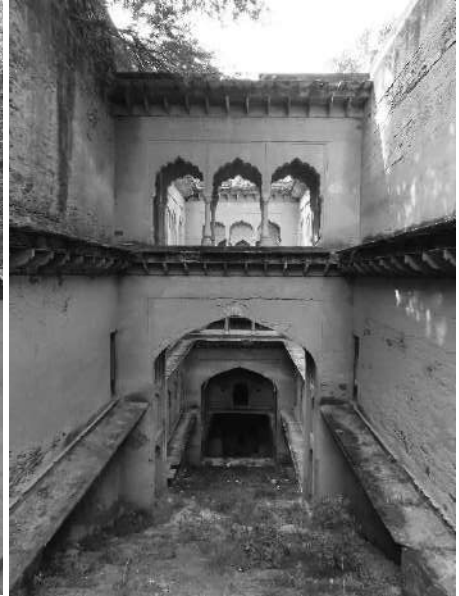


Tasing stepwell- three storeyed second pavilion tower

Tasing is situated 7 km away from Behror, and nearly 145 km away from Delhi. It is a historic place, which has the famous Tasing Fort. The stepwell here, though not so famous, is as beautiful as that of Neemrana. The stepwell, built in RR masonry, is oriented in the east-west direction, with its well shaft at the western end. The stepwell is located at the foothills of the Aravalli ranges.



Tasing stepwell-view of first koot from the top



Tasing stepwell-two storeyed first pavilion tower

There are three pavilion towers (koots) in the stepwell. The first pavilion tower, with two storeys, has a large archway spanning the width of the stepwell on the lower storey, and three foliated arch openings on each side above it on the second storey, supported by eight sleek carved stone columns. Four of these are pilasters embedded in the side walls. The second pavilion tower is three-storeyed with a similar large archway in the lowermost storey and three foliated arch openings each on the two storeys above it. The third pavilion tower, adjacent to the well shaft, has five storeys. Three foliated arch openings towards the stepped corridor exist on the top two storeys of the third tower. Such openings with foliated arches would have existed on the top four storeys, but the arches on the third storey from the top have been converted into pointed arches, perhaps during the renovation of the stepwell, and two such openings have been closed on the fourth storey from the top. An opening has been provided in the well shaft, connecting it with the stepped corridor. The lowermost storey has a stepped tank adjacent to the well shaft. Niches have been made in the side walls on the top storey, between the first and the second koots and on the top three storeys, between the second and the third koots. Staircases have been provided in all the three koots on the southern side to access all the levels.



Tasing stepwell-view of the third koot from the top

Ledges have been provided at all the levels along the side walls and pavilion towers. Deep arched niches have been provided in the side walls on the top two storeys for people to take bath, change clothes, and keep their belongings, while using the stepwell. The unique feature of this stepwell is its ledges, which consist of two layers of slate overhangs, separated by RR masonry in between—all working in unison. This must have been done to increase the strength of the cantilever, considering the weakness of one layer of slate to bear the load of person walking over it. The Tasing stepwell can become a major tourist attraction, if maintained properly and marketed well. A domed chhatri exists outside the stepwell with beautiful paintings inside its dome.

92. Kotputli Baodi

Kotputli, Jaipur, Rajasthan

27° 41' 56" N, 76° 12' 09" E

Elevation: 340 m

Period: 18th century



Kotputli-Nagaji ki Baodi- water drawing platform



Kotputli-Nagaji ki Baodi-view from the entrance

Kotputli was formed by joining the main town of Kot and the nearby village of Putli. It was founded by King Jai Singh-II in 1727 AD. The stepwell at Kotputli is situated in Mohalla Buchaheda near the Bhomia ji's temple. The Shiva temple and the new overhead water tank are nearby. It is said that the stepwell was built by the king of Kotputli for holding parties with ladies. It is a simple stepwell with a flight of steps, oriented in the north-south direction, and the water-drawing platform at the southern end. The unique feature of this stepwell is nearly 20 ft long stone block of 2 ft x 1 ½ ft cross section, spanning the width of the stepwell in front of the water-drawing platform at the southern end. The procurement, transportation, and placement of such a large stone block are really an engineering feat.

93. Shergarh ki Baodi

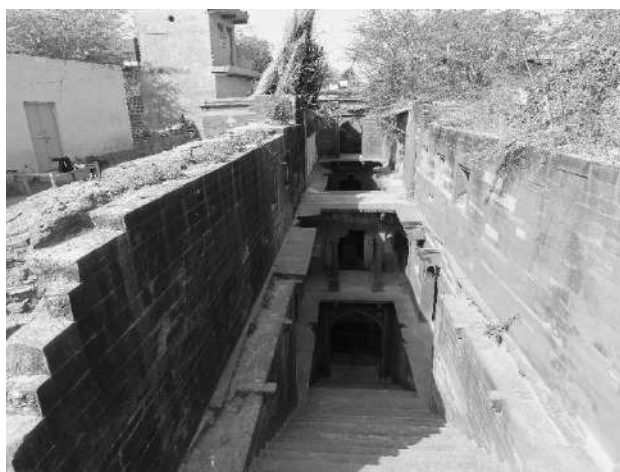
Dhaulpur, Rajasthan

26° 40' 57" N, 77° 54' 09" E

Elevation: 170 m

Period: Unknown

Dhaulpur or Dholpur is the smallest district of Rajasthan state, bordering Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Dhaulpur was a princely state in the British India and was founded by the Jat ruler Maharana Kirat Singh in 1806 AD. The Shergarh ki Baodi, also called as the Jinnat ki Baodi (the Stepwell of Djinn), is situated in the New Shergarh area of the old city. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its well circular shaft at the western end. Built of the famous red sand stone of this area, brought from Sarmathura, the baodi is five-storeyed, with approximately one meter thickness of the side walls. There is a structure on the north of the side wall at the western end of the baodi, which appears to be a sentry post with two medallions with 'Ya Allah' written over them. It indicates that it might have been built by some Muslim noble. The structure has beautiful corbels.



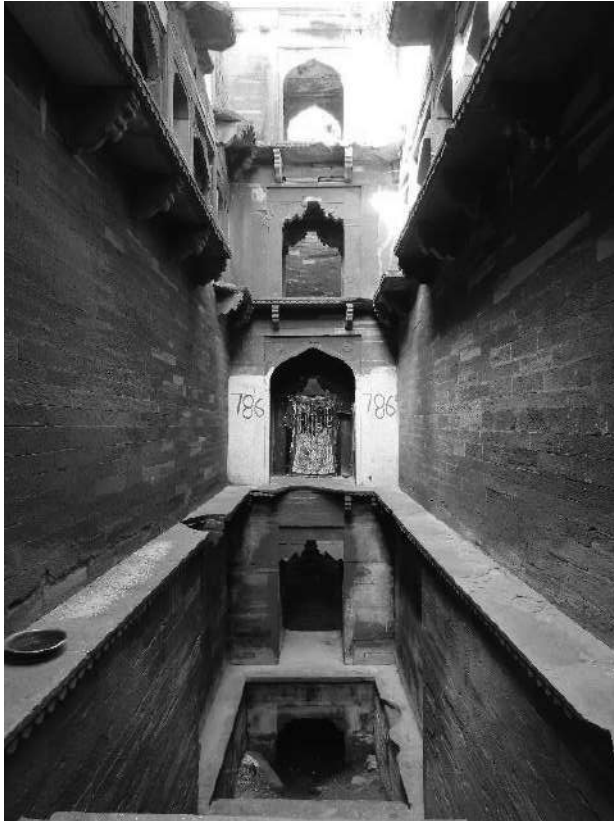
Kotputli-Nagaji ki Baodi- water drawing platform



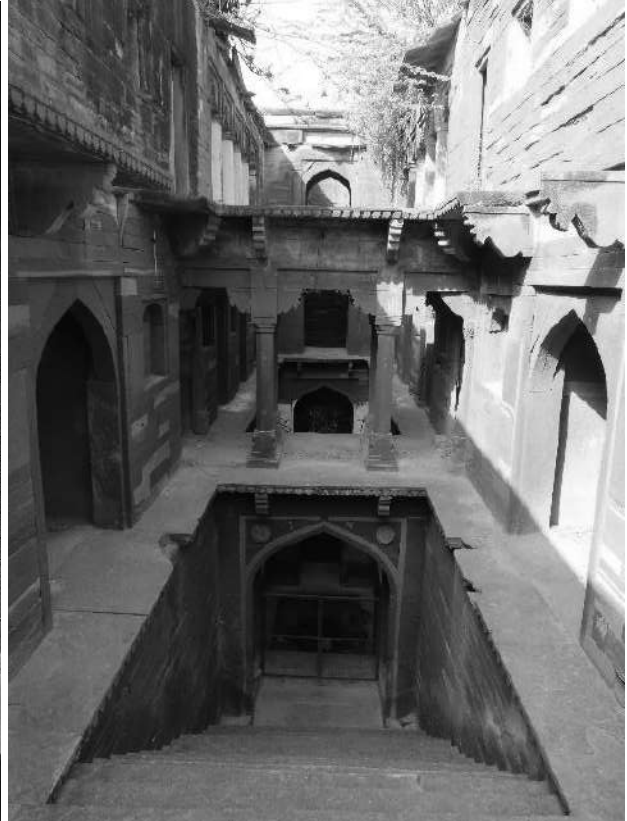
Kotputli-Nagaji ki Baodi-view from the entrance

Nothing has been constructed on the first and the second landings. The first pavilion tower, constructed on the third landing, is two-storeyed. It has a pointed archway on the lower storey and three corbelled-arch openings with four columns and four pilasters on the upper storey. The second pavilion tower has been built on the fifth landing on the edge of the well shaft and is five-storeyed. All the storeys have openings connecting the stepped corridor with the well shaft. Small pavilions have been built on all storeys, except the lowermost one, which is directly opening into the well shaft. These pavilions have single opening with either corbelled arch or pointed arch in both directions connecting with the well shaft. However, the middle storey has pointed arch opening towards the entrance of the stepwell and corbelled-arch opening towards the well shaft. This middle storey pavilion has been converted into a make shift mosque. Steps to go up have been provided in the top pavilion of the first tower. Beautiful brackets support the cantilever chajjas or the side

walkways at all levels. On the top storey, verandahs (pavilions) have been built with corbelled-arch openings inside both the sides of the stepped corridor, between the first and the second pavilion towers. Big niches have been provided in the side walls on the second storey from the top, perhaps to take rest and change clothes. Apart from this, small niches have been built in the side walls, perhaps for keeping lamps and other belongings. The water-drawing arrangements exist on top of the well shaft.



Dhaulpur-Shergarh ki Baodi-five storeyed second pavilion tower



Dhaulpur-Shergarh ki Baodi-two storeyed first pavilion tower

This beautiful stepwell can attract a lot of tourists, if its surroundings and approach road are improved. The access to the stepwell is very difficult and the surroundings are dirty.

94. Royal Stepwell

Dhaulpur, Rajasthan

26° 41' 56" N, 77° 53' 51" E

Elevation: 180 m

Period: 19th century

Also known as the Grand Baodi or Badi (Big) Baodi or Purani (Old) Baodi, it is situated behind the Nihaleswar temple at Dhaulpur, and is said to have been built between 1873 and 1880 AD, during the reign of Maharaja Nihal Singh (r. 1873-1901). Some people say that it belongs to the period of Ibrahim Lodhi (r. 1517-1526). The stepwell is grand in appearance. Oriented in the east-west direction, with circular well shaft on the western end, the red sand stone stepwell is unique for its numerous foliated arches supported on four pillared columns each, surrounding its circular well shaft and columns with twin pillars on both sides of the rectangular stepped corridor. The stepwell is said to be five-storeyed, although only three are visible, as the rest are under water. The circular well, surrounded by pavilion on the top two storeys, has 16 openings on each storey, and the foliated arches supported on columns each with four pillars. All these arches are carved with medallions on both sides and floral designs in the middle.



Dhaulpur-Royal stepwell-view of the stepped corridor with side pavilions from the west



Dhaulpur-Royal stepwell-arched verandah



Dhaulpur-Royal Stepwell-Circular well shaft with foliated arches supported on four pillared columns



Dhaulpur-Royal Stepwell-view from east

Another unique thing is the holes provided on both sides of the niches, made in the side walls of the verandahs and the galleries surrounding the well shaft, to place the mashal or the burning torches for lighting the area. Some of these holes have been plugged, while renovating the stepwell. Each niche had one such hole on either side. The stepwell is one of the main tourist attractions of Dhaulpur and is still in use.

95. Chhoti Baodi

Near Gajra ka Maqbara, Dhaulpur

26° 41' 59" N, 77° 54' 00" E

Elevation: 170 m

Period: Unknown

Another beautiful stepwell similar to the Royal Stepwell in grandeur, known as the Chhoti Baodi (small stepwell), is situated near the Gajra ka Maqbara or the Gajra Tomb across the road, near Maharana Government Higher Secondary School and Bagh Baba Saheb ka Bada Colony. Although being on a smaller scale as compared to the Royal Stepwell, the Chhoti Baodi is grander and much more impressive in terms of architecture.



Dhaulpur-Chhoti Baodi-top plan



Dhaulpur-Chhoti Baodi-circular well shaft with galleries



Dhaulpur-Chhoti Baodi-verandah



Dhaulpur-Chhoti Baodi- view of top storey



Dhaulpur-Chhoti Baodi-decorated arch openings



Dhaulpur-Chhoti Baodi-circular well view of lower storey

Oriented in the east-west direction, with its well shaft in the east, the stepwell is three-storeyed structure with only two storeys visible, as the rest is under water. The entrance is locked, and no details about its key have been made public for the benefit of the visitors. One has to jump over the boundary wall by taking support of the garbage piled up on the other side. Even the name of the stepwell has not been mentioned anywhere, which speaks volume about the negligence of the organisations involved in its upkeep. Two-storeyed arch galleries surround the circular well and the verandahs, with decorated arch openings adorning both sides of the stepped corridor, descending to the water level. The galleries have intricately carved columns and foliated arch openings. Since not many visitors come here, pigeons have made the baodi their home and their droppings are scattered everywhere.

96. Chopda Kund

Dhaulpur, Rajasthan

26° 42' 06" N, 77° 53' 24" E

Elevation: 180 m

Period: 19th century (1856 AD)



Dhaulpur-Chopda Kund

The Chopda Kund and the Shiva Temple were built by Rajdhar Kanhaiya Lal in 1856 AD⁴⁴. He was the maternal uncle of Raj Rana Bhagwant Singh (r. 1836-1868 AD) and was the Diwan of Dhaulpur state. The temple, existing nearby, is a unique example of the 19th century architecture. The water for the kund was received from the Muchkund Tank through pipes, which are now defunct because of encroachment on the land. The Chaumukhi kund--the kund with four faces or entrances--is six storeys deep and has four entrances in the Vijaya style of architecture. It has steps on three sides, while a ramp has been provided on the fourth side. It is made of red sand stone. Two gaumukhs (snouts) exist to channel incoming water into the kund.

⁴⁴ Information put up by the State Government at the site of kund and temple

97. Muchkund Kund

Dhaulpur, Rajasthan

26° 40' 47" N, 77° 51' 56" E

Elevation: 200 m

Period: 8th century



Dhaulpur-Machkund tank

The Muchkund Kund is a stepped pond or tank, built with red sand stone, surrounded by numerous temples, built during 775-915 AD. Muchkund was the 24th Suryavanshi ruler—19 generations before Lord Ram. The legends say that once he fought the demons on the side of Gods and was very tired. When the war ended, he received the blessings of the Gods for a long sleep, with the condition that whosoever wakes him up will get burnt to ashes. A demon called Kal Yavan attacked Lord Krishna and Mathura to help Jarasandh, the ruler of Magadh. Kal Yavan had a boon from Lord Shiva that he could not be defeated in the battlefield. Lord Krishna knew it and he hid himself in such a way that his shadow fell on the sleeping Muchkund. Kal Yavan chased Lord Krishna and thinking that he was hiding there woke up Muchkund. As soon as Muchkund woke up, he looked at Kal Yavan, who was turned to ashes immediately.

The water of the Muchkund Kund is considered very sacred by the Hindus, because of its rich history.

98. Phoolnath Sagar Baodi

Bikaner, Rajasthan

28° 00' 32" N, 73° 16' 33" E

Period: 18th century



Bikaner-Phoolnath ki Baodi

Located on the Karmisar road, the Phoolnath Sagar was earlier known as the Raghunath Sagar or the Mundra Tank, as it was built by the Mundra family, in the memory of Raghunath Mundra in Vikram Samvat 1777 (1720 AD). A saint known as Phoolnath meditated here, and it came to be known as Phoolnath Sagar. There is a stepwell in one of the corners of the tank, known as the Phoolnath Sagar Baodi. The top plan of the steps is square, and there are six steps in square shape. After this, there are four steps in octagonal shape, followed by nine steps in hexadecagon (sixteen-sided polygon) shape. Ultimately, the central tank might have the circular shape, but it's not visible due to the standing water. It is a unique stepwell in this respect. It is said to be 22 ft deep with 22 steps. There are five domical chhatris on one side of the stepwell. Because of its shape, it is said to be in the shape of Sri Yantra, which is known to cleanse our soul, find our ultimate purpose, and bless us with knowledge, health, fame, and fortune. The stepwell still had sufficient water, when visited in the month of April.

99. Titarwada stepwell

Gajner-Kodamdesar Road, Bikaner, Rajasthan

28° 00' 22" N, 73° 04' 09" E

Period: Unknown



Gajner-Titarwada Stepwell-showing pillars of different heigh



Gajner-Titarwada-inlet for water

Another unique stepwell is situated just by the side of the Gajner-Kodamdesar road, about 6 km away from Gajner, and one km from the Bikaner-Kolayat highway, while coming from Bikaner. Gajner is famous for its lake and palace. The stepwell is unique in the sense that it was perhaps built primarily to cater for the birds, as there might not be any water source for birds in those days. There is nothing in this place, even now. The area is bereft of any wetness. I felt it when I visited it in the month of April. There is a Titarwada--sanctuary for quail or pheasant birds--nearby. It was owned by the royal family earlier, but has been handed over to a trust, as informed by a local resident of Gajner who brought me here. The stepwell has pillars of different heights, which could be used by birds for quenching their thirst, depending upon the water level in the stepwell. The rectangular stepwell, built of RR masonry, has steps on one side, which could be used by human beings to fetch water. Water could be stored in the stepwell during rainy season, for which there are two inlets at different levels, with primitive filtering arrangement for keeping out the impurities. The details about who built it, when, and why are not available.

100. Jachcha ki Baodi

Hindaun City, Karauli, Rajasthan

26° 43'56" N, 77° 02'51" E

Elevation: 230 m

Period: 18th century



Hindaun City-Jachcha ki Baodi

The Jachcha ki Baodi is located near the Prahlad Kund and the Narsingh Temple in Hindaun City, a railway station on New Delhi-Mumbai Central railway line and a tehsil in Karauli district. Hindaun City is known as the stone city due to the existence of several industries, dealing in supply of stones and marbles across the globe. The legends say that Lord Narsimha--a reincarnation of Lord Vishnu--killed Hiranyakashyap at this place, the capital of Hiranyakashyap, from which it got its name. According to another legend, the area adjoining the town was a dense forest, which was the abode of a female demon Hidimba, so the place came to be known as Hindvan, which was then corrupted to Hindaun⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ Rajasthan District Gazetteer, Sawai Madhopur, 1981 page 529

This stepwell is said to have been built by Bhai Lakhi Rai Banjara in the 18th century. He is said to be one of the richest traders of Delhi, who came from an area now in Pakistan. According to the legends, water did not appear after the stepwell was excavated. A saint predicted that water will appear in the well, if a pregnant woman (jachcha in Hindi) gives birth to her child in it. That is how it received its name as 'Jachcha ki Baodi'. Some people say that a stone sculpture can be seen lying in the centre of the stepwell, if its water is drained out completely. According to the folklore, water of this stepwell can clean the clothes, without the use of any soap or detergent.

The stepwell has the potential to become a tourist attraction, but for the apathy of the state government. Although the government renovated the stepwell in 2017, the shrubs have appeared again, all around it. It is very difficult to access the stepwell as it is surrounded by thorny bushes on three sides and marshy water on the main entrance. We had to place big boulders in the standing water to cross over.

The stones for construction of this stepwell were brought from the Karauli mines. The tank is square in shape with six levels of pair of steps built on three sides, which could be seen at the time of the visit in July. The water-drawing platform is in the north. An old inscription exists outside the south-east corner of the stepwell, the script of which cannot be deciphered. However, it appears that the year 1790 has been engraved. Hence, I have taken it to belong to the 18th century.

101. High School Baodi

Hindaun City, Karauli, Rajasthan

26° 44' 7" N, 77° 01' 52" E

Elevation: 230 m



Hindaun City-High school baodi -view of the pavilion towers



Hindaun City-High school baodi

There is another stepwell in Hindaun City, located near the High School, on account of which I have named it as the 'High School Baodi'. This stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its circular well at the western end. The stepwell has been built in RR masonry, with columns and

arches of red sand stone. It is said to be seven storeys deep. The stepwell has two pavilion towers (koots). Only the top storey and a part of the storey below it are visible, as the rest of the portion is under water. There are three openings in each direction with multi-cusped, foliated arches on every storey of the first pavilion tower, while the second pavilion tower has three such openings only in one direction, towards the entrance in the east, as this pavilion tower is adjacent to the well shaft. An opening in the wall at each storey has been provided in the second pavilion-tower, which allows water from the well shaft to enter into the stepped corridor. Benches facing the entrance have been provided in the second koot. The columns supporting the arches are carved. There is no information available about who built it and when. The entrance to the stepwell is obstructed by the growth of vegetation, thus requiring proper maintenance.

102. Shahi Snan Grih/Royal Bath

Karauli, Rajasthan

26° 29' 36" N, 77° 01' 59" E

Period: Middle of 19th century (1850 AD)



Karauli-Royal Bath-main entrance archway

Karauli is situated in Rajasthan, at the border of Madhya Pradesh. Karauli was a princely state, which joined the Union of India on 7th April, 1949. The remains of a fort in the form of a sturdy wall surrounding the city can still be seen. The famous temple of Kaila Devi is also situated here. The Karauli state, along with the Jalesar state, was once ruled by Jadon (Yaduvanshi) Rajputs, the

descendents of Lord Krishna. Raja Arjun Pal founded the city of Karauli, also known as Kalyanpuri, in 1348 AD⁴⁶.



Karauli-Royal Bath-view inside pavilion



Karauli-Royal Bath -view from main entrance



Karauli-Royal Bath-pavilion tower in the corner

⁴⁶ Rajasthan district Gazeteer, Sawai Madhopur, 1981 page 532-33

The Royal Bath, also known as Shahi Kund or Shahi Snan Grih, was built by Raja Pratap Pal (r.1837-1849) and Harbaksh Pal (r.1805-1837), on the banks of Bhadrawati River in the middle of the 19th century. Initially, it had very clean water, which used to be supplied to the city. The whole stepwell is below ground level and surrounded on three sides by high walls erected recently, while a temple exists on the fourth side. The entrance gate is locked, purportedly to keep the anti-social elements away. The steps, through a large pointed archway, lead to water in the stepwell from the main entrance. The three-storeyed pavilion towers have been built on all the four corners. These pavilion towers have two archways each, through which the steps descending from four directions can be accessed to reach the central square kund. The pavilions with multi-cusped foliated arch openings towards the kund have been built on the upper two storeys of these pavilion towers. Carved rectangular stone columns support these arches in the main pavilions, while sleek octagonal columns support foliated arch openings in the corners. Below these three-storeyed pavilion towers, pairs of steps have been provided in the middle of all the four sides to reach the water level in the kund. The stepwell has been built of red sand stone.

The Royal Bath of Karauli can become a great tourist attraction because of its unique shape and architecture. Only a little maintenance and cleanliness are required. People are not even aware about its existence, and there is no advertisement in this regard. In my opinion, it would be better if the ASI takes over its maintenance.

103. Jind Baba ki Baodi

Manch, Karauli, Rajasthan

26° 28' 05" N, 76° 55' 47" E

Period: 1250 AD



**Manch-Jind Baba ki Baodi-
pavilion tower**



**Manch-Jind Baba ki Baodi-view
towards entrance with ardh-koot**

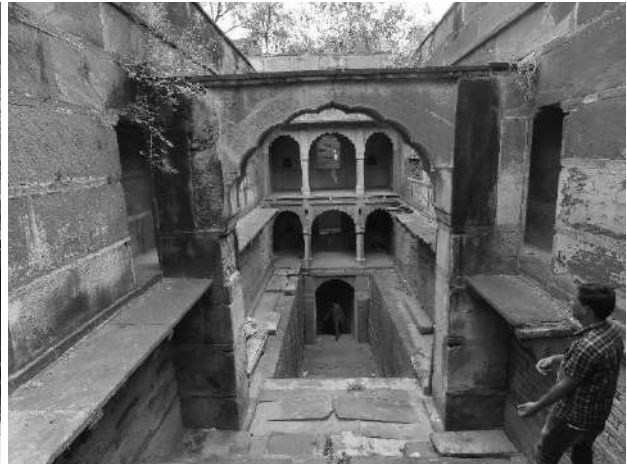


**Manch-Jind Baba ki Baodi -well
shaft**

The Manch village is located on the Karauli-Gangapur City road in Karauli district of Rajasthan state. The stepwell is just on the left-hand side of the road while going to Gangapur City. At the entrance, there is a stone post, called gowerdhan or jal stambha, with the images of Lord Ganesh and Lord Brahma. It also has inscriptions which are, however, illegible due to layers of paint used over time. The entrance is through a door with an arched canopy, which opens into the entrance pavilion. An ardha-koot exists on the first landing, which consists of a large foliated archway. The opening in the side walls has been made on either side of this ardha-koot for crossing over through the ledges to the portion, between ardha-koot and koot. A four-storeyed pavilion tower (koot) has been made on the second landing of the stepped corridor, just before the well shaft. A circular archway exists at the entrance of the well shaft in the lowermost storey. Above this, three multi-cusped or foliated arch openings towards the entrance have been provided on the second and the third storeys, i.e., two middle storeys of the pavilion. All the above three storeys of the pavilion are connected with the well shaft through an opening in each storey. On the topmost storey, a window has been made, which opens towards the entrance. This chamber of the top storey might have been used as a leisure room. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its circular well shaft in the west.



Manch-Jind Baba ki Baodi-view from the entrance pavilion



Manch-Jind Baba ki Baodi-showing the half pavilion and main pavilion tower

The stepwell has been built of red sand stone. The ledges have been provided in the side walls to approach the second and the third storeys of the pavilion tower. Existing supports in the well shaft indicate that the steps were provided initially in the well shaft below the lowermost storey of the pavilion tower. The villagers mentioned that the stepwell is nearly 950 years old and is called as the Jind Baba ki Baodi, as it was built by the djinns in one night.

104. Alanpur Baodi

Alanpur village, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

26° 00' 02" N, 76° 21' 48" E

Period: 15th century



Sawai Madhopur-Alanpur baodi-main axis in east-west direction



Sawai Madhopur-Alanpur baodi-well shaft in the east

The Sawai Madhopur city was founded in its current form by Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh-I (r. 1751-1768) in 1765 AD, though it existed earlier by the name of Ranthambhore. The city is home to the Ranthambhore National Park and Ranthambhore Fort—a world heritage site declared by the UNESCO in 2013. The Alanpur village is on the outskirts of the city at a distance of 3 km.

The Alanpur stepwell is 5 km away from the Sawai Madhopur railway station and situated near the Alanpur circle. This is an L-shaped stepwell, with its entrance from the south and well in the east. The stepwell has been repaired, but there is no water as the whole area surrounding it is heavily built up. It has been built in RR masonry. The two-storeyed pavilion tower, which has a pointed arch opening on both the storeys exist before the well shaft. The water-drawing platform with carved supports is still intact. According to Meena (2009), the Persian inscription, now broken and available in Ranthambhore Fort collections, mentions that this stepwell—also known as the Ghorī Baodi—belongs to the period of Alauddin Fidan Shah, the son of Mahmud Shah Khilji-I, the sultan of Malwa, and was built in AH 874, i.e., 1469-70 AD by Khwaja Jahan, the son of Bir Ali Turk Khurasani.

105. Hatkeshwar Kund

Hatkeshwar Temple, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

25° 59'35" N, 76° 22'32" E

Period: 18th century



Sawai Madhopur-Hatkeshwar kund

The Hatkeshwar Kund is situated in the Hatkeshwar Temple complex in front of the Shani Temple. It is said to be as old as the Sawai Madhopur city itself. Therefore, its period has been taken as the 18th century. It is a square kund, having a water-drawing platform in the north and a pair of steps in the west. The kund is full of water, albeit covered with lichen.

106. Thathera Kund

Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

25.9933092° N, 76.3883906° E

Period: Unknown



Sawai Madhopur -Thathera Kund- view from the western entrance

The Thathera Kund is located in the heart of the Sawai Madhopur city at the second cross roads after the police post. It's a square kund, with its current entrance from the west, though the steps descend to water level from three sides--north, south, and west. Perhaps, the entrances from the north and the south have been closed. The water-drawing arrangement still exists on the east, though the entry from the east has been completely blocked by the houses, whose walls have been raised over the boundary of the stepwell. The kund had sufficient water, even at the end of the summer season in the beginning of July. The kund is 6 km away from the Sawai Madhopur railway station. Thathera literally means coppersmith or brass-smith. Nothing more is known about this kund regarding the time when it was built and who built it.



Sawai Madhopur -Thathera Kund-view from the south

107. Telan Panseri ki Baodi/Balaji ki Baodi

Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

25° 59'27" N, 76° 23'15" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: Unknown



Sawai Madhopur-Telan Panseri ki Baodi

The Telan Panseri ki Baodi, also known as the Balaji ki Baodi, is near the Banki Mata temple on Raj Bagh Road. It is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the east. It has a square well shaft. The water-drawing arrangement has been provided in the north and the south sides of the well shaft. The stepwell has a two-storeyed pavilion tower, which has a big pointed archway in the lower storey, while three pointed-arch openings have been provided in each direction on the upper storey. The arches on the upper storey are supported on eight twin-pillared, carved, and tapered stone columns, out of which four are embedded in the side walls and work as pilasters. The walkways along the side walls have been provided in between the the two levels. The well still has water, but it is full of garbage.

108. Ram Dwara Baodi

Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

25° 59' 08" N, 76° 22' 44" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: 18th century



Sawai Madhopur-Ram Dwara Baodi-steps in the well shaft



Sawai Madhopur -Thathera Kund- view
from the western entrance



Sawai Madhopur -Thathera Kund-
view from the south

The Ram Dwara of Sawai Madhopur belongs to Ram Sanahi sect, which was established in Vikram Samvat 1825, i.e., 1768 AD. It is said that the stepwell was already there, even before the Ram Dwara was established. Thus, the stepwell belongs, at least, to the 18th century and is approximately 250 years old.

The stepwell has been oriented in the north-south direction, with the entrance in the north and the circular well shaft in the south. The stepwell has two koots (pavilion towers). The first pavilion tower, on the first landing, is supported on a large pointed archway. A chamber has been added above it later on as the second storey. The second pavilion tower on the second landing has a pointed archway on each storey. On this landing too, a chamber has been added on the top. The stepwell might have been used initially for irrigating the nearby agricultural fields. The well shaft has spiral steps inside it, and still has some water in it. The baodi is, however, well kept.

109. Kshetrapal Baodi/Sukhwas kund

Sukhwas, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

25° 54' 31" N, 76° 29' 10" E

Elevation: 230 m

Period: 15th/16th century



Sukhvas-Kshetrapal Baodi-central vertical well shaft with steps inside



Sukhvas-Kshetrapal Baodi-view from a corner



Sukhvas-Kshetrapal Baodi

No direction board for the stepwell has been provided on the main road, and it is a difficult work in itself to find and reach the stepwell, which is located about 400 m on the right-hand side of the Sawai Madhopur-Sheopur road in Sukhwas village.

According to the inscriptions available in the stepwell, the Kshetrapal Baodi--also known as the Sukhwas Kund--was built between 1451 and 1526 AD. The stepwell is 15 m x 15m in size and has symmetrical pattern of steps and other structures on all the four sides. It consists of two main parts--a central vertical circular well shaft from which water comes out, and the steps surrounding it on all the sides to access it. The stepwell is built of sand stone. A square chhatri, supported on four columns, has been constructed in each corner of the stepwell.



Sukhvas-Kshetrapal Baodi- framed & carved niche



Sukhvas-Kshetrapal Baodi-corner chhatri supported on four columns

The entrance to the baodi has been provided from all sides, through a pair of steps descending in two directions. A carved and framed niche has been made in this pair of steps. These niches might

have held the sculptures of deities previously, but these are presently empty. The vertical circular well shaft contains spiral stairs to go down the well. Because of the summer season, the water level had gone down, which normally reaches above the top level of the well shaft after rains. Even in the end of June, the water depth available in the well, according to the villagers, was nearly 6 m. The columns, supporting the square chhatris in the corners are beautifully carved. One of these chhatris still has a Shivalinga, worshipped by the people. The figures of kirtimukhs, ducks, and floral patterns have been carved on the stone curtain railing above these niches. These railings were provided to prevent people from falling down. The sculpture of a cow suckling its calf is lying near the jal stambha or goverdhan (stone post), which has the inscriptions and the images of Shivalinga worship. The stepwell has been renovated under corporate social responsibility by the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, a public sector unit of the Government of India, under the supervision of the INTACH.

110. Bazaar Kund

Allapur, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

25° 54' 24" N, 76° 29' 25" E

Elevation: 230 m

Period: 15th/16th century



Allapur Baodi-circular well shaft with steps inside



Allapur Baodi



**Allapur Baodi-jal stambha or
gowardhan**

Allapur can be said to be a twin village of Sukhwas. Both the villages have merged with each other in such a way that one can't say where one ends and the other starts. Allapur is located 25 km away from Sawai Madhopur on the Sheopur road, also called as MP (Madhya Pradesh) road. The Allapur Baodi or kund, usually called the Bazaar Kund, as it is in the village market, and is situated in front of the Radha-Krishna Temple and Gita Bhawan.

The Bazaar Kund of Allapur is similar to the Sukhwas baodi. It has a square shape with four entrances--one on each side and a vertical circular well shaft in the centre of the stepwell. The stepwell has similar steps on all the four sides and inside the well shaft. Four square chhatris, one in each corner, supported on four columns, exist here too. The only difference with the Sukhwas stepwell is that Allapur's Bazaar Kund has not been renovated and is littered with garbage. It is also a little less elegant, when compared with the Sukhwas stepwell. The walls of the surrounding houses have been raised on the boundary of the kund on the north, south, and west sides. A jal stambha or gowardhan (stone post) is fixed in one of the corners, which has no inscription, except the images on all four sides. A part of the courtyard of a particular house has been constructed just above one of the chhatris. The kund is under the village administration, which has closed its eyes from the condition of such a wonderful heritage monument.

111. Allapur Chowki Baodi

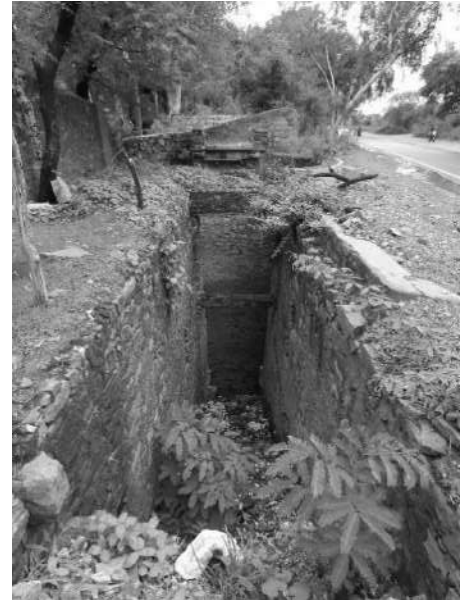
Allapur, Khandar, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

25° 54' 29" N, 76° 29' 36" E

Elevation: 230 m

Period: Not Known

A small stepwell exists on the left-hand side of the Sawai Madhopur-Sheopur road, near the forest post in Allapur village. It is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the west and well shaft in the east. The stepwell, built in CR masonry, is not in use now, though it still has some water. It is, however, full of garbage. It can still provide good yield of water, if desilted and no further construction takes place in its surrounding areas.



Allapur Chowki Baodi



Allapur Chowki Baodi-well shaft

112. Bahrawanda Khurd Baodi

Bahrawanda, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

25° 54' 15" N, 76° 30' 8" E

Elevation: 230 m

Period: Unknown

This stepwell is located just outside the gate of the Government Higher Secondary School of Bahrawanda Khurd and by the right-hand side of the Sawai Madhopur-Sheopur road. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the well shaft in the west and the entrance in the east. Built in RR masonry, the stepwell is crumbling, and filled with vegetation and construction waste. It has a two-storeyed pavilion tower with a single archway in the lower storey and three arched openings on the upper storey. Two water-drawing platforms exist in the well shaft even now, though the water is being taken out through pumps.



Bahrawanda Khurd Stepwell-well shaft



Bahrawanda Khurd Stepwell

113. Bahrawanda Water Works stepwell

Bahrawanda, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

25° 54' 18" N, 76° 31' 27" E

Elevation: 230 m

Period: Unknown



Bahrawanda-Water Works Stepwell-well shaft

This stepwell is inside the water works compound. Leaving aside the well itself, most of the stepwell has been filled up. It was informed by a person taking bath in the stepwell that since the stepwell water contains fluoride, the water is supplied to the village through an RO plant. The stepwell is situated just 50 m inside the Jat Mohalla on the right-hand side of the Bahrawanbda-Khandar road. Its orientation is in the east-west direction, with the well shaft in the east. This stepwell is an example of the way we treat our heritage. Even if the water is not potable, it could be used in agriculture, and its structure could be preserved. This can be done if the authorities are willing to do so.

114. Banzara ki Baodi

Khandar, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

26° 00' 18" N, 76° 35' 57" E

Elevation: 220 m

Period: 18th century

Khandar, located about 40 km away from Sawai Madhopur and situated on the banks of Banas River, is famous for its ancient fort. The confluence of three rivers viz., Banas, Chambal, and Seep rivers, is only 20 km away from Khandar.

The stepwell complex contains a chhatri, supported on 16 columns. The chhatri was built by a banzara about 300 years back. He used to trade with bullock carts. It is said that he owned one lakh bullocks because of which he was called as Lakhi Banzara. In the past, an animal fair used to be organised near this chhatri.



Khandar-Banzara ki Baodi-well shaft



Khandar-Banzara ki Baodi-entrance

The stepwell is just near the chhatri and is about 80 ft deep. The two four-pillared chhatris have been built at the entrance to the stepwell. This is similar to the todas, built at the entrance in the Gujarati stepwells. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction. The square well shaft is in the west,

while the two chhatris adorn the entrance in the east. The chhatris have circular domes with stone finials. There is a pavilion tower, which separates the well shaft from the stepped corridor of the stepwell. This tower appears to be double-storeyed. However, only three multifoil arch openings could be seen, as the rest was under water. The well shaft had a water-drawing arrangement on three sides. The stepped corridor is flanked by verandahs, which have multi-cusped foliated arch openings towards the stepped corridor. The stepwell was well maintained, and filled with clean water at the time of the visit in July. A park has been created enclosing the chhatri and the stepwell by a boundary wall.

115. Keshar Baodi

Khandar, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

26° 00' 39" N, 76° 37' 06" E

Period: Unknown



Khandar-Keshar Baodi

The Keshar Baodi is located about a km away from the Khandar town on the left-hand side of the road to Baler. The stepwell is inside the jungle, at the foothills of the Khandar Fort. It has been built in RR masonry in lime plaster. The stepwell seems abandoned and uncared for. It is a simple stepwell without any special feature. Oriented in the east-west direction, it has the well in the west, with a water-drawing platform.

116. Khari Baodi

Khandar, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

26° 00' 49" N, 76° 36' 10" E

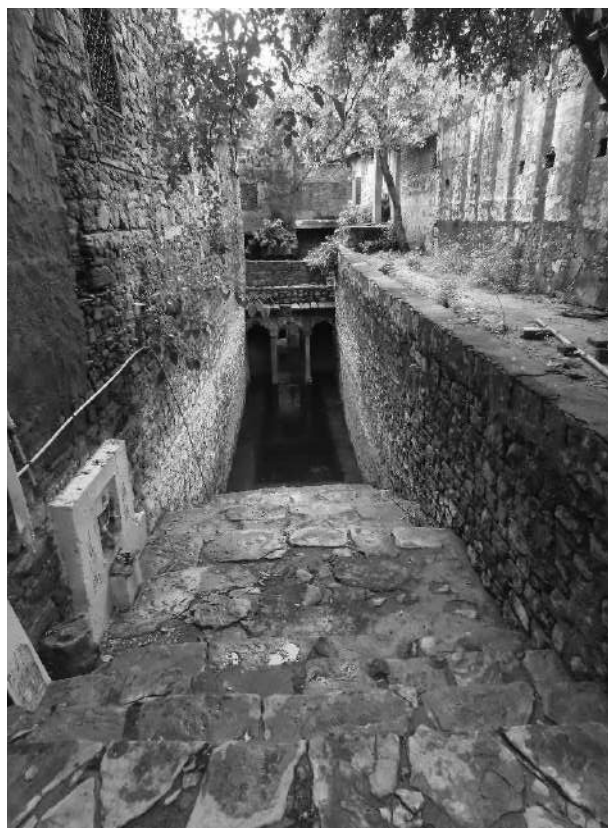
Elevation: 240 m

Period: Not Known

The Khari Baodi is situated inside the Lord Hanuman and Lord Shiva Temple complex, in the heart of the Khandar town. The stepwell is surrounded by houses, which have been raised on its boundary. A resident has made his septic tank, just by the side of the well shaft. The municipality must prevent such unauthorised and unwarranted constructions around the stepwells.



Khandar-Banzara ki Baodi-entrance



Khandar-Banzara ki Baodi-well shaft

The stepwell has been built in RR masonry and has only one pavilion tower, which appears to be double-storeyed. Only the top storey is visible since the remaining part of the stepwell is under water. Three openings with multi-cusped foliated arch openings, supported on square stone columns have been provided in the top pavilion. The pavilions are connected to the well shaft with openings. The stepwell, oriented in the northeast-southwest direction, has its square well shaft on the southwest end. An old benchmark, identified as BOM 160, is also located near the well shaft.

117. Chhan ki Baodi

Chhan, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

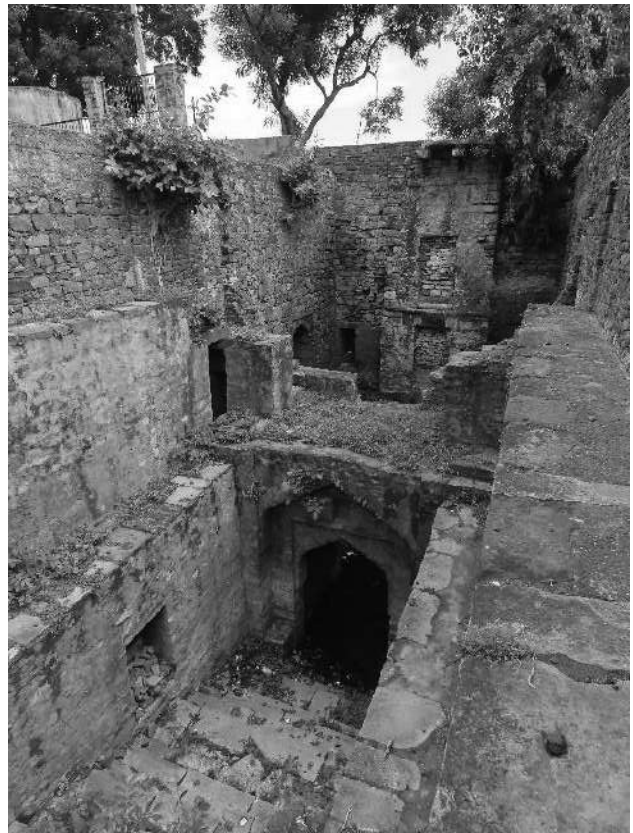
25° 54' 47" N, 76° 27' 60" E

Period: 1711 AD

The stepwell at Chhan is located nearly 50 m on the right-hand side of the road from Sawai Madhopur to Sheopur. A temple called as 'Baodi Wale Hanumanji' exists by the side of the stepwell. There is no direction board for the stepwell on the main road and one has to ask many people to find it. Allauddin Khilji is said to have encamped at Chhan during his attack on the Ranthambhore Fort⁴⁷.



Chhan ki Baodi-well shaft



Chhan ki Baodi-view of the pavilion tower

⁴⁷ Rajasthan District Gazetteer, Sawai Madhopur, 1981 Page 526



Chhan ki Baodi

The Chhan ki Baodi has been built in RR masonry and had initially a two-storeyed pavilion tower, whose top pavilion is now missing. The lower storey has a double arched gateway. The staircases have been provided on both the sides to access the storeys of the pavilion-tower. There is an inscription in the stepwell--though not clear--according to which the stepwell might have been built in Vikram Samvat 1768 (1711 AD)⁴⁸. The stepwell, oriented in the north-south direction, has a square well shaft on the southern end, where a water-drawing platform still exists. From the two openings, which are now closed, on the west side wall of the well shaft, below the water drawing platform, it appears that the pavilions were also made in the south side of the well shaft, with openings towards the well shaft, along with a provision of staircase on both sides.

⁴⁸ Inscription at the stepwell

118. Shankar Chaudhry ki Baodi

Ranthambhore forest, Sawai Madhopur,
Rajasthan

25° 57' 43" N, 76° 22' 06" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: Unknown

The place where this stepwell is located is itself known as the Shankar Chaudhry ki Baodi. It is located on the left-hand side of the road from Sawai Madhopur to Sheopur, inside the Ranthambhore forest at a distance of about 10 km from Sawai Madhopur. Perhaps, it might have been built for animals and cowherds. It is a simple stepwell, just like the Keshar Baodi of Khandar and is oriented in the north-south direction, with the well in the south. A separate trough for animals to drink water has also been provided.



Sawai Madhopur-Shankar Chaudhary ki Baodi



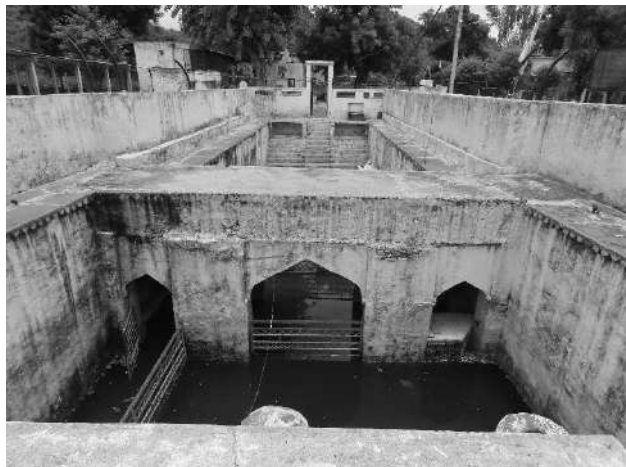
Sawai Madhopur-Shankar Chaudhary ki Baodi-entrance

119. Jind Baba ki Baodi

Lakheri, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 39' 22" N, 76° 11' 33" E

Period: Unknown



Lakheri-Jind Baba ki Baodi-view from the well shaft



Lakheri-Jind Baba ki Baodi-view from the entrance

Many stepwells in Rajasthan state are known by the name of Jind Baba, which are said to have been built by Djinnns or Jind. Another myth prevalent about all such stepwells is that these stepwells were built by Jind in one day or one night. Such mysteries, however, are not substantiated. This stepwell at Lakheri is one more such stepwell.

Lakheri is a sub-divisional town at a distance of 65 km from the district town of Bundi and 75 km from Kota. It boasts of a cement plant of ACC Limited. The Lakheri city is surrounded by the Aravalli range on the three sides, with Mej River flowing on its outskirts.

This stepwell is situated about 100 m from the Lakheri-Indergarh road on the left-hand side, near DAV-ACC Public School, opposite to the Balaji Market. The stepwell complex also has the Gopeshwar Mahadev Temple. It is oriented in the north-south direction, with its well at the southern end and the entrance in the northern end. There are four empty niches on each side wall. There is a pavilion tower in the middle, which appears to be two-storeyed. The top storey has three openings on each side. The openings facing the well have pointed arches--one bigger arch in the middle flanked by two small arches--while those facing the entrance are rectangular openings--the bigger one in the middle, flanked by two smaller ones. The smaller openings on either side of the central openings connect the through passage on the walkways along the side walls. The stepwell, though changed in character by the application of cement plaster in place of the original lime plaster, is well maintained and is full of clean water.

120. Peeliya ki Baodi

Peeliya ki Baodi, Lakheri, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 40' 51" N, 76° 12' 42" E

Period: Unknown



Lakheri-Peeliya ki Baodi

This simple stepwell is located in the village called as 'Peeliya ki Baodi', named after the baodi itself. It is near Bhaupura village on the right-hand side of the road from Lakheri to Indergarh. According to the legends, the water of this stepwell can treat jaundice (literally meaning peeliya in Hindi), because of which the stepwell and the village got their names. The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction, with the well in the north.

121. Raj ki Baodi/Rani ki Baodi

Lakheri, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 42' 52" N, 76° 12' 01" E

Elevation: 270 m

Period: Unknown

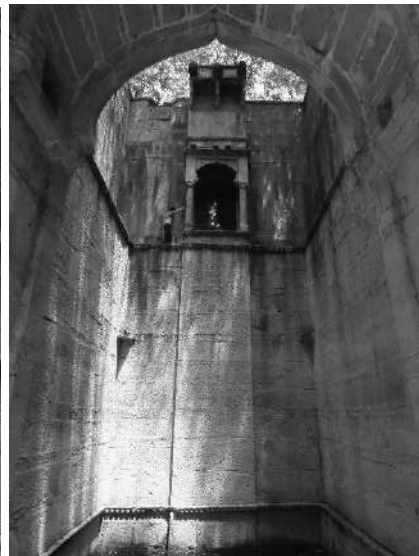
This beautiful, sturdy, and untouched stepwell lies inside the forest, on the right-hand side of the road from Lakheri to Indergarh. It is built in RR masonry, lined with stone tiles. Two framed niches have been made in the side walls at the first landing, which have damaged sculptures. A two-storeyed pavilion-tower separates the well shaft from the stepped corridor. The lower storey of the koot consists of a large pointed archway, while on the upper storey another large pointed arch is flanked by two smaller archways, which connect the passage from the ledges to the well shaft. The square well shaft has a water-drawing platform on the east, below which there is a beautifully framed niche, carved with geometric patterns. The medallions depicting an elephant and a lotus flower have been carved in the spandrels of the lower archway. A trough has been provided for animals to drink water, outside the well shaft. There is a chhatri, supported on eight pillars on the eastern side of the stepwell, which is now in a crumbling state. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the west and the well shaft in the east. There are 56 steps, of nearly one foot rise each, from ground level to the well shaft.



Lakheri-Raj ki Baodi-pavilion tower



Lakheri-Raj ki Baodi-view of the stepped corridor from pavilion



Lakheri-Raj ki Baodi-well shaft with water drawing platform

There is no direction board for the stepwell, and it can't be reached without the help of a local guide, conversant with the forest. The latitude and longitude given by me here can help in finding it. No information about who built this stepwell and when, is available.

122. Lonaba ki Baodi

Lonaba, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 41' 50" N, 76° 12' 41" E

Period: Unknown



Lonaba ki Baodi

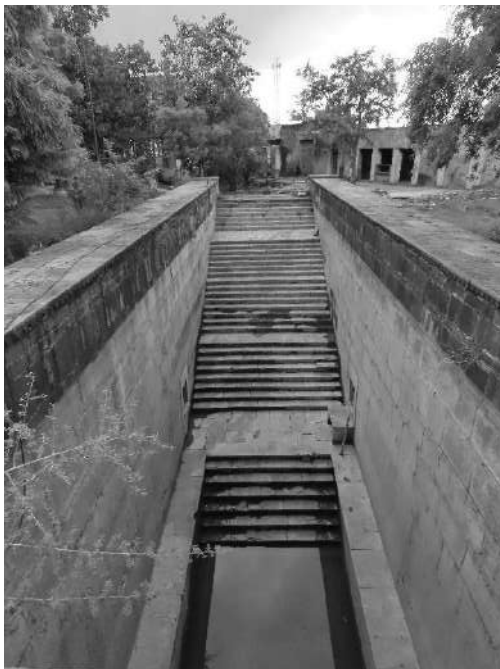
The Lonaba stepwell is located inside a monastery called the 'Maharaj ka Math' at Lonaba, on the right-hand side of the road from Lakheri to Indergarh. Lonaba is the place where the princely Indergarh state used to collect taxes. The well shaft has completely collapsed and is completely filled up. Only the stepped corridor with two-storeyed pavilion tower exists now. The stepwell was built in RR masonry, but the pavilion tower is in CR masonry. An opening on both the sides has been provided in each storey of the pavilion tower. The stepwell is oriented in the northwest-southeast direction, with its entrance in the southeast.

123. Salamdara ki Baodi

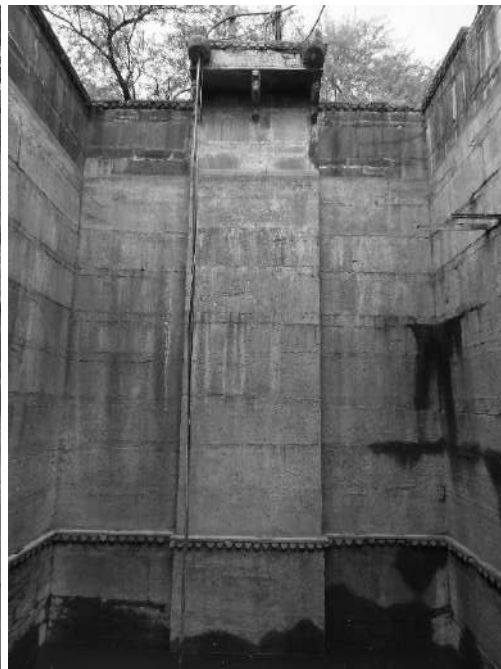
Lakheri, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 40' 34" N, 76° 12' 17" E

Period: 1786 AD



Lakheri-Salamdara ki Baodi- view from the well shaft



Lakheri-Salamdara ki Baodi-well shaft

The Salamdara stepwell is located at Salamdara--an old check post on the borders of erstwhile Bundi and Indergarh states. The remains of the Bundi state check post, with the old gate still exist. It was the post where Bundi state used to collect taxes from those who passed through this gate. Similarly, Indergarh state used to collect taxes at Lonaba, just ahead of this gate where Lonaba ki Baodi is located.

The stepwell, built of stone masonry, is in excellent condition and under active use. It has two framed niches in the side walls on the third landing, where the ledges in the side walls begin. There are four landings with 31 steps in the upper storey. A two-storeyed pavilion tower separates the well shaft from a rectangular tank. The pavilion tower has a multi-cusped foliated archway both on the lower and the upper storeys. On the upper storey, the foliated archway is flanked by two smaller pointed arch openings. These smaller archways connect the ledges along the side walls to the square well shaft. This stepwell is similar to the Raj ki Baodi in construction and style. The lotus medallions have been carved in the spandrels of the foliated arches. A jal stambh (stone post) is fixed at the entrance. There is an inscription on the left side wall at the entrance, according to which this stepwell was perhaps built in Vikram Samvat 1843 (1786 AD). The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the east and well shaft in the west.

124. Toran ki Baodi

Lakheri, Bundi, Rajasthan
25° 40' 22" N, 76° 10' 49" E
Elevation: 240 m
Period: Unknown

The Toran Baodi, located in the heart of the Lakheri town, is known by this name due to the toran gate (victory arch) at its entrance, which existed there but is missing now. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its main entrance in the west and the well in the east. The two other small side entrances on the north and the south have been closed by erecting walls. These entrances are through pointed arch gates, having beautiful stone carvings with lotus medallions carved on each side of the arch. Two empty niches in the side walls in the beginning of the stepwell, just after the side entrances and two in the well shaft exist without any sculptures. A pavilion tower, perhaps two-storeyed, separates the stepped corridor from the well shaft. Due to the standing water, only the top pavilion could be seen. It has three multi-cusped arch openings on both sides, which are flanked by two small rectangular openings, providing access to the pavilions from the ledges in the side walls. The Peepal and Banyan trees, apart from other shrubs, have taken roots in this beautiful stepwell, which are likely to damage its structure, if they are not removed. This stepwell is the biggest and the most beautiful in the Lakheri town and needs to be preserved urgently.



Lakheri-Toran Baodi-view of the entrance from top of the pavilion tower



Lakheri-Toran Baodi-pavilion tower

125. Jind Baba ka Kund

Lakheri, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 40' 21" N, 76° 10' 48" E

Elevation: 240 m

Period: Unknown

The Jind Baba ka Kund, located about 50 m away from the Toran ki Baodi, is a shining example of the administration's apathy towards our heritage. One has to cross the market while coming from the Toran Baodi, through a narrow alley to reach this square tank, which has steps on all four sides. The kund receives dirty sewage of the town and is heavily littered with garbage. Only one entrance remains open, as the other three have been closed by erecting a boundary wall. Each side had steps in the middle to enter the kund. Two framed niches were provided on each of the four sides. Presently, only two niches on one side exist. These niches might have the sculptures of deities, but they are empty now.



Lakheri-Jind Baba ka Kund-showing niches and entrance steps



Lakheri-Jind Baba ka Kund

126. Tamboliyon ki Baodi/Harijanon ki Baodi

Lakheri, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 40' 28" N, 76° 10' 44" E

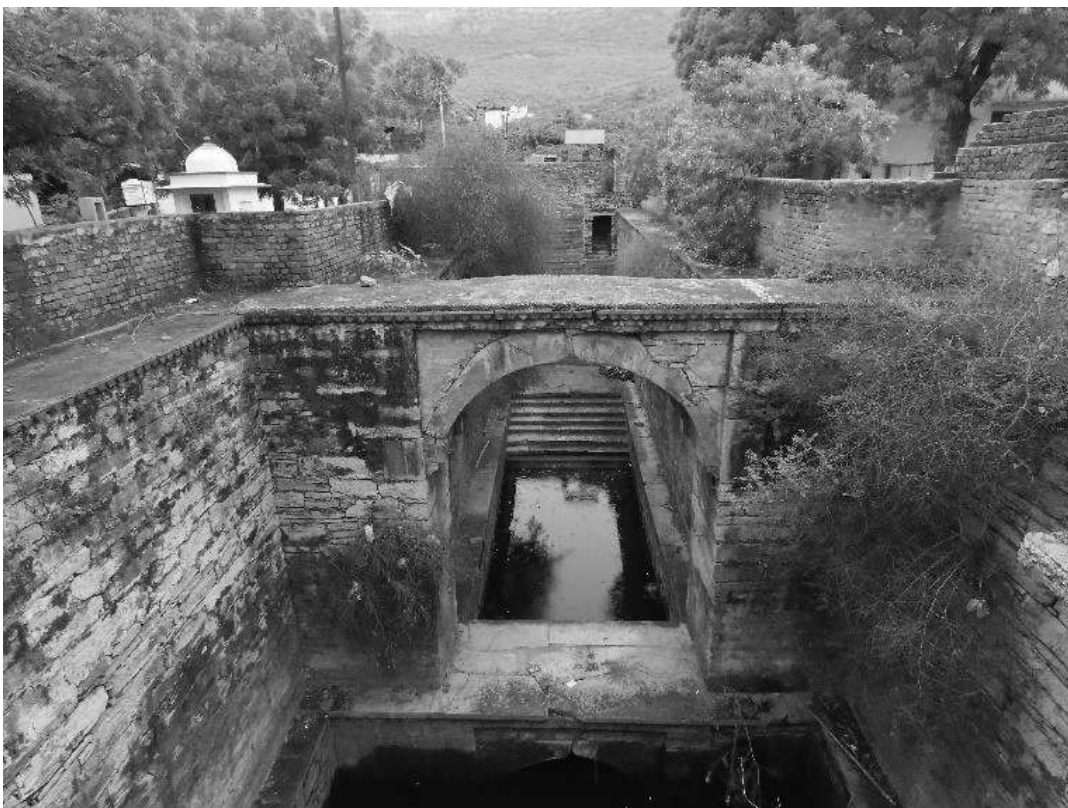
Elevation: 240 m

Period: Unknown

Tamboli is a person dealing with 'paan' (betel). The Tamboliyon ki Baodi, also known as the 'Harijanon ki Baodi', is nearly 200 m away from the Toran Baodi. The stepwell, beside a school, is locked and the key remains with a school teacher, who was not available at the time of my visit. So, I climbed the boundary wall of the stepwell. The stepwell, oriented in almost north-south direction, has its entrance in the north and the well shaft in the south. The entrance has been closed by constructing a brick wall. Thorny bushes have taken roots in the stepwell, which has been built in CR masonry. It is structurally very sound. However, a lot of waste has been thrown inside the well. A water-drawing platform exists in the south. A two-storeyed, half-pavilion tower (ardh-koot) on the second landing separates the well shaft from the stepped corridor. The tower has pointed archways on both the storeys.



Lakheri-Tamboliyon ki Baodi-well shaft



Lakheri-Tamboliyon ki Baodi-view from well shaft

127. Vyas Baodi/Dhobin ki Baodi

Lakheri, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 40' 17" N, 76° 10' 58" E

Elevation: 240 m

Period: Unknown



Lakheri-Vyas Baodi



Lakheri-Vyas Baodi- Two entrances in Bhadra style

The Vyas Baodi, also known as the Dhobin ki Baodi (literally meaning, washerwoman's stepwell), is located beside the Ganesh temple. The stepwell has been built in the Bhadra style with two entrances. It has two side entrances from the north and the south directions. The south side entrance is through the Ganesh Temple. There is no front entry. The well shaft had water-drawing arrangements on three sides, out of which the two in the north and the south exist, while the one in the east is missing now. The stepwell has a two-storeyed pavilion tower; the lower storey had a pointed archway, which is almost fully under water. Lotus medallions have been carved on both sides of this arch. The upper storey has a narrow corridor with a projected balcony on each side in the middle. Two more openings exist in this pavilion on both sides, which connect the walkways along the side walls. The balcony is supported on two exquisitely carved brackets, while its parapet on three sides has beautiful carvings of lotus and other geometric patterns. Two small niches, for keeping lamps, have been made on the sides of the balcony opening. This balcony might have been used as a sitting area to enjoy the cool breeze during summers. The sculpture of Lord Ganesh has been fixed below the balcony and above the lower archway. The roof parapet of the pavilion tower is full with carvings of geometric and floral patterns.

The stepwell is built of dressed stone blocks and is in excellent condition. However, it appears that its control has been taken over by the temple priest, as it is not freely accessible to the public. Practically, both the entrances are blocked and the stepwell is invisible to the public from outside.

128. Ghoom ki Baodi/Jhagdoo ki Baodi

Gendoli, Bundi, Rajasthan

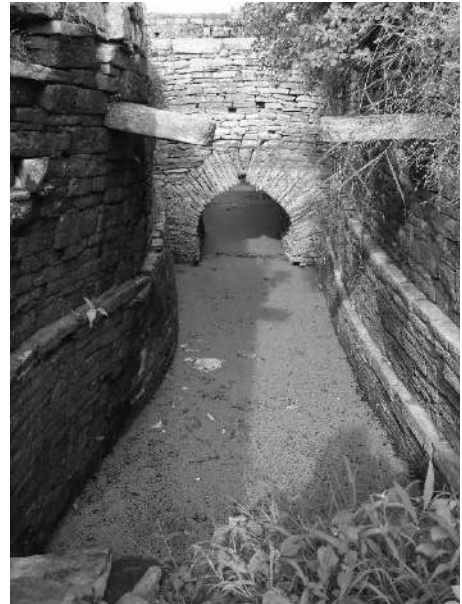
25° 32' 36" N, 75° 59' 47" E

Elevation: 250 m

Period: Unknown

The Ghoom ki Baodi is known by this name due to its location at the turn of the road from Lakheri to Bundi. Ghoom literally means 'turn' in Hindi. It is also called as the 'Jhagdoo ki Baodi', which has a story behind it. According to the legends, a man eloped with the wife of another man, for which he had to pay some fine--as fixed by the villagers--out of which one was to build this stepwell. Therefore, the stepwell came to be called as the 'Jhagdoo ki Baodi'. Jhagdoo literally means one who fights or is quarrelsome. This stepwell always has water, since it is away from the built-up area and still in active use.

The stepwell, built in CR masonry without any plaster, has two ardh-koots with pointed arches. It is oriented in the east-west direction, with its circular well shaft in the east and the entrance in the west.



Gendoli-Ghoom ki Baodi-first ardh-koot



Gendoli-Ghoom ki Baodi-showing well shaft and the second ardh-koot

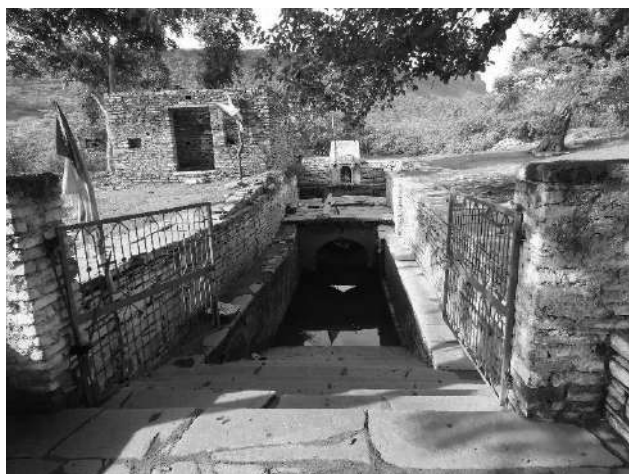
129. Nayi Baodi

Gendoli, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 32' 58" N, 75° 59' 28" E

Elevation: 250 m

Period: Unknown



Gendoli-Ghoom ki Baodi-showing well shaft and the second ardh-koot



Gendoli-Nayi baodi-well shaft

Situated at the foothills of the Aravalli range, on the banks of a lake, the Nayi Baodi (new stepwell) is oriented in the northeast-southwest direction, with its square well shaft at the northeast end, and the entrance from the southwest end. A big banyan tree adorns the entrance of the stepwell. A jal stambh or goverdhan (stone post) is also fixed at the entrance. The place is infested with langurs (black-faced monkeys). A stone trough for animals also exists at the entrance. The stepwell, built in CR masonry without any plaster, has two pavilion towers with pointed archways. It is similar to the Ghoom ki Baodi in style and material of construction, except that its well is square against the circular well shaft of the Ghoom ki Baodi.

130. Raoli ki Baodi

Gendoli, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 32' 56" N, 75° 59' 09" E

Elevation: 250 m

Period: Unknown



Gendoli-Raoli ki Baodi

The Raoli ki Baodi is located near the temple of Raoli ka Mahadev. This place holds graves (samadhis) of many nobles, because of which it is called as Raoli. Rao means a noble. The stepwell is at the foothills and full of water. It has been constructed in CR stone masonry, without any surface plaster. It has a single storeyed half-pavilion tower (ardh-koot), which separates the well shaft from the stepped corridor. The half-pavilion is supporting the side walls against the earth pressure. The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction, with its entrance from the south and well in the north. The water-drawing platform (dhana in local language) has been provided on the western side of the well shaft. A jal stambh or goverdhan is fixed at the entrance of the stepwell.

131. Khari Baodi/Chittora ki Baodi

Gendoli, Bundi, Rajasthan

25.545405° N, 75.990025° E

Elevation: 250 m

Period: Unknown



Gendoli-Khari Baodi-view of the entrance from the well shaft



Gendoli-Khari Baodi-pavilion tower



Gendoli-Khari Baodi-well shaft



Gendoli-Khari Baodi-view from the entrance

The Khari Baodi, also known as the Chittora ki Baodi, is in the heart of Gendoli village. This stepwell, oriented in the north-south direction, with its square well shaft in the south, is built of dressed stone masonry. The surroundings of the stepwell are very dirty, with a lot of garbage thrown inside it.

A two-storeyed pavilion tower separates the well from the stepped corridor. Due to the standing water, only the top storey was visible, which has a large pointed archway, flanked by two small openings for entry into the well shaft through the ledges in the side walls. Medallions of lotus and elephant have been carved in the spandrels of the arch. Two framed niches--empty at present--

exist in the side walls. Another niche exists at the entrance. The sculpture of Lord Ganesh has been carved in the well shaft, below the water-drawing platform (dhana). Thorny bushes cover the access to the well shaft at the ground level. The sculptures of damaged Shivalinga and Nandi are lying near the entrance. The steps for the entrance into the stepwell are provided on the two sides in the beginning. The site as well as the stepwell, both require urgent cleaning and renovation.

132. Bada Kund

Gendoli Khurd, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 32' 35" N, 75° 59' 03" E

Elevation: 240 m

Period: Unknown



Gendoli-Bada Kund-North Entrance



Gendoli-Bada Kund-east & west entrances



Gendoli-Bada Kund-pavilion and water hauling arrangement in the south



Gendoli-Bada Kund-view from the north

The Bada Kund or the 'Big Tank' is situated outside Gendoli village, near the Hanuman Mandir. The steps have been provided in the tank on three sides--east, west, and north. The main entrance is from the north. This stepwell always has water, since it is away from the built-up area and still in active use. A water-drawing arrangement exists on the southern side. The sculpture of Lord Mahadev and His consort, Parvati, sitting atop Nandi, exists in a big niche in the pavilion below the

water-drawing platform. The pavilion in the south has three multi-cusped arch openings. Each column of the pavilion consists of twin octagonal stone pillars. The capitals of these columns are carved with floral patterns. The spandrels of the arches are carved with lotus medallions. The pavilion roof is carved with an octagonal figure, having a lotus flower in the middle and the eight corners of the octagon and with a human figure in the middle of each side of the octagon, connected with ropes. A jal-stambha is fixed outside the kund. The projection of the water-drawing platform is supported on four beautifully carved brackets. The stepwell is in excellent condition and gives a royal and serene look. It has a potential to be a big tourist attraction, if developed properly.

133. Bagh ki Baodi/Shah ki Baodi

Gendoli, Bundi, Rajasthan

25° 32' 34" N, 75° 59' 36" E

Elevation: 230 m

Period: Unknown



Gendoli-Bagh ki Baodi-pavilions at the junction of two axes



Gendoli-Bagh ki Baodi-showing pavilion near well shaft

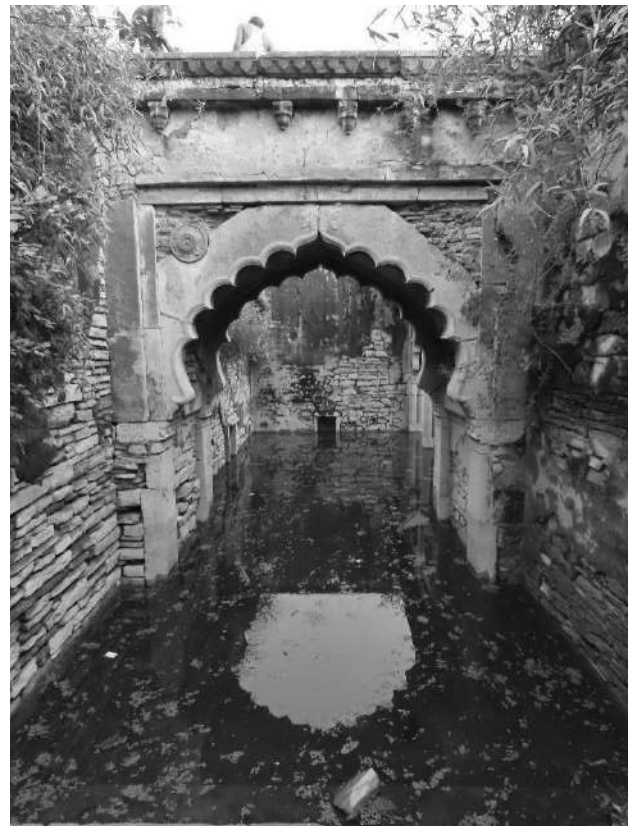


Gendoli-Bagh ki Baodi-long axis



Gendoli-Bagh ki Baodi-well shaft

The Bagh ki Baodi, also known as the Shah ki Baodi, is situated in the middle of agricultural fields, at one end of Gendoli Khurd village. Built in CR masonry, the L-shaped stepwell is full of water and in active use for irrigation purposes. Its long axis is in the east-west direction, while the short axis is in the north-south direction. The square well shaft is in the west. Two water-drawing platforms were initially built on two sides of the well shaft, out of which only one is intact. The water is taken out with the help of diesel pumps now. These platforms were supported on beautifully carved brackets. There are three pavilion towers in the stepwell, of which only the uppermost storey is visible; the rest being under water. Two pavilion towers have been built at the junction of two axes of the L-shaped stepwell, out of which the one on short axis has a multi-cusped arch opening on each side, while the one on the longer axis has three such openings on each side. The third pavilion tower is at the edge of the well shaft, which has a single multi-cusped arch opening. Lotus medallions have been carved in the spandrels of all the arch openings. This stepwell has a unique L-shaped structure, built in CR masonry.



Gendoli-Bagh ki Baodi-pavilion on the short axis

134. Jamuna Baodi

Kota, Rajasthan

25° 11' 59" N, 75° 51' 17" E

Period: 1715 AD

The Jamuna Baodi is located near the Shiv Mandir, opposite the MBS Hospital in Narayanpura area of Kota city. Its name has been derived from the Jamuna Paltan (Platoon) of Maharaja of Kota's army, which used to camp here in 1905. According to the inscription on the temple, the stepwell was built in Vikram Samvat 1772 (1715 AD)⁴⁹, when Maharao Bhim Singh-I ruled over Kota from 1713 to 1720 AD. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the east and the well shaft in the west. It has only one pavilion tower which separates the well shaft from the stepped corridor. The road by the side of the stepwell is named after the stepwell as the Jamuna Baodi Marg.



Kota-Jamuna Baodi-view from the entrance on east



Kota-Jamuna Baodi-sculpture of Lord Indra on Airawat elephant carved on well shaft

It has a single-storeyed pavilion tower with multi-cusped arch way. Lotus medallions have been carved in the arch spandrels. The water-drawing platform is still intact and has the sculpture of Lord Indra, sitting on an elephant carved below the platform. The ledges have been built along both the side walls from the entrance to the well shaft. There are two niches in the beginning of the side walls on the first landing. One of these niches has the sculpture of Lord Varah, a reincarnation of Lord Vishnu. The sculptures of various deities, including Lord Ganesh, adorn the niches in front of the temple.

⁴⁹ Inscription at the temple near the stepwell

135. Abli Meeni Baodi

Kota, Rajasthan

25° 11' 30" N, 75° 51' 10" E

Period: 17th century

Abli Meeni or Abla Meeni was a khawasan, kept of Rao Mukund Singh of Kota, who ruled from 1648 to 1658 AD. He saw her while hunting, and as she was very beautiful, he brought her along. Abla Meeni built this stepwell in Kota⁵⁰.



Kota-Abli Meeni Baodi-well shaft surrounded with corridors having openings towards well shaft



Kota-Abli Meeni Baodi-side verandahs facing stepped corridor



Kota-Abli Meeni Baodi-view towards entrance in the north



Kota-Abli Meeni Baodi-view towards the well shaft and the pavilion

The Abli Meeni Baodi is situated inside the office complex of the Junior Engineer of the Public Health Engineering Department in the Nayapura area. The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction,

⁵⁰ Mohan Lal Gupta, Kota, page 83

with its well at the southern end. It has two side entrances on the eastern and the western sides. The stepped corridor is flanked by verandahs on both the sides, supported on pointed arches, and has multi-cusped arch openings on both sides, towards the stepped corridor. These arch openings on the eastern side have been closed, perhaps to use the space as a store. On the northern end, a stone bench, having a lion faced arm-rests with lotus medallion carved on them has been kept. The bench faces towards the well. A pavilion tower, perhaps two-storeyed, with multi-cusped arch openings on each side on the top storey has been provided at the edge of the well. The corridor on the top storey of the pavilion tower, in the east-west direction, is also supported on the pointed arches, just like the corridors on both sides of the stepped corridor. The well shaft also has corridors on all the sides with arch openings. Not much can be seen due to the standing water, which is quite dirty and covered with algae.

136. Naga Baba Kund/Baodi

Kota, Rajasthan

25° 11' 17" N, 75° 50' 54" E

Period: Not Known



Kota-Naga Baba Kund-another view



Kota-Naga Baba Kund

The Naga Baba stepwell is situated inside the Naga ji ka Bagh in Kota. It has steps on all the four sides. The water-drawing platform is on the north side. Some pipes have been laid across the stepwell, which are hanging in air, thereby, spoiling the beauty of the stepwell. The water of the stepwell is being used for gardening.

137. Gopal Niwas Bagh Baodi

Kota, Rajasthan

25° 11' 29" N, 75° 51' 00" E

Period: Unknown



Kota-Gopal Niwas Bagh Baodi-view from the entrance



**Kota-Gopal Niwas Bagh Baodi-view
from the well shaft**

This stepwell is near the Balaji Hanuman temple. Oriented in the north-south direction, its entrance is in the south and the well shaft in the north. While a water-drawing platform exists in good condition, another one is left with supports only. The stepwell, quite narrow in width, around 7 ft wide, has four niches in the sidewalls--two on each side. However, the sculptures are missing from these niches. The water is being used for gardening. The top storey of the sole pavilion tower can be seen with a single multi-cusped arch opening; the rest being under water. Gopal Niwas Bagh is a beautiful garden, located in front of the Nagaji ka Bagh and Kshar Bagh in the Nayapura area of Kota city. Built in RR masonry, the stepwell has been re-plastered recently.

138. Chhatra Vilas Garden Stepwells

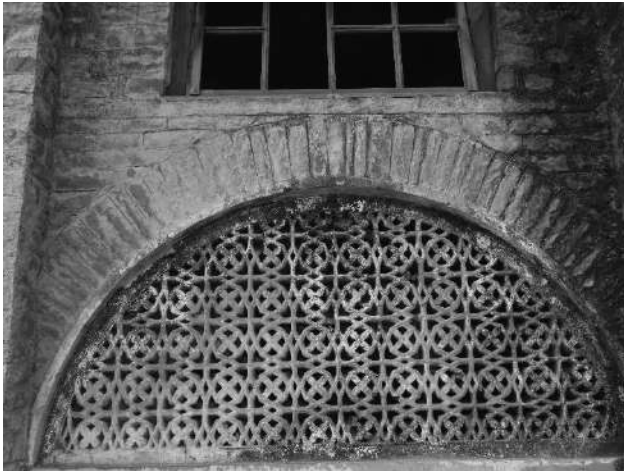
Kota, Rajasthan



Kota-Chhatra Vilas Garden-Jind Baba ki Baodi-well shaft



Kota-Chhatra Vilas Garden-Octagonal well



Kota-Chhatra Vilas Garden-jali work in the Queen's Swimming pool



Kota-Chhatra Vilas Garden-Queen's Swimming pool

The Chhatra Vilas Garden is situated near the Kshar Bagh and the Gopal Niwas Bagh. It contains the cenotaphs of the rulers of Bundi and Kota princely states, and a few stepwells apart from the sprawling gardens and water bodies, like lakes. I could see at least four stepwells inside the Chhatra Vilas Garden.

- i. The Baba ki Baodi is a square shaped structure, located at $25^{\circ} 11' 11''$ N and $75^{\circ} 51' 15''$ E. It has a water-drawing platform, though the water is now pumped out with diesel pumps for gardening.

- ii. The octagonal well, built in RR masonry and having spiral steps inside the well shaft, is located at $25^{\circ} 11' 17''$ N and $75^{\circ} 51' 13''$ E. It has been renovated with cement plaster recently.
- iii. Queen's Swimming Pool, housed inside a beautiful, old building with exquisite jali (lattice) work is now closed. It is located at $25^{\circ} 11' 15''$ N and $75^{\circ} 51' 11''$ E.
- iv. The Jind Baba ki Baodi, having an octagonal well shaft in the east and the entrance in the west, is located at $25^{\circ} 11' 17''$ N and $75^{\circ} 51' 4''$ E. This stepwell has steps descending inside the well shaft from two directions.



Kota-Chhatra Vilas Garden-spiral steps descending inside octagonal well



Kota-Chhatra Vilas Garden-Baba ki Baodi

All these stepwells except the Queen's Swimming Pool are in use. There are some other simple wells in the garden.

139. Sagar-Sagari Stepwell

Mandalgarh Fort, Bhilwara, Rajasthan

25° 12' 37" N, 75° 5' 40" E

Elevation: 490 m

Period: 12th century



Mandalgarh Fort-Sagar stepwell-showing steps on the north side

The Mandalgarh fort is situated at a height of 1850 ft, above mean sea level on a hill in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan. It was initially built by Chauhan Rajputs in the 12th century. The Rana Kumbha (r.1433-1468) is believed to have rebuilt it on the remains of an old fort in the 15th century. However, according to legends, it was built by Chanana Gurjar, who named it after Mandiya Bhil, and said to have found the Paras or the Philosopher's stone and given it to Chanana Gurjar. It is also said that it got its name 'Mandalgarh' due to its mandal (round) shape.

The fort has two big stepwells known as 'Sagar-Sagari'. Mandalgarh was used by Mughals to launch attacks on Mewar. Man Singh-I of Amber stayed here for a month for preparation, before attacking Rana Pratap in the Battle of Haldighati in 1576 AD.



Mandalgarh Fort-Sagar stepwell-north-south axis



Mandalgarh Fort-Sagar stepwell-view from the south



Mandalgarh Fort-Sagari stepwell

The bigger tank, known as Sagar, is built on the north-south axis. The steps have been made mainly on the north side, but quite a few steps have also been made on the east and the west sides on the stepwell. A water-drawing arrangement also exists on the west. Rain water comes from the southern side and gets stored in the stepwell. The smaller tank, known as Sagari, is located at $25^{\circ} 12' 43''$ N & $75^{\circ} 5' 38''$ E, near a mosque. It is also called Dev-Kund, as informed by the local people. One can imagine the Herculean work which must have been done in constructing this stepwell in a completely rocky terrain in those days. Such foolproof arrangements for storing water were necessary to make the forts impregnable and invincible.

140. Neelkanth Mahadev Baodi

Begun, Chittaurgarh, Rajasthan

24° 59' 29" N, 75° 01' 11" E

Period: 1702 AD



Begun-Neelkanth mahadev ki Baodi -view from the west



Begun-Neelkanth mahadev ki Baodi-well shaft



Begun-Neelkanth mahadev ki Baodi-view from east



Begun-Neelkanth mahadev ki Baodi-upper storey of the pavilion tower



Begun-Neelkanth mahadev ki Baodi-toran on the north side of the stepped corridor



Begun-Neelkanth mahadev ki Baodi-northwest corner of the well shaft



Begun-Neelkanth mahadev ki Baodi -niche with temple shikhar type pediment in the sidewall

Because of being located opposite the Neelkanth Mahadev Temple in Begun, this stepwell came to be known as the Neelkanth Mahadev Baodi. On the left side of the entrance, there is a double niche (a niche inside another niche), with no sculpture in it. As we go up the top level, a toran (victory

gate) stands on the right-hand side of the platform. Lord Ganesh has been carved in the middle of its beam, while the columns have been carved with floral patterns. As we proceed ahead on the platform, we see a double-storeyed pavilion tower. The lower storey of the tower consists of a multi-cusped archway, while the upper storey has five openings on both sides. The spandrels of the lower storey arch have beautiful carvings of lotus medallions. The niches in the side walls



Begun-Neelkanth mahadev ki Baodi-entrance to the stepwell

of lower storey are framed and have temple shaped carvings above the frame. Beautiful sculptures of Lord Brahma, mounted on his vehicle swan, and an elephant with warriors mounted on it, exist inside these niches on the lower level. Beautiful brackets support the ledges in the side walls of the stepwell on the two levels. The upper pavilion is supported on ten rectangular columns, carved with floral patterns. The square well shaft has projected balconies with five openings (three in the front and two on sides) each on the two upper storeys. Below the lower storey, the sculpture of Lord Shiva has been made in a framed niche. However, the architectural beauty of the stepwell apart, the whole stepwell is full of garbage thrown in by the public.

Four circular-domed chhatris adorn the four corners of the well shaft. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the east and well shaft in the west. On the north of the well shaft, projected sit-outs have been built and, on the south, there is a niche with a sculpture. It appears that there was a water-drawing platform on the northern side of the well shaft.

There is an inscription in the stepwell which is illegible, but it indicates towards Vikram Samvat 1759, i.e., 1702 AD, when it might have been built at a cost of Rs. 10,629/-⁵¹

⁵¹ Inscription at the stepwell

141. Devra Baodi

Begun, Chittaurgarh, Rajasthan

24° 59' 04" N, 75° 01' 09" E

Period: 17th century



Begun-Devra Baodi-view from the south

The Devra Baodi, similar to the Neelkanth Mahadev Baodi, is another beautiful stepwell in the Begun town. There are beautiful chhatris and a temple flanking the stepwell. This stepwell is aligned in the north-south direction, with its entrance in the north and square well shaft in the south. It has a trough for animals on the left-hand side of the entrance. A big niche on each side of the entrance has been made. As compared to the Neelkanth Mahadev Baodi, its pavilion tower has no pavilion in it and can be termed as a half-pavilion (ardh-koot), separating the well shaft from the stepped corridor. It has a very large pointed archway, covering the two levels. An empty niche exists in each side wall at the first landing. Medallions of lotus and a camel with riders are carved in the spandrels of the half-pavilion arch. A pair of elephants also adorns each side of the archway. The well shaft has small pavilions on the two upper storeys, projected into the well shaft. Each pavilion has five multi-cusped, foliated arch openings, towards the well shaft--three in the front and two in the sides.



Begun-Devra Baodi-view from the north



Begun-Devra Baodi-entrance from the north



Begun-Devra Baodi-half pavilion tower (ardh-koot)

The pavilion on the lower level is supported on four columns, while that on the upper level is supported in eight columns, providing a larger space inside. The spandrels of the arches on the upper storey are carved with lotus medallions. The capitals of the two middle columns of the upper pavilion are carved-- one with the image of Lord Ganesh. These pavilions are just below the water-drawing platform. The ledges have been adorned with the carvings of



Begun-Devra Baodi-well shaft with pavilions

geometrical patterns. A circular domed chhatri, supported on four carved stone pillars, has been built on each of the four corners of the well shaft, just like the Neelkanth Mahadev Baodi. The stepwell is built of stone masonry. The Devra Baodi was built in 1663 AD, during the period of Rawat Raj Singh,⁵² who was the Thikanedar or Thakur of Begun from 1628 to 1677 AD.

⁵² Ojha, Pashchimi Bharat mein Jal Prabandhan page 140

142. Devra Kund

Begun, Chittaurgarh, Rajasthan

24° 59' 07" N, 75° 01' 07" E

Period: 1697 AD



Begun-Devra Kund-view from the east

Only about 100 m away from the Devra Baodi, there is another stepwell, also known as the Devra Baodi locally. I have renamed it as the Devra Kund, just to differentiate them from each other. Moreover, since this one is more in the shape of a kund, the Devra Kund appears to be better.

The Devra Kund has a well or kund in the centre and is surrounded by the steps on three sides. A two-storeyed pavilion-tower is on the west, while the water-drawing platform is on the north. The pavilion on the lower storey is built with the multi-cusped foliated arch openings, supported on tapered twin-pillared columns, while the pavilion on the upper storey is built with pointed arch openings, supported on square columns. The sculpture of a deity is carved on the level below the lower pavilion. There are several chambers to take rest on these two storeys. The top storey has projected balcony on each side of the pavilion. The semi-circular balconies are supported on beautiful brackets, and their roofs are supported on four sleek octagonal stone pillars. The curtain railing of the balconies has lotus medallions carved on them, though a part of the railing is missing now. An elephant's sculpture has been erected in the two corners on the eastern side of the kund.



Begun-Devra Kund



Begun-Devra Kund-pavilion on the middle storey



Begun-Devra Kund-projected balcony



Begun-Devra Kund-sculpture of an elephant in the corner

There is an inscription which has not been translated, but it indicates Vikram Samvat 1754, i.e., 1697 AD, when its construction might have been completed starting from Vikram Samvat 1752, i.e., 1695 AD⁵³. At that time, Rawat Anup Singh (r.1692-1700 AD) was the Thakur of Begun Thikana. It is said that he built the kund in Dil-Khushhal Bagh (garden)⁵⁴. There appears to be a Jain sculpture in the inscription. This beautiful stepwell is crumbling and needs urgent repairs.

143. Bheemji ki Baodi/Balaji ki Baodi

Begun, Chittaurgarh, Rajasthan

24° 59' 11" N, 75° 00' 43" E

Period: Unknown



Begun-Bheem ji ki Baodi



Begun-Bheem ji ki Baodi-jal stambh or goverdhan at the entrance

This stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the east. It has a two-storeyed pavilion tower, having three multi-cusped foliated arch openings on each side on the upper storey, while the lower storey has a single multi-cusped archway. The stepwell is full of garbage, thrown by the villagers. The Banyan and Peepal trees have taken roots in the stepwell, which would damage the structural stability of the stepwell. A jal stambh or goverdhan (stone post) is fixed near the entrance with the sculpture of Lord Ganesh on it.

⁵³ Inscription at the kund.

⁵⁴ Ojha, Pashchimi Bharat mein Jal Prabandhan page 140

144. Sultan Singh Baodi

Bedla, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 38' 02" N, 73° 41' 29" E

Elevation: 590 m

Period: 18th century (1717 AD)



Udaipur-Bedla-Sultan Singh Baodi- view of the pavilion tower

Bedla, 4 km from Udaipur city, was a jagir or thikana under the Mewar state. The ancestor of the family, Rao Chandrabhan Chauhan aided Maharana Sangram Singh of Mewar and was killed in the Battle of Khanwa in 1527 against Babur. For his support, his descendents were granted the jagir of Bedla, consisting of 111 villages.

According to the inscriptions available on both the side walls at the entrance, the stepwell was built by Rao Sultan Singh (also spelled as Surtan Singh), the son of Sabal Singh Chauhan of Bedla in Vikram Samvat 1774 (1717 AD) at a cost of Rs. 73,780/-⁵⁵. A temple and a garden were also constructed along with the two-storeyed stepwell.

⁵⁵ Inscription at the stepwell



Udaipur-Bedla-Sultan Singh Baodi-view of the columns



Udaipur-Bedla-Sultan Singh Baodi-view from the well shaft

On the top storey, verandahs (pavilions) supported on four pillars have been provided on all the four sides surrounding the quadrangular well shaft. A niche has been provided in each pavilion surrounding the well shaft at the top level. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the east. Built of stone masonry, it has two-storeyed pavilion tower. The steps from the ground level entrance descend to the lower storey of the two-storeyed pavilion, having corbelled archway in both the directions, connecting the stepped corridor and the well shaft. The sculptures of Lord Ganesh on the right-hand side and another deity on the left side, adorn the entrance of the stepwell. A band of geometric patterns runs across the length and width of the stepwell, along the top edges. A niche exists in each side wall on the first landing, just after the entrance. The niches are now empty. Similar niches exist just before the corbelled archway in the lower storey and in the pavilions surrounding the well shaft on the top storey. The beautifully carved columns have distinguishable bases, shafts, and capitals. The columns of the pavilion on the upper storey facing the entrance, above the corbelled arch, are built in such a way that they appear to be twin-pillared, but the column is a single unit carved out from the same stone block. The columns of the side pavilions, surrounding the well shaft on the three remaining sides have a single pillar. The mason marks in the form of their names like 'Champo' and 'Lashu' can be seen on the stone pieces in the stepwell.



Udaipur-Bedla-Sultan Singh Baodi-view from the entrance

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, had mentioned about the efforts made by local people in cleaning this baodi, in one of the episodes of his 'Mann ki Baat' in 2022. However, the stepwell is back to the same condition and full of garbage, thrown by the visitors.

Another stepwell known as 'Sai ji ki Baodi' is located in Purohitwadi of Bedla at 24° 38' 08" N & 73° 41' 31" E, about 100 m away from the Sultan Singh ki Baodi. It is oriented in the east-west direction, with square well shaft full of water in the west, having a single-storeyed pavilion.

145. Sundarbai ki Vav

Payada, Udaipur

24° 35' 28" N, 73° 44' 08" E

Elevation: 570 m

Period: 17th century (1660 AD)



Udaipur-Sundarbai ki Vav- view of the third pavilion tower with toran openings in the lower storey



Udaipur-Sundarbai ki Vav-view of the second pavilion tower



Udaipur-Sundarbai ki Vav-view of well shaft



Udaipur-Sundarbai ki Vav-Sheshshayi Vishnu



Udaipur-Sundarbai ki Vav-carved column capital



Udaipur-Sundarbai ki Vav-Hayagreev



**Udaipur-Sundarbai ki Vav-Incarnation of
Varah**

This stepwell, in the midst of the agricultural farm of Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture & Technology, Udaipur, is situated in the village of Payada, (also spelled as Paida) was built in Vikram Samvat 1717 (1660 AD) by one Sundarbai, who was a khawasan during the reign of Maharaja Raj Singh of Mewar state⁵⁶. The stepwell, located by the side of the Sundareshwar Mahadev Temple, is an example of excellent architecture. Undoubtedly, this is the most beautiful stepwell in the Udaipur region. It is in active use and has been maintained very well. One reason for this cleanliness is its location away from habitation.



**Udaipur-Sundarbai ki Vav- view of the first pavilion tower from
the entrance**

⁵⁶ Solanki, Bhartiya Bavadiyan page-73



Udaipur-Sundarbhai ki Vav- view of top pavilion of the second pavilion tower



Udaipur-Sundarbhai ki Vav-Lord Brahma

The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the west and semi-circular shaft in the east. There are three pavilion towers in the stepwell. The first tower is single-storeyed, supported on eight columns, out of which four pilasters are embedded in the side walls. Two chhatris exist—one on either side on top of this pavilion. The carved chhatris are made of marble and supported on four sleek columns. A niche each has been made in the side walls in this pavilion. The niches are framed and have temple like architecture above them. These niches have sculptures of various deities. The right-hand side niche of the first pavilion tower has the sculpture of Lord Ganesh. The columns are beautifully carved. The second pavilion tower is two-storeyed and it also has two chhatris on the top. The two niches made in its lower storey have sculptures of deities. Three such niches with sculptures of deities, including that of Lord Brahma, Varah, and Hayagreeva exist on the top level, between the first and the second pavilion-towers. Kirtimukhs have been carved on the column capitals and in the middle of beams supporting the roof. The sculptures of Goddess Mahishasurmardini and Laxmi exist in the niches of the second pavilion in the lower storey. The third pavilion tower is three-storeyed. However, there is only one roof for the lower two storeys. All three storeys are supported on eight columns each. In the second level, torans have been made in the central openings on the eastern and the western sides. In the lowermost storey of the third pavilion tower, the sculpture of Sheshashayi Vishnu has been made in the left side niche. After the third pavilion tower, there is a square kund, full of water at the time of my visit, between the third pavilion-tower and the semi-circular well shaft. Verandahs, supported on pillars, have been built in the sides on the top level of this kund. A canopy, supported on beautifully carved brackets, has been

provided below the water-drawing platform on the eastern end of the well shaft. The square kund and the semi-circular well shaft are separated by a wall having corbelled arch openings, connecting both of them at all the levels.

The public is not aware about the existence of this beautiful stepwell, which can attract a large number of tourists. Another stepwell known as the 'Chor Baodi' (Thief's Stepwell), located in the Chor Baodi village nearby at 24° 36' 49" N & 73° 44' 14" E, near the Raghunath hills, is in ruins now.

146. Jas Kund

Bedla, Udaipur, Rajasthan

24° 37' 48" N, 73° 41' 33" E

Elevation: 590 m

Period: 19th century (1891 AD)



Udaipur-Bedla-Jas Kund-view from the entrance in the east

Also known as the Kund Baodi, the Jas Kund is situated near the Kundeshwar Mahadev Temple on the left-hand side of the Fatehpura-Bedla road, just after the bridge across river Ayad in Udaipur. The entrance to the kund is in the east, while the water-drawing platform is in the west, below which

there is a small pavilion supported on six pillars. This pavilion has a niche, which is at present empty. Just after the entrance, there are two niches on each side wall. While the left side niches are now empty, Lord Ganesh's sculpture exists in one of the niches on the right-hand side. The upper portion of the sculpture is damaged. The second niche on the right-hand side wall has an inscription, according to which the stepwell was built by Jas Kunwar Bai Jodhpuri, the mother of Rao Saheb Takhat Singh and this was named as the Jas Kund. It was built at the cost of Rs. 17,001/- in Vikram Samvat 1948 or Shaka Samvat 1814, i.e., 1891 AD⁵⁷. Rao Bahadur Takhat Singh (r.1880-1892) was the 13th Rao Saheb of Bedla thikana.



Udaipur-Bedla-Jas Kund- view of the main entrance from the west



Udaipur-Bedla-Jas Kund- view of the pavilion below the water drawing platform on the north wall



Udaipur-Bedla-Jas Kund- view of the south wall with descending steps

There is a series of steps descending in two directions on the northern and the southern sides of the kund. The kund is full of vegetation and wasps, while the water is covered with algae and garbage. Outside the kund, there is a stone water trough for animals. It appears that there used to be a bullock driven Egyptian wheel or rehat, for drawing water from the kund. The kund needs urgent protection and cleaning.

Shekhawati

The districts of Sikar, Churu, and Jhunjhunu are known as the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan. Shekhawati region of Eastern Rajasthan has produced almost all the business families of India, including the steel magnate, Lakshmi Mittal; the cement man, Dalmia; the cloth merchant, Singhania; the Khaitans; the Ruias; and the Poddars. Shekhawati used to be on the ancient trade route from India to West Asia. It is a very dry region with very little rain. Most of the houses have a tank, known as kund, to collect rainwater, which is used for drinking. Johara or Johad is a water

⁵⁷ Inscription available in the kund.

reservoir, which used to be constructed amid the farmland or the pastureland, having high amount of gypsum, which could retain monsoon water for a long time. These johads were fortified in different areas of Shekhawati to keep them safe and were beautified with fresco paintings inside the chhatris, made in each of the four corners of a johad and in the pavilions built in the middle of each of the four sides. The communities had a rule that these johads will not be used as lavatories by the people. These johads were to be used by the public, their livestock, and wildlife.

These johads are nowadays under disuse and disrepair, and need to be preserved as they can be perfect water harvesting structures, even in modern times. The areas in the vicinity of these johads are being polluted and turned into built-up areas. Sewage is entering these johads, and vegetation is taking roots in their walls as well as in the water collection areas. Consequently, the johads are being polluted and getting damaged, while our heritage is vanishing fast. We must spread awareness about the need of their conservation and revive all such water structures.

Also spelled as Lakshmangarh, Lachhmangarh, or Lichhamgarh, Laxmangarh is a tehsil town in the Sikar district of Rajasthan state. It is 30 km north of its district town of Sikar and 145 km north of the state capital of Jaipur. It was founded by Rao Raja Lakshman Singh of Sikar in 1805 AD. Its construction was completed within two years in 1807. Lakshman Singh also built a fort called as the Lakshmangarh Fort in the city. The fort is built upon huge, scattered rocks, with a unique place in fort architecture. The fort is now owned by the Jhunjhunwala family. This fort is mentioned in the debut novel, 'The White Tiger' by Arvind Adiga, which won the Man Booker prize in 2008. The fort was purchased by Mr. Ram Niwas Jhunjhunwala's family in 1960 from the then Rao Raja Kalyan Singh. Laxmangarh is also known for its old havelis with frescos. It also has a clock tower in the middle of the town. In some of the following pages, the stepwells of Shekhawati region have been discussed.

147. Todi College Johara

Laxmangarh, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 49' 15" N, 75° 01' 02"

Elevation: 360 m

Period: Unknown



Lakshmangarh-Todi College Johara-showing the pavilions in the middle of the sides and a chhatri in the corner



Udaipur-Bedla-Jas Kund- view of the pavilion below the water drawing platform on the north wall



Lakshmangarh-Todi College Johara-inside view of a pavilion



Lakshmangarh-Todi College Johara-main entrance from the north

The philanthropist, Bhagwandas Todi established the Todi College, which was inaugurated by the state Chief Minister, Mr. Mohan Lal Sukhadia on 8 July 1965. The johara is located in the backyard of the college. It is usually locked, and the public is not aware about its existence. The main entrance to the johara is from the northern side. The ramp for water collection and drinking water for animals is on the east. There is a chhatri in all the corners, except in the south-west corner, where it is missing.

148. Bhadrana Johara

Laxmangarh, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 49' 36" N, 75° 02' 47" E

Elevation: 360 m

Period: Unknown



Lakshmanagarh-Bhadrana Johada-steps connecting the pavilion and central entrance in the middle and chhatra at the corner



Lakshmanagarh-Bhadrana Johada-another type of water inlet and entrance to Johad



Lakshmanagarh-Bhadrana Johada-ramp for animals and water inlet to Johara



Lakshmangarh-Bhadrana Johada-niches in the side walls at a corner



Lakshmangarh-Bhadrana Johada-water inlet from the ramp outside Johada



Lakshmangarh-Bhadrana Johada-showing pavilion and entrance in the middle of a side and corner chhatri



Lakshmangarh-Bhadrana Johada-vegetation growth inside johada

This johara is located on the left-hand side of the road from Laxmangarh to Nawalgarh, just before Dholas. The main entrance is from the east, while the ramp for water collection and animals has been provided on the south. The main inlet for water, in the form of a rectangular opening in the side wall, has been provided above the ramp. Such inlets have been made in the base of all the corner chhatris. The rainwater also enters into the johada through the lower openings of all the entrance pavilions, built in the middle of all the sides as their lower-level matches with that of the ground level. The pavilions on the upper storeys of the entrances are supported on sleek carved stone columns. These pavilions could be used to take rest. A lot of vegetation, including thorny bushes, has grown up in this johara.

149. Bhadrana Kua

Laxmangarh, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 49' 33" N, 75° 02' 39" E

Elevation: 360 m

Period: Unknown



Lakshmangarh-Bhadrana Kua-showing the ramp for driving bullocks



Lakshmangarh-Bhadrana Kua-well shaft with water hauling arrangements



Lakshmangarh-Bhadrana Kua-pillars are supporting the water hauling arrangement



**Lakshmangarh-Bhadrana Kua-gaumukh
(water outlet)**



Lakshmangarh-Bhadrana Kua

Just 100 m before the Bhadrana Johara on the Laxmangarh-Nawalgarh road, lies this kua (well) on the right-hand side of the road. It has a very deep well, which is currently completely dry. The steps to go up the plinth are on the west and the south, while the ramp for bullocks to draw water is on the east. The common feature of such wells in the Shekhawati region, is the existence of four pillars on the periphery of the well shaft on the top.

150. Chetan Das ki Baodi

Lohargal, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

27° 41' 31" N, 75° 13' 35" E

Elevation: 470 m

Period: 16th century



Lohargal-Chetan Das ki Baodi-third pavilion tower



Lohargal-Chetan Das ki Baodi-looking towards entrance from the second pavilion

The Lohargal Dham, an ancient religious place is located 25 km away from the Nawalgarh city, its sub-division in the district of Jhunjhunu of Rajasthan state. It is said that Lord Krishna advised the Pandavas to go on a pilgrimage as a repentance of killing their brothers and other relatives in Mahabharata. He told them that their sins will be washed away at the place where their weapons, like Arjun's Gandeiv and Bhim's Mace will melt in water. When the Pandavas visited Lohargal and took bath in the Surya Kund here, their weapons melted. This place, therefore, is known as Lohargal--where the iron (loha) melted (gal). Lord Parshuram also performed yagna here for his repentance of killing Kshatriyas.



Lohargal-Chetan Das ki Baodi-view of the first pavilion tower from the entrance

The stepwell, known as the Chetan Das ki Baodi, is situated one km away from Goliyana and 2.5 km before Lohargal. Chetan Das was a contemporary saint of Goswami Tulsi Das, poet and writer of Ram Charit Manas, who lived in the 16th century, during the period of Mughal king, Akbar. The stepwell is situated on the left-hand side of the road to Lohargal. It is a six-storeyed deep stepwell. The 'samadhis' (graves) of the Saint Chetan Das and a few others are situated near the well shaft of the baodi on the eastern side.



Lohargal-Chetan Das ki Baodi-corridor between second and third towers

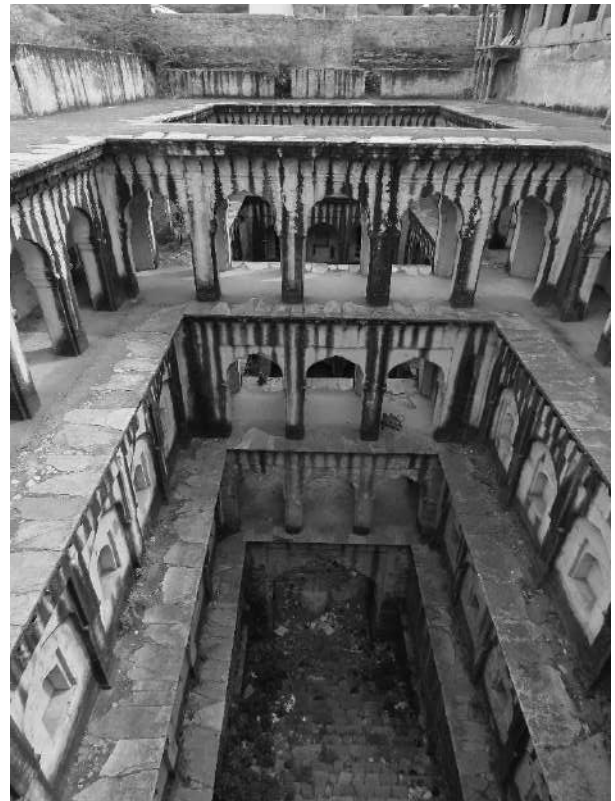


Lohargal-Chetan Das ki Baodi-view of a pavilion



Lohargal-Chetan Das ki Baodi-corridor on the side

The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the west and the well in the east. There are three pavilion towers. The first pavilion tower is two-storeyed, with a large, pointed arch in the lower storey and seven small, pointed arch openings above it. These arch openings open in both the directions-towards the entrance and the well. The arch galleries exist on the top of the north and south sidewalls of the stepwell, as well as in the pavilion towers. Total 108 steps lead from the entrance to the auxiliary square tank in front of the third pavilion tower, which is connected to the well at all the levels. It is said that the king of the region got his wish fulfilled due to the blessings of the saint Chetan Das. When the king wanted to do something in return, the saint asked him to build a stepwell for the pilgrims visiting Lohargal. The stepwell is said to have been built around 500 years back. The priest looking after the ashram and the stepwell mentioned that the records exist since 1672 AD in this regard. The stepwell is infested with langurs.



Lohargal-Chetan Das ki Baodi-second pavilion tower

The second pavilion tower is four-storeyed, while the third one is six-storeyed. The staircases to go down the stepwell have been provided on both the corners at its eastern end. Dark black marks have come up due to the rainwater on its lime plastered masonry all around, which present a very shabby look. The second pavilion tower has a large, pointed archway in the lowermost storey and three openings each way on the second and the third storeys. The stepwell is in good condition, but it needs minor repairs. Along with Lohargal, it has the potential to become a tourist attraction, if proper publicity is made.

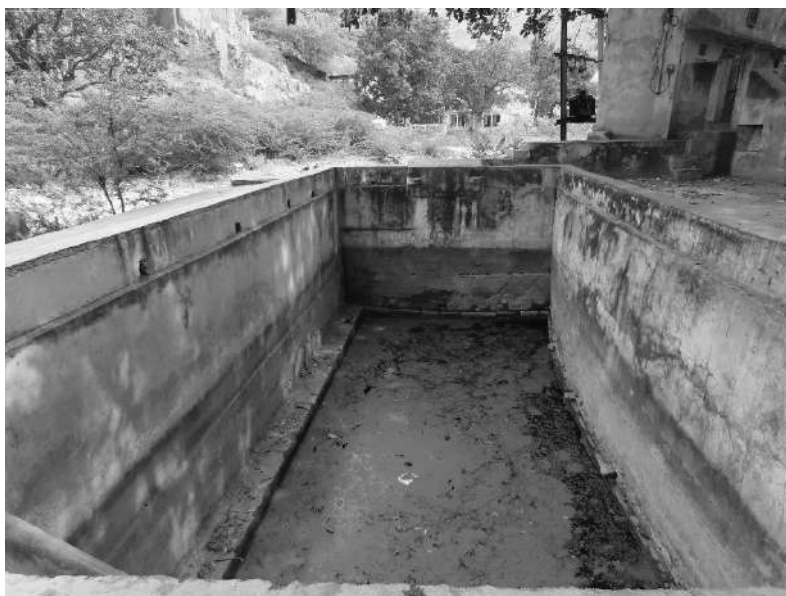
151. Gyan Baodi

Lohargal, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

27° 41' 02" N, 75° 23' 19" E

Elevation: 480 m

Period: Unknown



Lohargal-Gyan Baodi



Lohargal-Gyan Baodi-two side entrances

This small stepwell is situated on the left bank of the local river, by the side of an ancient Shiva Temple, under a big Banyan tree, on the left-hand side of the road going to Lohargal Dham. The water-drawing arrangement exists on the eastern side of the stepwell, while the steps descend from the northern and the southern side at its western end. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction. The water is quite dirty and covered with green algae. The location of this stepwell, as also that of the Chetan Das ki Baodi, strengthens the fact that many of the stepwells were constructed near the temples for religious purposes.

152. Surya Kund

Lohargal, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

27° 40' 16" N, 75° 23' 21" E

Period: Unknown



Lohargal-Surya Kund

According to the legend, there was a king named Surya Bhan in Kashi to whom a handicapped daughter, without one of the two hands was born. The priests told him that she was a female monkey in the previous birth, and the hunter hanged it on a Banyan tree after killing her. Her carcass dropped into the sacred Lohargal tank, because of which the monkey has taken the birth as your daughter. However, she will be fine, if her hand, still hanging on that tree, is dropped into the sacred tank. The king did the same and the girl became free of all her disabilities. The king was very happy, and he built the Surya Kund and the temple in the present form at Lohargal. Water continuously flows into the tank from the hills behind. People take bath in the tank and a big fare is held here every year.

153. Akam ka Kua

Laxmangarh, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 49' 02" N, 75° 01' 43" E

Elevation: 360 m

Period: 1869 AD



Lakshmangarh-Akam ka Kua

The well has approximately four ft high platform, on which four pillars--a common feature in such types of wells in Shekhawati--exist around the well. Mural paintings exist inside the chhatris, built on all the four corners. The well is located just before the city post office. Tanks for collecting water, hauled from the well shaft, have been built on one of the sides. The inscription inside the dome of one of the chhatris mentions Vikram Samvat 192658, which indicates that it might have been built in 1869 AD.

⁵⁸ Inscription inside a chhatri of the well



Lakshmangarh-Akam ka Kua-close up of four pillars supporting the water drawing arrangement



Lakshmangarh-Akam ka Kua-showing tanks and a chhatri in the corner



Lakshmangarh-Akam ka Kua-painting inside a chhatri

The surroundings of the well are very dirty as a number of pigs roam around it in the mud. The environs of the well need to be improved a lot, before it can become a tourist attraction.

154. Dholas ka Kua

Laxmangarh, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 49' 40" N, 75° 03' 07" E

Elevation: 360 m

Period: Unknown

This beautifully preserved well is located on the left-hand side of the road from Laxmmangarh to Nawalgarh, just before the Dholas village in the Maliyon ki Dhani. It is like the typical wells in the Shekhawati region. The track used for hauling up water through bullocks is in good condition. The holes in the thick stone slabs, supported on the four pillars and used for hauling up water manually, can still be seen, though the water is no more drawn from the well manually. Tanks by the side of the raised platform, used for water outlet and further distribution as well as used for animals, still exist.



Lakshmangarh-Dholas ka Kua-four pillars with supports for hauling up water



Lakshmangarh-Dholas ka Kua-track for bullocks for hauling up water



Lakshmangarh-Dholas ka Kua-well shaft



Lakshmangarh-Dholas ka Kua-arrangement for hauling up water manually



Lakshmangarh-Dholas ka Kua-water tank with gaumukh outlet

155. Beed Ka Johada

Fatehpur Shekhawati, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 57' 39" N, 74° 58' 24" E

Elevation: 330 m

Period: Vikram Samvat 1956 (1899 AD)



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Beed ka Johada

Beed in Rajasthani means forest. In Hindi, it is called 'Beehad', which possibly has transformed into beed. A big area near Fatehpur, and in north of the village Harsawa was left for wildlife and for grazing of animals, by the Nawab of Fatehpur, Jalal Khan in 1479 AD. The area has a famous Balaji's temple. Fatehpur was strategically located on the route from Sambhar to Hissar--a salt trade route. This johada is also known by the names of 'Sankhalwala Johada', 'Jhajhariyon ka Johada', and 'Ramgopal Ganeriwala Talab'. Another well and a dharmashala (inn) for travellers were built nearby this johad.



**Fatehpur Shekhawati-Beed ka Johada-
inside view of a central chhatra**



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Beed ka Johada-another view

The main entrance to the johad is from the east. It has a ramp for animals to drink water (gaughat) in the north. A water inlet to the johada also exists in the north from the ramp. Such inlets have been provided in all the corners. The two other entrances are in the south and the west. A chhatra on a high pedestal, called 'anda' exists in the centre of the johad from where people used to jump into water. The anda has got a very narrow and winding staircase to the top, where a chhatra has been built. Holes in the boundary walls on all the four sides have been provided, through which rainwater enters the johad. A chhatra has been provided in each corner. A different type of beautiful chhatra has been made in the centre of each of the four sides.



**Fatehpur Shekhawati-Beed ka Johada-painting inside a
chhatra with inscription**



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Beed ka Johada-entrance from the east



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Beed ka Johada-view of the ramp outside on the north with water inlet to the johada



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Beed ka Johada-View of a corner with chhatri



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Beed ka Johada-anda in the centre with a chhatri

According to the inscription inside one of the chhatris, the johad was built by Ramgopal Ganeriwala, the son of Heeralal ji and the grandson of Laljimal ji in Vikram Samvat 195659, i.e., 1899 AD, and inaugurated for public on Monday, 13th Sudi of Magh month of the Hindu Calender.

⁵⁹ Inscription in the Johada

156. Ghadwa Ka Johada

Fatehpur Shekhawati, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 59' 02" N, 74° 57' 49" E

Elevation: 330 m

Period: Vikram Samvat 1911 (1854 AD)



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Ghadwad ka Johada



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Ghadwad ka Johada-ramp for animals and water collection in the east



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Ghadwad ka Johada-view through the opening of a chhatri

This johada was built by Seth Gulraj ji, Jagannath Singhanian Mahanand Rai ji, Raghunath Rai ji of Devra and Anant Ram Poddar of Ramgarh in Vikram Samvat 1911 (1854 AD)⁶⁰, according to the inscription available on the wall of the johada.



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Ghadwa ka Johada -main entrance from the west



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Ghadwad ka Johada-pavilion on the upper storeys of the entrances in the centre of all the sides

The johada is square in plan, with 300 ft x 300 ft in size with main entrance in the west, towards the road to the city. There is an octagonal chhatri, having a temple type dome and stone finial, in each corner of the pond. There is a double-storeyed entrance in the centre of all the three sides, except on the east, where it is connected with a ramp. A foliated archway works as the entrance in the lower level, while a kabani type pavilion (Bengal type chhatri) features over each of the entrances in the upper storey, with three arched openings, both inside and outside, and the steps descending on both sides towards the corners. There are seven gokhade/niches at the lower level below the central chhatri on the east.

The central niche is connected with the ramp outside, to work as a water inlet. Another opening above it is also connected for this purpose. The steps from all the entrances in the centre of the sides, lead up to the chhatris in the corner. There is gaughat (ramp) in the east for drinking water for animals. The pond also displays an excellent symmetrical architecture.



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Ghadwad ka Johada-view of the east side with ramp and steps connecting all the chhatris

⁶⁰ Inscription in the Johada

157. Nagarpalika ka Johada

Fatehpur Shekhawati, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 59' 16" N, 74° 57' 52" E

Elevation: 330 m

Period: Unknown



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Nagarpalika ka Johada

This pond is maintained by the municipality of Fatehpur city and, thus, known as Nagarpalika ka Johada, among the locals. It is used for immersion of deity Durga's idols during Durga Puja. Water to the tank is supplied by the municipality.



**Fatehpur Shekhawati-Nagarpalika ka
Johada-another view**

158. Poddaron Ka Kua

Fatehpur Shekhawati, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 59' 23" N, 74° 57' 45" E

Elevation: 330 m

Period: VS 1908 (1851 AD)



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Poddaron ka Kua-tank



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Poddaron ka Kua-well shaft

According to the inscription available on the well, it was built in Vikram Samvat 1908 by Seth Loonkarandas Kunjlal Poddar from the industrialist family of Poddars, and was inaugurated on Krishna Paksh, 5 of Bhadrapad month of the Hindu Calender⁶¹. The well has a high platform and its entrance is from the west. The ramp for bullocks--used to draw water--exists in the south. It has four small minarets around the well shaft to support the manual water drawing arrangements. According to the information provided by the Radhkrishna Poddar Charitable Trust, the electrical equipment for pumping water was installed in 1986.



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Poddaron ka Kua

⁶¹ Inscription available on the well

159. Nawab Alaf Khan Ki Baodi

Fatehpur Shekhawati, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 59' 42" N, 74° 57' 42" E

Elevation: 330 m

Period: 1614 AD

Since the founding of Fatehpur in Vikram Samvat 1508 to 1787 (1451 to 1730 AD), 12 Kayamkhani nawabs ruled Fatehpur for 279 years. Rao Raja of Sikar, Shiv Singh Shekhawat---a Rajput---took it over in Vikram Samvat 1788 (1731 AD) on Chaitra Shukla Paksh 1. From 1731 to 1947 AD, 10 Shekhawat Jagirdars ruled for 216 years. Fateh Khan, a Muslim Kayamkhani nawab (1436-1474 AD), established Fatehpur in 1451 AD. He constructed the fort of Fatehpur in 1449 AD. His eldest son, Jalal Khan (1474-1489 AD) --a warrior and kind nawab who established the village of Jalasar, 10 km south of Fatehpur--left Fatehpur beed (forest land), north of village Harsawa for grazing of animals. He died in 1489 AD (VS 1546).



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Nawab Alaf Khan ki Baodi-
first pavilion tower



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Nawab Alaf Khan ki Baodi-
entrance

Alaph or Alaf Khan was the 7th nawab of Fatehpur from 1570 to 1626 AD. He founded the village of Alapsar near Beswa in VS 1627. He is considered to be the bravest nawab of Fatehpur. He took part in a number of wars on the side of Akbar and Jahangir. His son, Daulat Khan-II became the nawab in 1626 AD and remained till 1653 AD. He built this stepwell during his father's reign in 1614 AD (1671 VS) and renovated the fort in 1605 AD (1662 VS). He also built a canal all around the fort. It is also said that it was constructed by Sheikh Mohammed of Nagaur during the reign of Daulat Khan. The stepwell has six levels, but it is completely filled with the garbage and debris thrown by the nearby residents. Hazardous waste from hospitals as well as the domestic waste are being thrown into the stepwell. Nobody is bothered to preserve the heritage. The municipality is neglecting these issues and has no time to address them.



**Fatehpur Shekhawati-Nawab
Alaf Khan ki Baodi-pillars over
well shaft**



**Fatehpur Shekhawati-Nawab
Alaf Khan ki Baodi-arched
corridor**



**Fatehpur Shekhawati-Nawab
Alaf Khan ki Baodi-entrance
pavilion**

This stepwell is near one of the gates of the fort, known as Baodi Gate. Therefore, this stepwell is also known as Baodi Gate ki Baodi, among the locals. It urgently requires the removal of the waste and preservation through restoration works. If something is not done urgently, this stepwell is going to be buried under waste and garbage.

160. Mohan Singh Ki Baodi

Udaipurwati, Neem Ka Thana, Rajasthan

27° 43' 52" N, 75° 28' 29" E

Elevation: 450 m

Period: Unknown



Udaipurwati-Mohan Singh ki Baodi-view from the first pavilion showing niches in the sides

The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance from the east and the circular well shaft in the west. There are two pavilion towers. The first tower has a large, pointed archway of two storeys, while the second tower is four storeyed. Various niches have been made in the side walls between the entrance and the first pavilion tower. At each level, side walkways lead from the entrance up to the second pavilion along the side walls. Through the small openings, flanking the main pointed arch in the first pavilion tower, one can reach the portion between the two pavilion towers. The second pavilion tower separates the stepped corridor from the circular well shaft. In the top two storeys of the second pavilion tower, pavilions with three pointed-arch openings looking towards the entrance have been provided. The pavilion on the top level of the second tower is connected with the pavilions along the two side walls. These pavilions or the verandahs would have

provided much needed relief and comfort during the hot summers of Rajasthan. These pavilions on the top level along the side walls also have arched openings towards the stepped corridor. On the second level from top, large niches exist along the side walls. On the third level from the top of the second tower, a small space with an arched opening, flanked by a niche on both sides has been provided. All the four storeys are connected with the well shaft through an opening in the second pavilion tower.



Udaipurwati-Mohan Singh ki Baodi-view of the first pavilion tower from the west



Udaipurwati-Mohan Singh ki Baodi-second pavilion tower



Udaipurwati-Mohan Singh ki Baodi-view from the entrance



Udaipurwati-Mohan Singh ki Baodi-view of the two storeys with pavilion and niches on the side

The circular well shaft has two columns to support the pulley or the water lifting arrangement. The stepwell has been recently painted beautifully, but the plaster is peeling out, which erases the paintings. Vegetation is taking roots in the stepwell, as witnessed in front of the first pavilion tower.



Udaipurwati-Mohan Singh ki Baodi-circular well shaft



Udaipurwati-Mohan Singh ki Baodi-steps descending into the small kund in front of the second pavilion tower



Udaipurwati-Mohan Singh ki Baodi-view of the second pavilion tower and pillars of the well shaft



Udaipurwati-Mohan Singh ki Baodi-inside view of the pavilion of the second tower

It was very difficult to access this stepwell, even though the city is small, because there was no direction board erected for the purpose. On top of it, the city is criss-crossed by narrow streets, making the movements by a vehicle very difficult. There is no parking place nearby. This is the usual story all over India for our heritage spots. Moreover, the entrance to the stepwell is far from impressive and unrecognisable. It appears that there were two more entrances to the stepwell from north and south, which have been closed now. A small inn (serai) has been built at its entrance by one Mr. Bhuramal Mandawawala, son of Mr. Girdhari Lal Mandawawala in VS 2047, which mentions the name of this stepwell as 'Munshaji ki Baodi'. This serai, which is not in use now, has covered the entrance of the stepwell.

161. Palsaniyon Ki Baodi

Khandela, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 36' 29" N, 75° 30' 25" E

Elevation: 480 m

Period: Unknown



Khandela-Palsaniyon ki Baodi-view from the entrance



Khandela-Palsaniyon ki Baodi-view from the well shaft

Khandela, 47 km away from the district city of Sikar, is an ancient city which is famous for its fort, stepwells, havelis, and chhatris. The Khandelwal Vaishya and Brahmin communities consider Khandela as their origin and pilgrimage. Karmeti Bai, known as the Meera of Shekhawati, was born in Khandela. At one time, there were 52 stepwells in Khandela.

Palsaniyon ki Baodi is located on Udaipurwati road. The stepwell has a pavilion tower, nearly submerged at the time of the visit. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction with its entrance in the west, presently blocked by a recently constructed temple. This is how the heritage is being encroached upon in India. The square well shaft with water lifting arrangement, having two pulleys, exist in the west. Three niches exist in the upper level of each of the two side walls. The stepwell was also used for irrigation of the fields in the past. Steps have been provided at the entrance in the east to go down the well.



Khandela-Palsaniyon ki Baodi-well shaft

On an inscription⁶² available in the temple and the Baodi compound, it has been mentioned that it was built by the wife of Seth Phoolchand ji Parasrampuriah of Nawalgarh, sister of Sahji Sri Amarchand ji, mother of Sri Brij Lal, Sri Ramrikhdas, Sri Chiranji Lal, and Sri Tugan Lal Parasrampuriah of Nawalgarh. It is very surprising that the names of all the male relatives of that lady have been mentioned in the plaque, but the name of the lady who built the stepwell has not been mentioned.

⁶² Inscription available in the temple near the stepwell

162. Munka Ki Baodi

Khandela, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 36' 16" N, 75° 30' 28" E

Elevation: 480 m

Period: 200 years old



Khandela-Munka ki baodi-view from the entrance pavilion



Khandela-Munka ki baodi-entrance pavilion in the east

This stepwell is said to have been built by a business family known as Munka. It is situated by the side of the Ramanand Ashram, the entrance to which is through a pavilion of the stepwell. The 200-year-old ashram has a very old shivalinga. Oriented in east-west direction, its entrance is in the west, while the well shaft is in the east. There is an entrance pavilion having multi-cusped arch openings. The stepwell is three-storeyed with two pavilion towers. The first tower is single-storeyed having three arched openings on both sides. The second pavilion tower is three-storeyed. The first and the second storeys have verandahs or pavilions for sitting and taking rest, while the bottommost storey has an opening connecting the well shaft with the stepped corridor. Other levels were also connected with the well shaft but now these openings have been closed. In a way, people are erasing their heritage and after some time, the real architecture of such stepwells will be lost completely.



Khandela-Munka ki baodi-view of the two pavilion towers



Khandela-Munka ki baodi-second pavilion tower



Khandela-Munka ki baodi-inside first pavilion tower

The top level of the second tower has a bigger verandah with five arch openings. The side walls have smaller niches at the top level and bigger niches in the middle level. The side walkways are available along the side walls. The vegetation is growing inside the stepwell, which is likely to damage its structure.

163. Dwarka Das Ji Ki Baodi

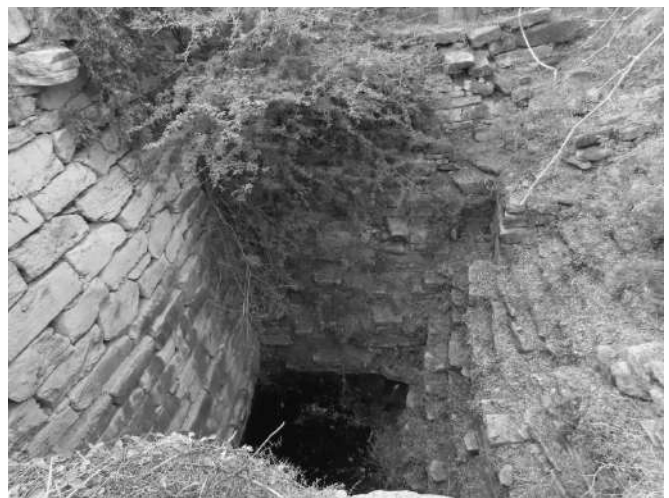
Khandela, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 36' 16" N, 75° 30' 42" E

Elevation: 480 m

Period: Not Known

Made of very big dressed stone blocks brought from the Rampura mines, this stepwell is said to have been built by Saint Dwarka Das. The stone blocks were brought on camel and bullock-carts. One can imagine how laborious it would have been to transport these big stone blocks over a distance of about 4 km. No lime has been used in joining these blocks. The square-shaped stepwell has steps in the north corner, to descend to the water level. This is a unique stepwell different than most of the stepwells existing in the area, due to the use of gigantic size of stone blocks.



Khandela-Dwarka Das ji ki Baodi

164. Songiri Baodi

Khandela, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 36' 06" N, 75° 29' 59" E

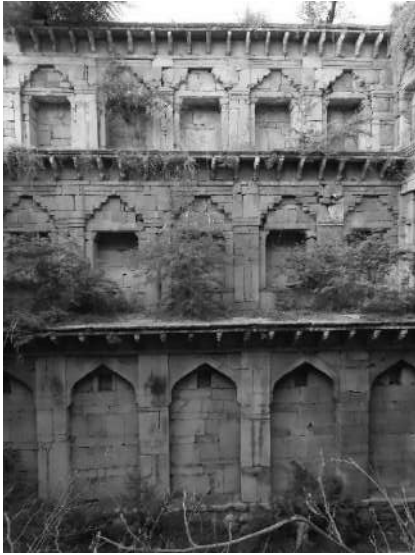
Elevation: 500 m

Period: 8th century



Khandela-Songiri Baodi-view of the second pavilion tower and the side walls from the first tower

Said to be the largest stepwell in Khandela, it was built around 1300 years ago. The king built this stepwell in the name of his widowed sister, Songiri or Soni Bai. There are inscriptions in the stepwell which have not been translated, but it mentions the name as Songiri Boadi. A small work, costing Rs. two lakhs, was sanctioned to clean and repair the stepwell, but nothing appears to have been done. The stepwell is full of vegetation. Even the steps have not been cleaned. The Baodi is situated near the Nagarpalika Bhawan in the compound of Bhartiya Janata Party's district office.



Khandela-Songiri Baodi-view of the north side wall



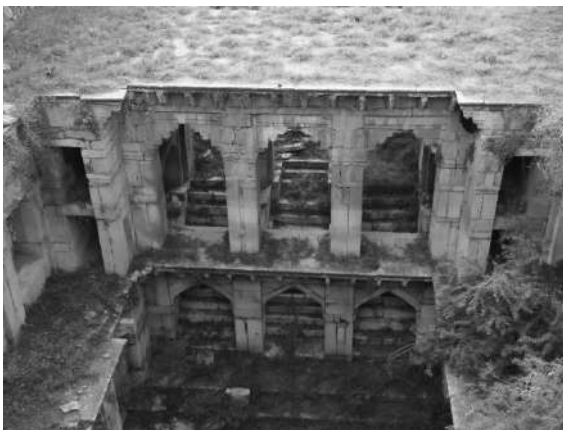
Khandela-Songiri Baodi-view of the first and the second pavilion towers from the entrance in the west



Khandela-Songiri Baodi-first pavilion tower when viewed from the entrance



Khandela-Songiri Baodi-view from the well shaft



Khandela-Songiri Baodi-view of the first pavilion tower when seen towards the entrance



Khandela-Songiri Baodi-view between the first and the second pavilion towers when seen from the north



Khandela-Songiri Baodi-looking down the well shaft



Khandela-Songiri Baodi-another view of the corbelled arches of the first pavilion tower

The stepwell is built of beautifully dressed stone blocks, and it appears that lime has not been used in its construction. The stone blocks have been joined by using old technique of interlocking or by metal connectors.

There is a jal stambha near the well shaft. A new RCC tank has been built on the high-level platform of the well shaft, thus disturbing the original architecture.



Khandela-Songiri Baodi-transverse view inside the first pavilion



Khandela-Songiri Baodi-corbelled arch of the first pavilion tower



Khandela-Songiri Baodi-jal stambh near the well shaft

There are two pavilion towers in the stepwell. The first tower has three triangular arch or the corbelled arch openings in the single storey facing the entrance. But it is two storeyed towards the well shaft having three triangular arch openings on the top storey and pointed arches in the lower storey. The steps from the entrance descend continuously through the first pavilion tower up to the

rectangular tank existing between the two pavilion towers. This rectangular tank is now devoid of water and has completely silted. The parts of the triangular or the corbelled arches and the corbels supporting the ledges in the side walls at different levels are beautifully carved. An inscription exists in the first pavilion tower mentioning the name 'Songiri'⁶³. Other information on the inscriptions has not been decoded yet. The top two levels of the second pavilion tower also have three triangular or corbelled arch openings towards the entrance, while the bottommost level has three pointed-arch openings. The openings in the centre of all three levels of the second pavilion tower connect the stepped corridor with the well shaft. On the side walls, niches have been provided at all the three levels with the support of embedded triangular or corbelled arches in the upper two storeys and pointed arches in the bottommost storey. Staircases have been provided in both the pavilion towers, connecting all the levels. The stepwell needs repairs and removal of the thorny bushes and vegetation.

165. Kali Bai Ki Baodi

Khandela, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 35' 27" N, 75° 29' 36" E

Elevation: 510 m

Period: 16th century

Located 1.5 km south of Khandela on the Palsana road, the Kali Bai stepwell is said to have been built over a period of 17 years between VS 1575 and 1592 (1518-1535 AD) during the period when Rawat Nathu Der Nirban was ruling Khandela, and Ibrahim Lodhi (r.1517-1526 AD) ruled Delhi. The stepwell was completed when Humayun (r.1530-1540 & 1555-1556) was ruling Delhi. The



Khandela-Kali Bai ki Baodi-first pavilion tower

stepwell has now turned into a garbage dump and entrance to it is completely blocked due to heavy infestation of thorny bushes. In fact, it is difficult to see anything as it is completely covered and some miracle is urgently required to bring it back to light.

⁶³ Inscription available in the stepwell



**Khandela-Kali Bai ki Baodi-view
of the well shaft**



**Khandela-Kali Bai ki Baodi-steps
in the auxiliary tank**



**Khandela-Kali Bai ki Baodi-
second pavilion tower**

It is said to have been built by Rama and Bala, the two sons of Prithviraj and grandsons of Agrawal Garg Koti Kala. It is known to be the oldest stepwell of Khandela. Built in RR masonry, the stepwell is oriented in east-west direction, with its entrance from the west and circular well shaft in the east. There are two pavilion towers in the stepwell. The first tower is four-storeyed and supported on arches. It has five arch openings and two side openings on the top level and three main arches along with side openings in the lower storeys. Similarly, the second pavilion tower has five storeys with five arch openings on the top level both ways with two small side openings to pass through the towers. The lower storeys have three main arch openings with small side openings. An auxiliary square tank exists between the second pavilion tower and the circular well shaft, with steps from the tower leading to the square tank. The well shaft has eight openings connecting it with the stepped corridor.

166. Alakhiya Johada

Mandawa, Sikar, Rajasthan

28° 02' 31" N, 75° 09' 11" E

Period: 17th century



Mandawa-Alakhiya Johada-another view



Mandawa-Alakhiya Johada-one of the entrances



Mandawa-Alakhiya Johada-anda
in the centre of the johada



Mandawa-Alakhiya Johada-a
chhatra with eight multifoil arch
openings



Mandawa-Alakhiya Johada-
inside view of the pavilion or
chhatra in the middle of a side

The Mandawa city is situated 190 km north of the capital city of Jaipur and is famous for its fort and havelis. The city was established by Mandu Jat in the 18th century and was initially known as 'Mandu Ki Dhani' and then 'Mandu Ka Bas' before being called as Mandawa. The Alakhiya Johada traces its name to saints (sadhus) for whom it was built by the Chokhani family around 350 years back. It is also known as the Chokhani Baodi or the Chokhani Johada.



Mandawa-Alakhiya Johada-ramp for animals with water inlet



Mandawa-Alakhiya Johada-another view

The johada is under renovation and is being adorned with beautiful rajasthani mural paintings. This johada has all the elements like gaughat (ramp) for water drinking by animals; a chhatra on a high pedestal called 'anda' in the centre of the johada from where people used to dive into water while swimming; 'nallahs'--holes in the boundary walls to work as water-inlets; 'ghats'--wide steps descending from boundary walls towards the centre all around. The top ghat is called 'firni' because couples after marriage take rounds of the johad on 'firni'. The last ghat around the 'anda' or the central chhatra is called 'chaubee' where people used to get stuck in mud while taking bath in the johad.

This johad has the 'gaughat' (ramp) in the north side, while it has three entrances--similar in design--on other three sides. The chhatris are the round canopies with eight openings. These chhatris have been provided on all the four corners. Each chhatra has eight multifoil arch openings with their columns made of stone. All the chhatris on the corners as well as those above the entrances in the middle of the sides can be approached by steps on either side from the pathway, provided outside the boundary walls. In many other johads, such platform and the steps are provided inside along the side walls as in case of the Ghadwa johada and Beed Ka Johada in Fatehpur Shekhawati.

Shri Teekam Das ji Maharaj Ashram exists next to the side of the stepwell, while a defunct dharmashala (inn) built by Sri Sanehiram Daulatram Chokhani exists across the road.

167. Bhika Ji Ka Kua

Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

28° 07' 52" N, 75° 24' 15" E

Elevation: 330 m

Period: Unknown

I got to visit the Bhika Ji Ka Kua by chance as I was searching for the Mertani Ji Ki Baodi. It appears to me that there existed a stepwell on this site as the stepped corridor appears to have been filled up and converted into a park, while the well shaft remains along with two minarets, which might have been used to draw water from the well. Four beautiful chhatris supported on four columns exist on the corners on a high platform. The whole structure is standing desolately and needs urgent attention. It's a pity that the administration itself is ignoring the heritage.



Jhunjhunu-Bhika ji ka Kua-chhatris in the corners



Jhunjhunu-Bhika ji ka Kua-pillars above the well shaft

168. Tulsiyano Ki Baodi

Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

28° 07' 57" N, 75° 24' 09" E

Elevation: 340 m

Period: Unknown



Jhunjhunu-Tulsiyano ki Baodi-pillars above the well



Jhunjhunu-Tulsiyano ki Baodi-entrance pavilion

The Tulsiyano Ki Baodi truly depicts the apathy of the government as well as the public towards the heritage. The public has turned it into a garbage dump--perhaps the worst, I have seen in the country. The state administration has completely closed its eyes, while the heritage is going to dogs. Even the condition of the name board of the stepwell supports this notion. Only the well shaft with two minarets used for drawing water remain standing, overlooking the stepped corridor, brimming with garbage. A small room--in forlorn condition--also exists at the entrance.

The stepwell is oriented in the northeast-southwest direction with its entrance in the south-west and the well shaft in northeast. The municipality can still revive the stepwell if it takes immediate measures otherwise it is as good as lost forever.



Jhunjhunu-Tulsiyano ki Baodi-stepped corridor fully filled up with waste

169. Khetan Baodi

Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

28° 08' 03" N, 75° 24' 00" E

Elevation: 330 m

Period: Not Known



Jhunjhunu-Khetan Baodi-view of the pavilion near well shaft



Jhunjhunu-Khetan Baodi-first pavilion tower



Jhunjhunu-Khetan Baodi-second pavilion tower

This stepwell is another shining example of unconcerned administration. The stepwell--full of thorny vegetation--is kept locked. There is no notice about how one can visit it. The people have made it a waste dump yard. While I was taking photographs, a man, nonchalantly, threw garbage into it. The name board of the stepwell, containing information about it, is fully rusted and paint has peeled off in such a way that not a single word is legible.

The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction with its well shaft in the north and the entrance in the south.

There are three pavilion towers in this stepwell. The first tower is two-storeyed with a large, pointed archway on the lower storey and five multifoil arch openings on the upper storey. Apart from this, there is a small pointed arch opening each on either side of these five arches, along the two side



Jhunjhunu-Khetan Baodi-another view near second pavilion tower

walls to pass through the ledge. The trefoil arch openings are supported on rectangular columns. The second pavilion tower is three-storeyed with a large, single arch gate of the height of the two lower storeys and multiple arch openings on the top level. The third tower is adjacent to the well shaft. It could not be seen from outside as the stepwell was locked. It has a rajasthani style balcony to be used as a sit-out on the top level. The lowermost two storeys have niches in the side walls.

170. Meratni Baodi/Bhoot Baodi

Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

28° 08' 01" N, 75° 23' 43" E

Elevation: 340 m

Period: 1783 AD

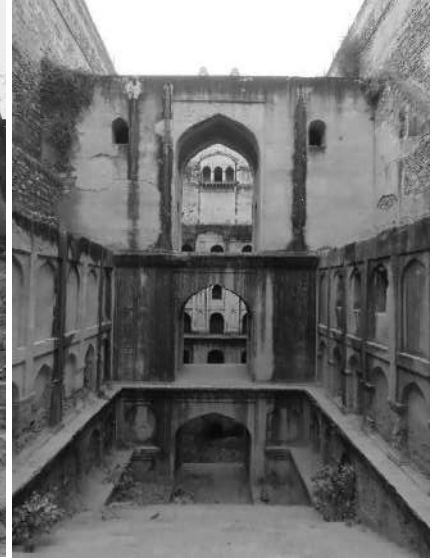


Jhunjhunu-Meratni Baodi-view from the entrance pavilion

The Mertani Baodi or Meratni Baodi, the largest stepwell in Jhunjhunu is also known as the Bhooton Ki Baodi or the Bhoot Baodi (the Ghost Stepwell). It is named after the queen, Bakht Kanwar, Rani Meratni from Merta, who was the widow of Shardool Singh, the founder of Khetri who built it in 1783 AD at a cost of Rs. 70,000/-. Around 30 m deep, it is considered to be the most beautiful stepwell of the Shekhwati region. It has 122 steps to go down to the lowest water level in three parts. According to the legend, its water was so acidic that an Englishman died within few hours of drinking its water in 1930. Built initially for ladies to take bath and wash clothes, its sulphuric water was used to treat skin diseases. Even the people from South India used to come here to take bath in this stepwell to cure their skin diseases.



Jhujhunu-Meratni Baodi-entrance pavilion when viewed from the west



Jhujhunu-Meratni Baodi-second pavilion tower

At the entrance is a double-arched gate which opens into a vaulted space, flanked by two chambers having three small arch openings towards the stepwell. The stepwell is built in RR masonry in lime plaster. A large, pointed arch leads to the steps descending towards the well shaft, opening to a 100 m long stepwell with two minarets of the well shaft, overlooking at the western end. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction with its entrance in the east. The stepwell has three pavilion towers with additional smaller steps leading to each level along the side walls. The single-storeyed first pavilion tower consists of a large, pointed archway, about 20 ft high, with an arched gallery on the sides, along the side walls to pass through towards the second pavilion. It also has a hidden staircase inside its masonry to go up and down.



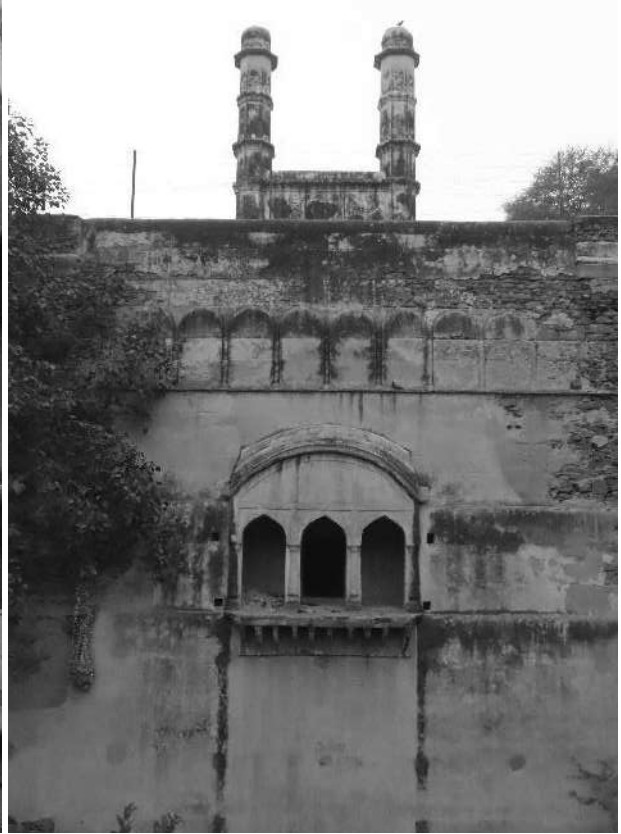
Jhujhunu-Meratni Baodi-first pavilion tower



Jhujhunu-Meratni Baodi-entrance



Jhujhunu-Meratni Baodi-third pavilion tower



Jhujhunu-Meratni Baodi-top of the third pavilion tower with the pillars of the well shaft in the background

The second pavilion tower is three-storeyed and has a pointed archway on each storey with staircase on either side. Ledges have been provided at three levels to walk along the side walls in the stepped corridor space between the first and second pavilion towers. The side walls have been provided with beautiful niches with embedded arches between the first and the second pavilion towers. An auxiliary tank, rectangular in shape, completely silted at present, has been provided before the third pavilion-tower, separating it from the well shaft.

The nine-storeyed third pavilion tower is connected to the well shaft at each level. The lowermost level has an arch opening connecting the well shaft. Five levels or storeys above this opening have three arch openings towards the entrance. The side walls have niches in between the second and the third pavilion towers. The seventh level has an opening on the right, which leads to the rajasthani style chhatri or pavilion, with three arch openings on the eighth level through a staircase. The Meratni stepwell is a better maintained stepwell as compared to all others at Jhunjhunu.

171. Pinjrapole Society Kua

Fatehpur, Sikar, Rajasthan

27° 57' 03" N, 74° 58' 32" E

Elevation: 340 m

Period: unknown

It's typical of many wells (kua) spread all over the Shekhawati region. At a distance of 3 km from Harsawa village on NH-52 national highway and 4 km before Fatehpur, the well is situated inside the Pinjrapole agricultural farm on left side, while going from Laxmangarh to Fatehpur. The well was donated by Seth Jwala Prasad Bhartia to Pinjrapole Society to perpetuate the memory of his mother, Shrimati Hardei Devi, according to the inscription available on one of the four pillars of the well⁶⁴. The earthen ramp for bullocks used as draft animals to lift the water through charas still exists. A small tank with steps to descend built for storage of water drawn from the well, also exists nearby.



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Pinjrapole Society Kua-tank and a part of bullocks_ track



Fatehpur Shekhawati-Pinjrapole Society Kua-pillars around the well shaft

⁶⁴ Inscription available on the well

172. Rolsabsar Johadi

Rolsabsar, Sikar, Rajasthan

28° 02' 35" N, 74° 51' 23" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: 16th century



Rolsabsar Johadi



Rolsabsar Johadi-ramp with water inlets

The Rolsabsar village comes under the Sikar district and is located 12 km away from the Fatehpur sub-division, 66 km north of Sikar and 180 km from the state capital at Jaipur. Originally, there were two villages--Rol and Sabsar, which have merged into Rolsabsar. The Sabsar village is said to have been established in the 16th century.

A smaller johad is called Johadi or Johari. Square in shape, this johadi has a ramp for animals on the east. It has entrances on all the four sides. The entrances are similar on the opposite sides in the north and the south, and in the east and the west. It's a simple johadi with no chhatri either at its corners or in the middle of the sides. There is no 'anda'--central chhatri in the centre. The steps on the north and the south sides are different from those on the east and the west. At the time of my visit in December, there was some standing water in the johadi. There is no direction board for the johadi and it needs minor repairs urgently.

173. Anantram Poddar Ka Johada

Ramgarh Shekhawati, Sikar, Rajasthan

28° 10' 04" N, 74° 58' 07" E

Elevation: 300 m

Period: 1845 AD



Ramgarh shekhawati-Anantram Poddar ka Johada



Ramgarh shekhawati-Anantram Poddar ka Johada-ramp for animals with water inlets

The johada at Ramgarh Shekhawati, also known as Ramgarh Sethan, is hardly 200 m away from the National Highway-52 to Churu. It is located on the right side of the road to Bissau and was built by Mr. Anantram Poddar in 1845 AD⁶⁵. It was renovated in 2011 in the memory of Tulanandan Kailashpati by his descendants, according to the inscriptions at its entrance. The johada has octagonal, domed chhatris at each of the four corners. A ramp for animals and water inlet exists in the east, where a big Peepal tree stands. The johada is in the western corner of a big ground, surrounded by a boundary wall. The water inside the johada is very dirty and covered with algae, due to the sewage entering into it.



Ramgarh shekhawati-Anantram Poddar ka Johada-octagonal chhatri with circular dome at a corner

⁶⁵ Inscription available on the Johada

174. G.B. Ruiya Park Well

Seth Ram Narain Ruiya Marg, Ramgarh Shekhawati, Sikar, Rajasthan

28° 10' 31" N, 74° 59' 31" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: Unknown



Ramgarh Shekhawati-G. B. Ruiya Park Well



Ramgarh shekhawati-G.B.Ruiya Park Well-well shaft with an opening

This well is in a corner of the G. B. Ruiya Park on Ramgarh-Bissau road. The well is a little different from other typical wells, existing in large numbers in the Shekhawati region. It has a few chambers built on its side, beneath the plinth, with an opening in the well shaft. The chambers might have been built for use as a resting place during summers. The well is completely dry now.



Ramgarh shekhawati-G.B.Ruiya Park Well-chamber with an opening into well shaft

175. G.B. Ruiya Ka Jalashaya

Seth R.N. Ruiya Marg, Ramgarh Shekhawati, Sikar, Rajasthan

28° 10' 32" N, 74° 59' 34" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: Unknown



Ramgarh Shekhawati-G.B.Ruiya Jalashaya-beautiful pillars around the well shaft



Ramgarh Shekhawati-G.B.Ruiya Jalashaya-steps to go up



Ramgarh Shekhawati-G.B.Ruiya Jalashaya-pillars for supporting water lifting arrangement and storage tank

The G.B. Jalashaya or tank is located inside the G.B. Ruiya Park. The well has a very high plinth on which the tank has been constructed. This tank is used to supply water under the pressure of its height to the park. The park lies in ruins now as nobody looks after it. Moreover, there is no water in the well. The water lifting platform is very beautiful and different from the typical four independent pillars surrounding the well shaft, as compared to numerous other wells of the region.

176. Bissau Ka Johada

Bissau, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

28° 14' 34" N, 75° 05' 09" E

Elevation: 300 m

Period: 1843 AD (VS1900)



Bissau ka Johada



Bissau ka Johada-paintings inside chhatri



Bissau ka Johada-ramp for animals and inlet for water

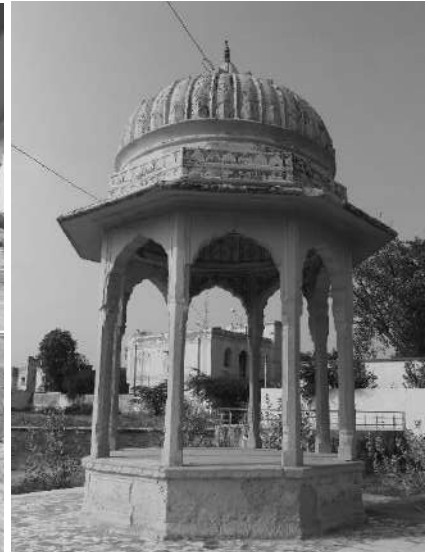
The Bissau town is 195 km away from the state capital at Jaipur. Bissau is famous for silent Ramlila which is held every year. There is no dialogue in this Ramlila which is conducted only through actions. Masks are used in this Ramlila which has been there for 175 years when it was started at Ramana Johada on Gangiyasar Road. Bissau was known as 'Vishala Jat Ki Dhani' in olden days. It was named Bissau in 1746 AD by Thakur Keshari Singh to whom it was granted by his father Maharao Shardul Singh. Rulers of Bissau were the descendants of Rao Shekha.



Bissau ka Johada-jal stambh



Bissau ka Johada-inside view of the pavilion



Bissau ka Johada-domical chhatra with eight multi-cusped arch openings

The Bissau Ka Johada is also known as the 'Dhawal Palia or Dhol Palia Johad'. The johad is neat and clean. Like other johads, it has an octagonal chhatra with eight multi-foil arch openings and a circular dome, at each corner. Steps to enter the johad have been provided in the middle of all the four sides. There is no central chhatra or 'anda' in the centre. However, it has a unique pavilion with three arch openings supported on sleek columns, having a rajasthani style chhatra flanked with circular domes on the northern side of the johad. A ramp for animals has been provided on the north and a jal stambha having inscriptions and images of Lord Ganesh, a cow with a suckling calf, the Sun, and the Moon exists at one of the corners of the western edge of the ramp. The inscriptions, though incomprehensible, mention the Vikram Samvat 1900⁶⁷, when the johad might have been built. A water inlet channel for collection of rainwater exists on the eastern side of the johad.

⁶⁶ Bissau is famous for silent Ramlila which is held every year. There is no dialogue in this Ramlila which is conducted only through actions. Masks are used in this Ramlila which has been there for 175 years when it was started at Ramana Johada on Gangiyasar Road. Bissau was known as 'Vishala Jat Ki Dhani' in olden days. It was named Bissau in 1746 AD by Thakur Keshari Singh to whom it was granted by his father Maharao Shardul Singh. Rulers of Bissau were the descendants of Rao Shekha.

⁶⁷ Inscription available on the jal-stambha

177. Untwaliya Ka Johada

Untwaliya, Churu, Rajasthan

28° 14' 43" N, 75° 00' 18" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: 1940 AD (VS 1997)

The Untwaliya Ka Johada is located just outside the village of Untwaliya, 8 km away from the district town of Churu. Also known as 'Prem Sarovar' meaning the 'Love-pond', it was built by Seth Udairam Laxminarayan Chandgothiya of Ratan Nagar in Vikram Samvat 1997 (1940 AD), according to the inscription⁶⁸ available at the entrance. It has an entrance pavilion with three openings, supported on double-pillared columns. Different from most of the johads, it has been built in a circular shape with four entrances in all the four directions, the main entrance being in the west. A ramp for animals is in the east. There is a temple of Karni Mata on northern side of the johad. The johad requires petty repairs and cleaning, including a general face lifting.



Untwaliya ka Johada

⁶⁸ Inscription available at the johada.



Untwaliya ka Johada-view from the top of the entrance pavilion



Untwaliya ka Johada-ramp for animals and inlet for water



Untwaliya ka Johada-view through the openings of the entrance pavilion



Untwaliya ka Johada-entrance pavilion

The johad is built of dressed stone blocks and is in excellent condition. Images of a monkey, Sun, fish, frog, and a woman have been carved on the steps of the johad. The image of three fish is quite interesting as they have a common head. Small triangular niches have been provided in the boundary wall all around for lighting lamps.

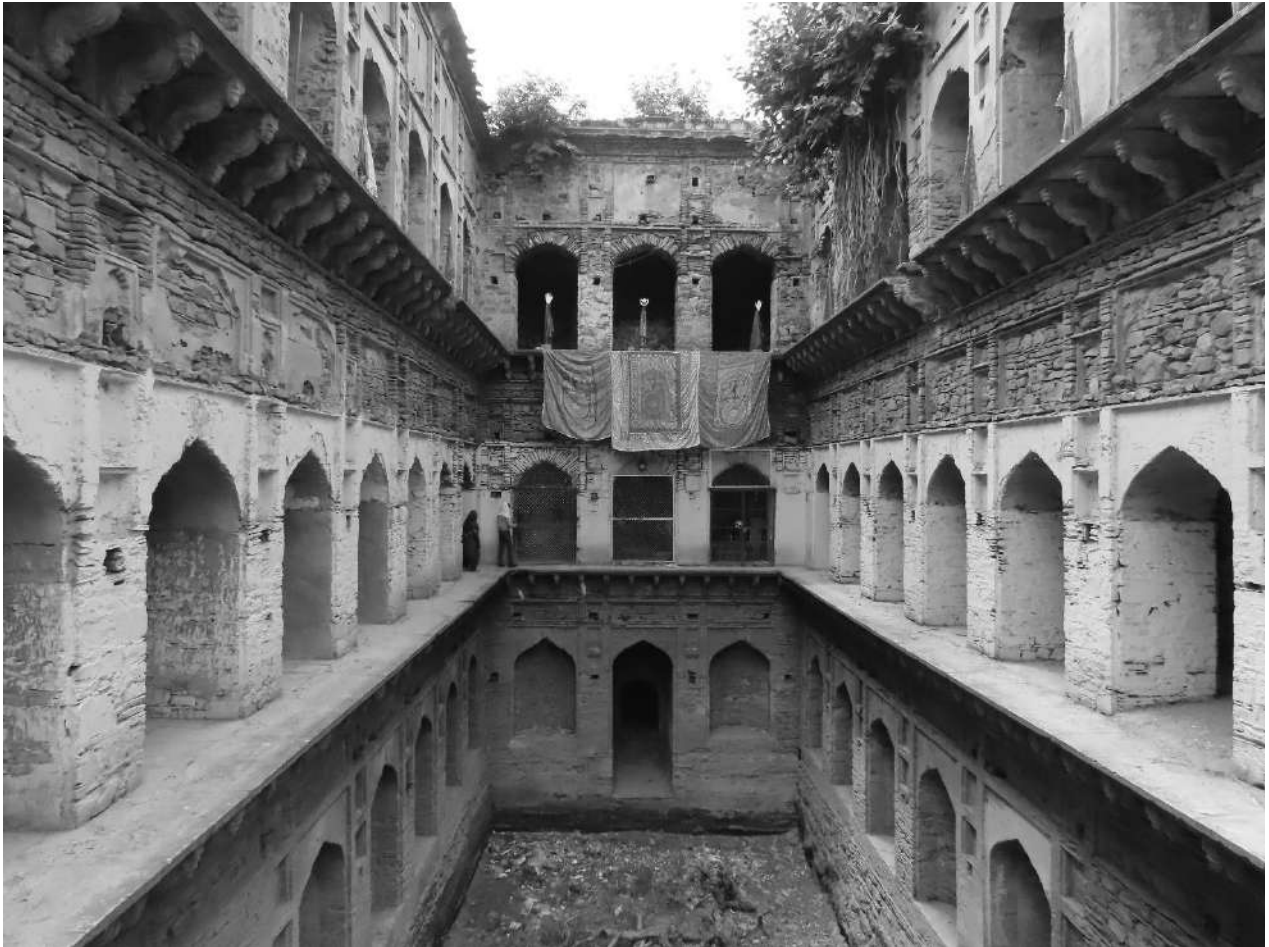
178. Manoharpur Baodi

Manoharpur, Shahpura, Rajasthan

27.3033375° N, 75.9473281° E

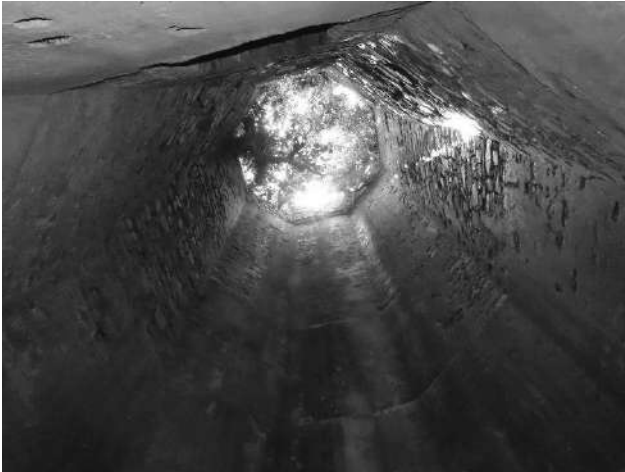
Elevation: 455 m

Period: Unknown



Manoharpur Baodi -showing pavilions on top two levels and niches at the bottom level

The stepwell at Manoharpur near Shahpura in Jaipur district of Rajasthan is a three-storeyed stepwell, built in RR masonry with lime plaster. At all the three levels, the stepped corridor was connected with the well shaft, but these openings have now been closed on the top two levels. The middle level of the only pavilion tower, adjoining the octagonal well shaft, has been converted into a religious place by a particular community. The lower two levels are below the ground level. The entrance to the stepwell as well as the roof of the top level have been infested by vegetation.



Manoharpur Baodi -looking up the octagonal well shaft



Manoharpur Baodi -unauthorised occupation by a religious community



Manoharpur Baodi -view from the pavilion tower



Manoharpur Baodi -view from the entrance



Manoharpur Baodi -carved brackets supporting ledges



Manoharpur Baodi-ledges supported on brackets on the side wall in bad condition

The auxiliary square tank before the pavilion tower is full of silt and garbage. Three arched openings, overlooking the entrance, have been provided in each of the top two levels of the pavilion tower. These are connected with verandahs or corridors on both the sides, which have seven arched openings towards the stepped corridor. At the bottom level, five big arched niches have been provided on each side. The staircases have been provided on both sides of the pavilion tower. Chhajjas or ledges, supported on stone corbels, have been built on the top two levels on both the sides. The stepwell needs urgent cleaning and repairs as well as protection from encroachment by religious groups. This stepwell, if conserved well, has the potential of becoming a tourist attraction. The tragedy is that neither the State Government nor the Central Government is taking interest in it. There is no sign board for the stepwell anywhere.



Manoharpur Baodi -side corridor

179. Bala ji ki Baodi

Baswa, Dausa, Rajasthan

27° 08' 58" N, 76° 35' 32" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: Unknown



Baswa-Balaji ki Baodi-view from the well shaft



Baswa-Balaji ki Baodi-view from the entrance

Baswa⁶⁹ is a sub-divisional town of Dausa district in Rajasthan, located about 20 km from Bandikui Junction railway station of Jaipur-Delhi railway line. The stepwell, known as the Balaji ki Baodi, is in the east of the town adjacent to the Balaji Temple, also known as Baodiwale Balaji. Thus, both the stepwell and the temple are known by the names of each other.

This stepwell, oriented in east-west direction, is surrounded by a road on the south and agricultural fields on the north. The entrance is on the east and the well shaft is in the west. There is a big Peepal tree on the entrance, which has been protected by a high platform. The stepwell is four-storeyed with the middle two storeys--the second and the third from the top--have three multifoil or cusped arch openings in the pavilions on the west side tower at the edge of the well shaft. These arches are supported on rectangular stone columns. The baodi has been built in RR masonry. Niches in the side walls have been provided in



Baswa-Balaji ki Baodi-pavilions with multifoil arch openings with rectangular stone columns

⁶⁹ Baswa is famous for being the last resting place of famous Maharana Sanga who died here in 1528 AD after fighting the Battle of Khanwa with Babur in 1527. His memorial chhatri exist near Baswa railway station.

all the four levels. One has to go down 50 steps (in the top three levels) to reach the fourth level. Landings have been provided after every flight of steps. Two unconnected half-pavilion towers (ardh-koots) with projected balconies on second level--one from each side wall- support the side walls in the middle. They are not connected with each other. The stepwell was repaired in 2023, but the north side wall has collapsed during heavy rains in 2024. Local people said that the stepwell may be around 500 years old and was built by Djinns. The circular well shaft was completely dry at the time of my visit. It must have been connected with the stepwell at all the levels but now connects only at the third level, since the other openings at other levels have been closed. The temple authorities have covered the stepwell by casting an RCC slab over it. This only shows that nobody is bothered to preserve the cultural heritage. The quality of the building construction can be compared by the fact that the stepwell has survived for about 500 years, while the repairs gave way after only one year.

180. Mahant ji ki Baodi

Rajgarh, Rajasthan

27° 13' 47" N, 76° 36' 45" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: 16th century



Rajgarh-Mahant ji ki Baodi-view from the well shaft side



Rajgarh-Mahant ji ki Baodi-view showing left side

The Mahant ji ki Baodi, also called the 'Tala Chabi Baodi' i.e. lock and key stepwell is located at the Badikui end of the city of Rajgarh, by the side of the road over the bridge in Ganga bagh on the road from Bandikui to Alwar. Rajgarh⁷⁰ is around 40 km from Bandikui railway junction station on Delhi-Jaipur railway route.

⁷⁰ Rajgarh is a tehsil town of Alwar district, famous for its mango and lemon orchards. It is also famous for its cumin market, white marble and the mint which was shifted to Calcutta (Kolkata) by the British. It was the original capital of royal state of Alwar up to 1771 when it was shifted to Alwar. It was established by the king Baghraj, a Gurjar Pratihar king. Gurjar pratihars



Rajgarh-Mahant ji ki Baodi-view showing right side



Rajgarh-Mahant ji ki Baodi-view from the entrance showing first tower

The four-storeyed Mahant ji ki Baodi is oriented in east-west direction, with its entrance in the west and the circular well shaft in the east. The entrance is through a multifoil arched gate, having a raised platform on either side. The pavilions on either side of the entrance also have multifoil arched openings. Just before the entrance, on the left side, there exists a Garuda-stumbha or Tirtha-stumbha on which the devotees used to offer water. Inside the entrance, there are chambers on both sides which house the memorials of the mahants or the priests. Beautiful mural paintings adorn the roofs and walls of the entrance pavilions. The Mahants belonging to the Dadu panth were the gurus of the kings of Alwar. Dadu Dayal ji was born in 1601 Vikram Samvat and died in 1660 Vikram Samvat. Thus, this stepwell can be assumed to have been built by the Mahant around 400 years ago.



Rajgarh-Mahant ji ki Baodi-entrance pavilion with painting



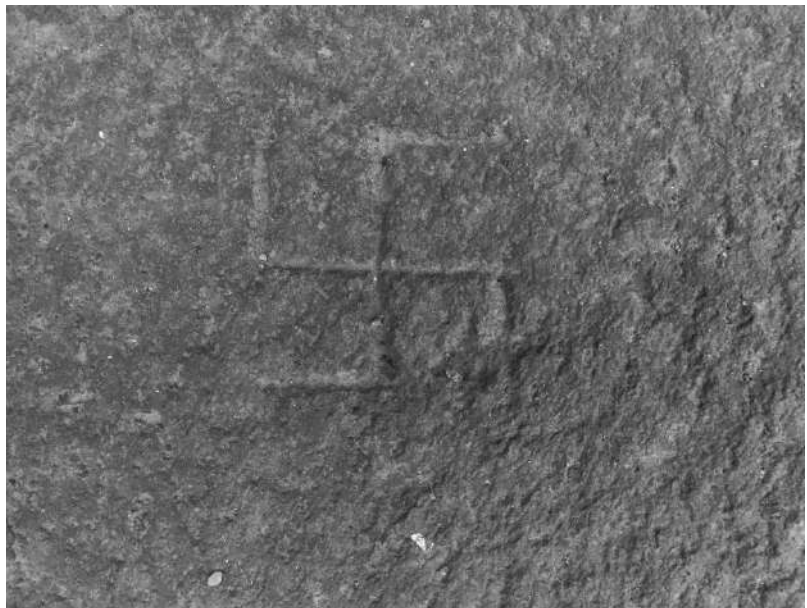
Rajgarh-Mahant ji ki Baodi-entrance with Garuda-stambh

ruled this area in 10th and 11th century. The fort was renovated by the king Rajdev of this clan and was named as Rajgarh. It is said that there were around one and a half dozen stepwells in the Rajgarh area.

On the top level, pavilions exist on three sides with cusped arch openings. The arches are supported on twin-pillared columns. The pillars are octagonal, tapering towards the top. There are three such openings from the entrance pavilion in the west towards the stepped corridor, while there are seven such openings in the eastern end with two columns on both the ends of the pavilion having four pillars each. The side verandahs in the north and the south have 12 arched openings. The 13th opening on the right side opens to the memorial chhatri outside, while that on the left leads to the roof. Parabolic arches inside support the pavilion roofs. In the middle of the left side pavilion, small temples dedicated to Lord Shiva and Lord Hanuman exist, while the one in the middle of the right-side pavilion is dedicated to Lord Ganesh.



Rajgarh-Mahant ji ki Baodi-view of second tower



Rajgarh-Mahant ji ki Baodi-mason mark on step stone

There are two pavilion towers--one in the middle of the stepwell at the end of the two flights of steps and the second at the western end before the well shaft. The first pavilion tower or the koot supports the sides with one large-sized pointed arch way. On the second level, arched niches have been provided on the side walls. The third level between the two pavilion towers also has niches on the side walls. The second tower or koot also has a large-sized pointed arch equal to the height of the second and the third levels. Earlier, all the four levels were connected with the circular well shaft through openings in the second pavilion tower. Now, the openings remain at the top and the fourth level, while others have been plugged. The top-level opening has been converted into a small makeshift temple. On the second level, the walkways along the sides go through small openings in both the towers.

The fourth level has steps going down from the third level. There are 38 steps to reach the fourth level kund and 20 steps inside the kund at the fourth level. There is no water either in the rectangular kund or the circular stepwell. Vegetation is growing rapidly in the kund. People said that there was ample water in the stepwell up to 1995. In 1978, it is said that the water came out of the entrance

gate. The stepwell is surrounded by fields on two sides and water during rains can certainly seep into the well. The well shaft and the kund require a little desilting to restore them. Specific marks of the masons, who worked in its construction, can be found on the steps. The condition of the stepwell is very good and it can attract a lot of tourists--foreign as well as domestic--if proper publicity is made in the media. At all costs, this stepwell needs to be protected and the area surrounding it should not be allowed to be turned into a concrete jungle. There are two memorial chhatris--one on the north and the other on south side of the stepwell, which are worth visiting.

181. Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi

Rajgarh, Alwar, Rajasthan

27° 14' 28" N, 76° 37' 55" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: Unknown



Rajgarh-Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi-buttresses or counterfort supports at level 3 & 4



Rajgarh-Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi-view towards entrance

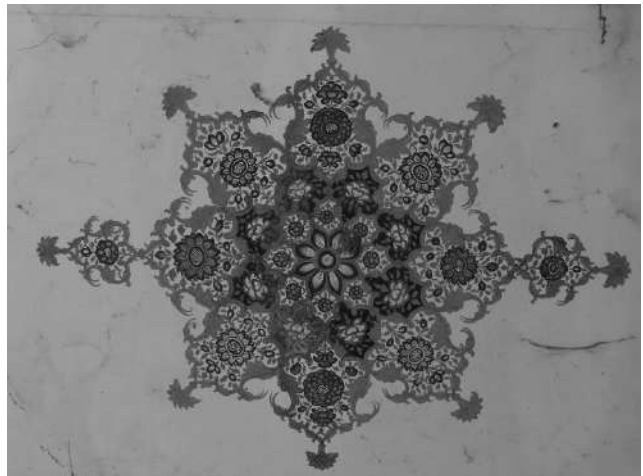


Rajgarh-Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi-pavilion at level two

The Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi is located at the other end of Rajgarh, towards Machedi by the side of Dukhbhanjan Hanuman ji's temple on the left side of the road. This stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction with its entrance from the west and the circular well shaft in the east. The stepwell might have been very grand in the past, but it is dilapidated at present. If it is not taken care of, it will vanish from the scene very soon as heavy vegetation is taking roots in the stepped corridor so much so that one cannot enter through the steps. The main pavilion tower has started crumbling. The stepwell is five-storeyed deep. The top four levels have niches in the side walls. The well shaft is connected with the stepped corridor at all the five levels.



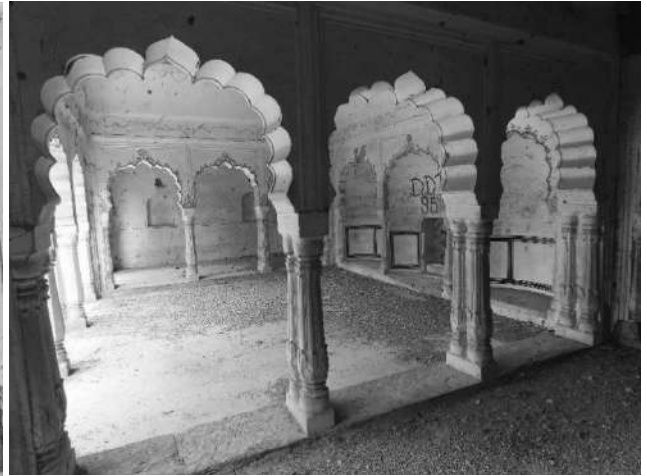
Rajgarh-Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi- Lord Ganesh painted above the opening connecting the well shaft at level two



Rajgarh-Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi-roof painting in level one



Rajgarh-Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi-painted multifoil arch at level one



Rajgarh-Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi-pavilion at level one



Rajgarh-Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi- main pavilion tower showing levels 3 to 5



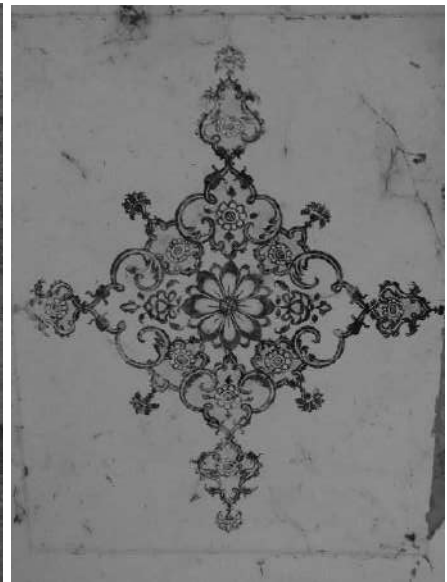
Rajgarh-Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi-main pavilion tower showing levels 1 to 4

The stepwell has been built in RR masonry with lime mortar. Most of the openings are multifoil arched openings but some inside the main pavilion tower have horse shoe arches. These arches are supported on stone columns. Beautiful paintings adorn the roofs outlines of the arches but these are also getting erased with time, since lime plaster is peeling off. A painting of Lord Ganesh has been made on the opening connecting the well shaft with the corridor in the second level. The side walls

are supported by counterforts in the third and fourth levels in the middle of the stepwell at the end of the steps, like the Baswa stepwell. There is a kund between these counterforts and the main pavilion tower. The kund has steps inside to get down. The top two levels can be approached by staircase on the southern side of the pavilion tower on the east. The lowermost two levels can be accessed through the steps from the main entrance from the west. The entrance pavilion on the west has five multifoil arched openings towards the stepped corridor. Heavy vegetation in the stepped corridor needs to be cleared regularly.



Rajgarh-Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi-painting and arrangement for hanging a swing in the pavilion at level one



Rajgarh-Bheru Sahay ji ki Baodi-roof painting at level two

A big banyan tree stands near the well shaft. A banyan tree always indicates the presence of ground water. A gaumukh exists in the small square tank on the east of the main well shaft. Perhaps this gaumukh was used for disbursing water from the stepwell to the needy. The circular well shaft had two ghatika yantra for fetching water from the well. The pipes lowered in the well shaft show that the well is still alive. On the whole, the stepwell needs to be cleared of vegetation and repaired so that it continues to serve the society.

182. Rani ka Kua

Machadi, Alwar, Rajasthan

27° 15' 16" N, 76° 39' 44" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: 15th century⁷¹

The Rani ka Kua in Machadi is located nearly 8 km from Rajgarh and 40 km from the Bandikui junction railway station on Delhi-Jaipur route at an hour's drive. The stepwell is situated outside the town. The stepwell called as the 'Rani ka Kua' or the queen's well was built in 1458 AD (Vikram Samvat 1401) by queen Champa Devi, the wife of the Badgujar king Ishwar Sen, who reigned from 1458 to 1489 AD. Machadi is said to be the old capital of Viratnagar of Mahabharat fame. It came later under the Rajgarh kings and ultimately under Alwar State. Machadi is said to have been established in the 13th century by the king Matsyadev. It was ruled by Gogadev in 1369 AD after whom Ishwar Sen became the king.



Machadi-Rani ka Kua-view at the top looking north



Machadi-Rani ka Kua-arched openings from the circular galleries towards inside

The stepwell is similar to the Bhammariyo Kuvos at Halisa and Mehmedabad in Gujarat. Similar stepwell exists by the name of 'Quinta da Regaleira' in Sintra in Portugal. In such types of stepwells, the steps are made inside the wall of the well shaft and they descend either both ways or from one direction. There are pavilions inside the thick wall of the stepwell and there are openings inside the well shaft for light and ventilation.

⁷¹ Power of Creativity, UNESCO, December 2009 page 22



Machadi-Rani ka Kua-steps connecting different levels



Machadi-Rani ka Kua-view of the gallery surrounding the well shaft. Narrow steps going down can be seen



Machadi-Rani ka Kua-pavilion at the third level



Machadi-Rani ka Kua-projected canopy or sit out at the second level



Machadi-Rani ka Kua-arched openings from the circular galleries towards inside

The stepwell at Machadi, called as the Rani ka Kua, is a 12-sided polygon and can be termed as a dodecagon. However, it is not a regular polygon with equal sides. We enter from the north through a small gate with pointed arch, flanked by two small niches on the sides, perhaps used for keeping lamps. After the entrance, one can go down the steps through the galleries from either side. On the plinth level, about a meter higher than the ground level, the normal width of the shaft wall has been

widened by providing an overhang, supported on beautifully carved brackets. These stone brackets are built in three parts each.



Machadi-Rani ka Kua-Shivalaya at the beginning



Machadi-Rani ka Kua-entrance to the stepwell in the north



Machadi-Rani ka Kua-beautiful corbels at the first level



Machadi-Rani ka Kua-stone pillar at the entrance on a raised platform

The stepwell has been constructed in RR (Random Rubble) masonry and at the time of my visit in February 2025, it was being repaired. The well was full of scaffolding erected for the purpose. It, therefore, affected the photography. After descending to the next level below, there is a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva (shivalaya) which has a shivalinga on a raised platform. The shivalaya has small niches in the inner wall for light and ventilation from the well shaft. All other sides of the temple have small niches, perhaps to keep lamps etc. An electric fan has been added lately. Just outside the temple and a little below it, there is projected balcony which could have been used as a

sit-out to enjoy cool breeze. Somewhere near this balcony, a tunnel coming from the fort, a km away, used to open, through which the queen used to come to take bath in the stepwell. On the next level below the temple, there is a pavilion, similar in size to the temple. It has niches all around in the walls. Below this, a gallery has been provided in full circumference of the well shaft. It has 12 arch openings in the inner wall, opening towards the well, while bigger niches have been made in the outer wall inside the gallery, just opposite the inner openings. The steps go down to an opening through which unprotected steps lead to water downwards. The complete height of the well shaft is said to equal to a seven storeyed building, i.e., nearly 80 ft.

The well was dried up at the time of my visit. But it can survive as it is surrounded by agricultural fields. It is good that it is being repaired now. However, what is needed the most is to take repair work continuously. It can be self-sustaining if some entry ticket is kept. But for that, the approach road must be developed and some other measures, like direction boards and some shops, are necessary to be taken.

183. Hathi Gopal ji ki Baodi/Math ki Baodi

Machadi, Alwar, Rajasthan

27° 15' 01" N, 76° 39' 25" E

Elevation: 300 m

Period: 500 years old



Machadi-Math ki Baodi-view from the entrance



Machadi-Math ki Baodi-view from the top

This stepwell is known as the Hathi Gopal ji ki Baodi or Math (Mutt) ki Baodi because it is located inside the complex or math of the Hathi Gopal temple. One has to turn right and pass through a gate just before the start of the Machadi village. The baodi is built in random rubble (RR) masonry and has not been plastered. The side walls are bulging inside towards the well shaft and need protection otherwise these may collapse after some time due to earth pressure. Though the baodi is oriented in the east-west direction, the entrances are in the north and the south at the eastern end. The well shaft is in the west. A small pavilion with rectangular opening has been provided in the

middle of the stepwell with a view to support the deep side walls, which have been constructed in RR masonry without any plaster. There was no water in the stepwell at the time of my visit in February. The stepwell is said to be around 500 years old.

184. Bairwa Basti Baodi

Machadi, Alwar, Rajasthan

27° 14' 45" N, 76° 39' 52" E

Elevation: 290 m

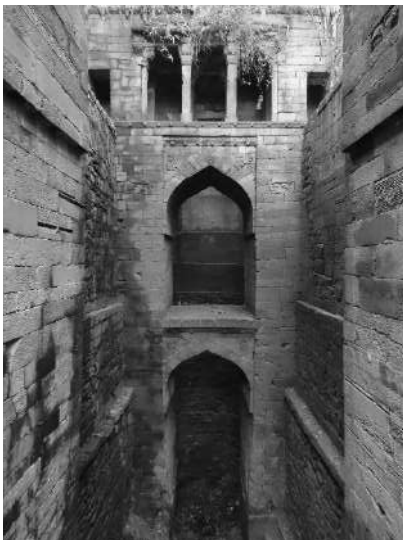
Period: Unknown



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-circular well shaft



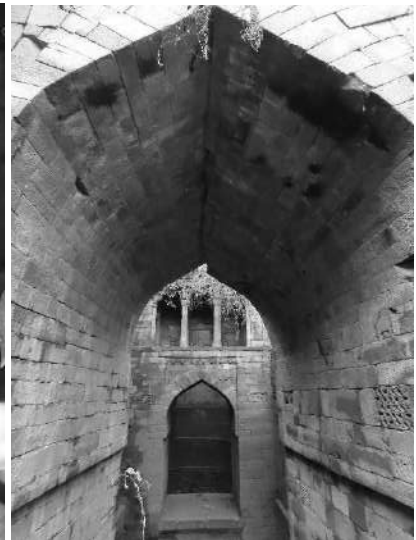
Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-view showing first and a part of second pavilion tower



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-full view of the three storeyed second pavilion tower



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-heavily decorated column shaft on the top storey of the second pavilion tower



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-view of the second tower through the arch of the first tower



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-a beautifully carved panel showing sexual embracement of a couple on the right



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-closer view of the arch in the middle storey of the second pavilion tower



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-carving of kirtimukh on a stone



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-showing a predator attacking a deer



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-beautiful capital of the columns at the top level



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-showing a warrior fighting a lion

The Machadi or Machari is the birth place of the great Hindu king, Hemu, who became known as Samrat Hemchandra Vikramaditya and declared himself as the ruler of Delhi after the death of Humayun. His rule was, however, short lived as he was defeated by the Mughal forces lead by Bairam Khan in the second Battle of Panipat in 1556, which established the Mughal Empire under Akbar. Machadi has a very rich history. There are some remains of the rich history that dot the area nearby. This stepwell is one of them. I have named it as the Bairwa Basti Baodi since it is situated in that area, at the end of the Machadi village. However, no information about its construction is available. People don't even know about its existence. I had gone to visit the better-known the Rani ka Kua and happened to visit this baodi by chance.



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-another carving showing fish



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-chhatra at the entrance of the stepwell



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-another carving with a kirtimukh



Machadi-Bairwa Basti Boadi-carving on a side wall

The stepwell appears to have been renovated once in the past during, in which the stones have been fixed at random points. This puts uncertainty about the original position of each stone. However, the sculptures and the beautiful carving on the stones describes the richness of the architecture.

Because of the sculpture of the kirtimukh available on the stones, the architecture seems to be related to Jainism.

Though the stepwell is oriented in east-west direction, with its well shaft in the west, the main entrance is in the north. There is a chhatri on the right side of the entrance. The wall on the east has a stone carving, consisting of a couple engaged in sexual intimacy. Of course, it has been defaced to some extent. The first ardh-koot (half-pavilion tower) has a big pointed archway that supports the side walls. The second pavilion tower in the west, before the well shaft, is three-storeyed. The lowermost two storeys are connected to the well shaft through a pointed arch opening on each storey. The top storey has a pavilion with three openings towards the stepped corridor. Staircases have been provided on both sides of this pavilion to access it from the top. The two columns of this pavilion are exquisitely carved with marvellous capitals. The side walls as well as the pavilions are adorned with very intricately carved stones. The stepwell needs to be taken care of by the State ASI. Proper publicity needs to be given for its existence and location as it has the potential of becoming a self-sustaining monument by attracting tourists. A combined circuit of various stepwells starting from the Chand Baodi at Abhaneri to other stepwells at Rajgarh and Machadi can be publicised and implemented.

185. Bhapura ki Baodi

Bhapura, Jaipur, Rajasthan

26° 44' 32" N, 75° 39' 12" E

Elevation: 350 m

Period: 1637 AD



Bhapura ki Baodi-entrance of the stepwell



Bhapura ki Baodi-rectangular kund before the well shaft

The stepwell at Bhapura is located in the Bhapura village which falls in the jurisdiction of Sanganer tehsil and Jaipur district. It is 18 km away from Sanganer and 23 km from Jaipur. The stepwell was

built in 1637 AD (Viram Samvat 1694, Chaitra badi 13)⁷² during the reign of Mirza Raja Jai Singh-I of Amber, who reigned from 1621 to 1667, according to the inscription available in the stepwell, just after the main entrance from north-west.



Bhapura ki Baodi-showing circular well shaft and a tank nearby



Bhapura ki Baodi-showing top level



Bhapura ki Baodi-view towards the wellshaft with the first pavilion tower in the foreground

⁷² Inscription available in the stepwell

The stepwell at Bhapura is located in the Bhapura village which falls in the jurisdiction of Sanganer tehsil and Jaipur district. It is 18 km away from Sanganer and 23 km from Jaipur. The stepwell was built in 1637 AD (Viram Samvat 1694, Chaitra badi 13)73 during the reign of Mirza Raja Jai Singh-I of Amber, who reigned from 1621 to 1667, according to the inscription available in the stepwell, just after the main entrance from north-west.

The stepwell is oriented in the northeast-southwest direction with its entrance in the northeast and the well shaft in the southwest. It is a five-storeyed stepwell. The first pavilion tower consists of a large pointed archway with its height of two storeys. The second pavilion tower consists of two large pointed archways, each of two storey height. It has staircases on both sides to go to the top pavilion on the 5th storey. The third pavilion tower has a pavilion on the top, i.e. 5th storey. There are galleries on the third and fourth storeys on all three sides. The first and second storeys from the bottom are connected with the main circular well shaft through an arch opening on each storey. An auxiliary circular well exists just before the main well shaft, connected with the well shaft through an arch opening. Water was available in this auxiliary well as well as in the main well shaft at the time of my visit in February. The side walls have around 2 m high parapet above the 4th storey. The pavilion on the 5th storey has two big multifoil arch openings on the sides, while it has a large pointed arch opening in the centre, flanked by two small pointed arch openings.



Bhapura ki Baodi-galleries on the two middle storeys on three sides



Bhapura ki Baodi-view of the third pavilion tower



Bhapura ki Baodi-view of the first pavilion tower from the second tower



Bhapura ki Baodi-showing the second pavilion tower

⁷³ Inscription available in the stepwell

The stepwell has been built in random rubble masonry with lime plaster. It has been recently repaired nicely and has the potential of becoming a tourist spot. However, proper publicity is required for this. Since agricultural fields exist behind the stepwell, it can survive and fulfil its purpose of storing precious water required, even in dire circumstances.

186. Todalari Baodi

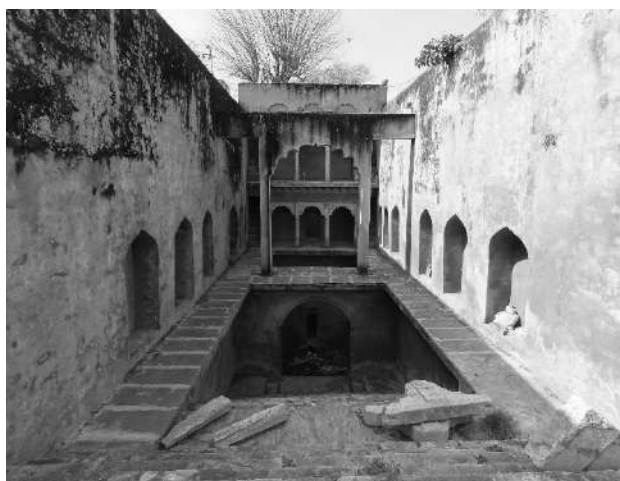
Todalari, Jaipur, Rajasthan

27° 14' 10" N, 76° 06' 03" E

Elevation: 440 m

Period: Unknown

The Todalari village is situated about 56 km from Jaipur on Pratapgarh road. The stepwell is located in the middle of the agricultural fields owned by a businessman, who has appointed a caretaker to look after his estate. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction with its entrance from the east and the well shaft in the west. It is appreciable that the owner of the land has tried to repair the stepwell, however, he has repaired the stepwell with cement plaster and the change in the shape of the openings can't be ruled out. The stepwell has been built in Nanda style with two pavilion towers. The first pavilion tower is two-storeyed and has a circular archway in the lower storey and a multifoil archway on the upper storey. The second pavilion tower, just before the circular well shaft, is three-storeyed. The upper two storeys have three multifoil arch openings each. The lowermost storey has an opening connecting the stepped corridor with the well shaft. Similar opening connects the well shaft on the middle storey. The top two storeys are connected with staircases on both sides. There are six niches in each of the side walls. An overhang at the level of the first storey has been provided on both the side walls to walk from end to end.



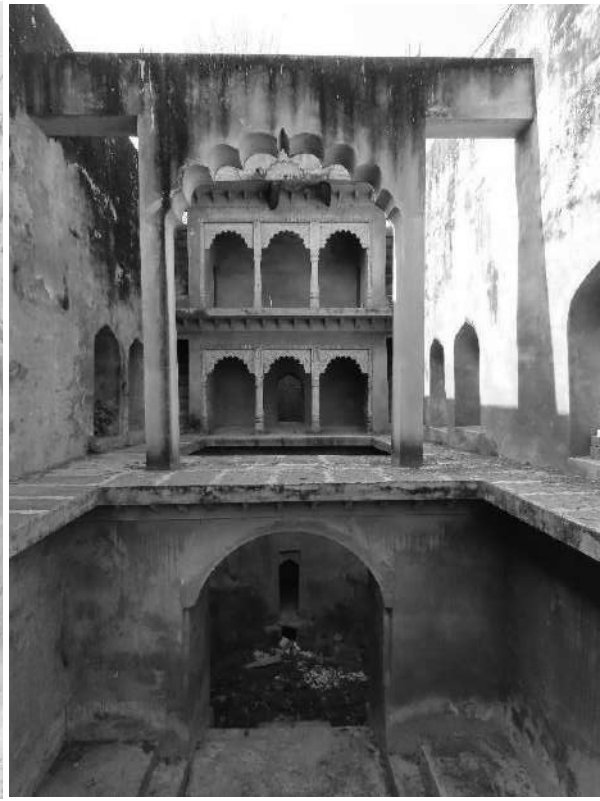
Todalari ki Baodi-showing side walls and the first pavilion tower



Todalari ki Baodi



Todalari ki Baodi-well shaft with openings to connect the stepped corridor



Todalari ki Baodi-view of the second pavilion tower through the first tower

The well was dried up at the time of my visit in February. However, the caretaker told me that water is there in the well in the monsoon season. The well has dried up due to a tubewell having been bored to replace the stepwell to irrigate the land. There is no direction board anywhere to reach this stepwell and no information about its history or architecture is available.

187. Shahpura Baodi

Shahpura, Jaipur, Rajasthan

27° 23' 23" N, 75° 57' 51" E

Elevation: 440 m

Period: Not known



Shahpura Baodi-first pavilion tower in the foreground

The Shahpura town is located 65 km northwest of Jaipur on the national highway to Delhi. The beautiful stepwell of Shahpura is located near Baba Gangadas Government Girls Post Graduate College. The temple of Lord Hanuman situated on its entrance is known as the Baodi wale Balaji. The stepwell is in a very good state, but there is no water in it because the built-up area has sprung up on all its sides.



Shahpura Baodi-showing right side of the entrance



Shahpura Baodi



Shahpura Baodi-view of the left side wall with water fetching arrangement



Shahpura Baodi-Garuda stambha outside the entrance



Shahpura Baodi-view of the second pavilion tower

A Garuda-stambha or jal-stambha can be seen at the right side of the entrance to the stepwell. The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction with its entrance from north and the circular well shaft in the south. The well shaft is, at present, outside the boundary wall of the baodi. There are two pavilion towers in the baodi. The first tower is single-storeyed and consists of a big pointed arch gate. This gate is equal to two storeys. From the first landing up to the first tower, three multi-cusped arch openings towards the corridor have been provided. This verandah has an additional multi-cusped arch opening towards the entrance. This level becomes the top storey of the second pavilion tower at the edge of the well shaft. All the multifoil arches are supported on the rectangular stone columns. There are connected pavilions on three sides on this level, with multi-cusped arch openings. The middle storey has door sized niches on three sides--two side walls and the one wall on the well shaft side. The bottom most storey has an opening connecting the auxiliary circular tank in the stepped corridor with the well shaft. There are 45 steps to reach this auxiliary well from the entrance. The top storey is also connected with such type of opening. At the top of all the three storeys, a cantilevered footpath, supported on stone

brackets, has been provided along the three sides. The water drawing arrangement has been provided on top of the third storey on the east side wall.



Shahpura Baodi-view from the well shaft



Shahpura Baodi-view from the first tower



Shahpura Baodi-corridor on the right side

The well is completely dried up. The auxiliary well at the end of the stepped corridor is full of waste thrown by people. The municipality has constructed a toilet block attached to the west side wall of the stepwell. The stepwell which was once worshipped has become the place for urination. We have certainly forgotten our culture.

188. Kali Mandir Baodi

Shahpura, Jaipur, Rajasthan

27° 22' 49" N, 75° 57' 38" E

Elevation: 440 m

Period: 20th century

The Kali Mandir Baodi now houses the Kali Mandir since the temple has occupied the whole stepwell. At the end of the descending steps, what must have been the kund just before the well shaft, a temple dedicated to Goddess Kali has come up. The encroachers have not spared the stepwells. The tragedy is that the local government also ignores this problem. The well shaft behind it has been filled up and a peepal tree exists in its place. The water drawing arrangement can still be seen. The statue of Goddess Kali sits just in the opening connecting the well shaft to the stepped corridor. The opening has been closed now. Three niches in each of the two side walls and one each flanking the goddess exist even now. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the east and the well shaft in the west.



Shahpura-kali Mandir Baodi-view from the first tower towards the entrance



Shahpura-kali Mandir Baodi-niches can be seen



Shahpura-kali Mandir Baodi-the water fetching arrangement can be seen on the top right hand side of the photograph

According to the local people, this stepwell is said to have been built by Rao Pratap Singh Bahadur, the ruler of Shahpura and the grandfather of the current Rao Rajendra Singh, who is the Member of Parliament from this place. Manoharpur is the predecessor state of Shahpura and was founded by Rao Manohar Singh who ruled from 1584 to 1616. Rao Pratap Singh Bahadur ruled from 1881 to 1942. So, the stepwell would have been built in the beginning of the 20th century and may be around 100 years old.

189. Gurudwara Baodi

Sawarda, Jaipur, Rajasthan

26° 44' 57" N, 75° 17' 13" E

Elevation: 360 m

Period: 18th century



Sawarda-Gurudwara Baodi-view from the well shaft



Sawarda-Gurudwara Baodi-view from the entrance pavilion



Sawarda-Gurudwara Baodi-view of the entrance



Sawarda-Gurudwara Baodi-view of the only pavilion tower with kund in the foreground

An information board available in the compound of the Gurudwara at Sawarda mentions that Guru Gobind Singh stayed here in 1706-07 AD while going to Nanded in Maharashtra. A saint named Kanardas, who remained in the service of Guru Gobind Singh, built this stepwell with the blessings

of the Guru. Thus, this stepwell would have been built in the beginning of the 18th century and is around 300 years old. Since the stepwell is inside the gurudwara complex, I have named it as the Gurudwara Baodi. Sawarda village is 10 km from its tehsil town of Dudu and 60 km from Jaipur.

The stepwell is a simple one built in Nanda style. It is oriented in the north-south direction, with its entrance from the north and the circular well shaft in the south. It has two-storeyed pavilion tower at the edge of the well shaft. The top pavilion has three-pointed arch openings with small staircases on both sides going up. The lowermost storey has an opening connecting the stepped corridor with the well shaft. The well has sufficient water all round the year as it is surrounded by agricultural fields and its water is being used for irrigation.

A jal stambha stands in front of the entrance pavilion. The entrance pavilion has two pointed-arch ways in the front and three such openings towards the stepped corridor. The arches are supported on sleek rectangular stone columns. Walkways are available on both the storeys on the right-side wall but only above the bottom storey in the left side wall. The stepwell has been repaired in cement plaster and it is possible that its originality might have been sacrificed. There are umpteen numbers of banyan trees inside Gurudwara complex.

190. Vir Teja ji Temple Baodi

Sawarda, Jaipur, Rajasthan

26° 44' 50" N, 75° 17' 34" E

Elevation: 360 m

Period: Unknown



Sawarda-Teja ji Mandir Baodi-first pavilion tower



Sawarda-Teja ji Mandir Baodi-circular well shaft

In the compound of the Vir Teja ji Temple, behind the Government Primary School of Sawarda village, there is a stepwell which is now in a dilapidated state. The stepwell has two pavilion towers. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the east and the circular well shaft in the west. The entrance pavilion tower is single-storeyed and has a pointed arch gate. A long, stepped corridor follows after it which ends at the second pavilion tower which is four-storeyed. The lowermost storey has an opening connecting it with the well shaft. The second storey from the bottom has three pointed-arch openings towards the stepped corridor. The top two storeys with a pavilion on each have a single opening each way. These pavilions were perhaps used for taking rest.



Sawarda-Teja ji Mandir Baodi-pavilion on the top storey of the second tower

The stepwell has been constructed in random rubble masonry with lime plaster. The well is now completely dried and filled up to the ground level. It requires repairs. The stepwell can be retrieved if its well shaft is excavated and other part is repaired because it is surrounded by agricultural fields on two sides.



Sawarda-Teja ji Mandir Baodi-long shot of the stepped corridor towards the first pavilion tower



Sawarda-Teja ji Mandir Baodi-showing the second pavilion tower

The stepwell has been constructed in random rubble masonry with lime plaster. The well is now completely dried and filled up to the ground level. It requires repairs. The stepwell can be retrieved if its well shaft is excavated and other part is repaired because it is surrounded by agricultural fields on two sides.

191. Dudu Baodi

Dudu, Jaipur, Rajasthan

26° 40' 54" N, 75° 13' 29" E

Elevation: 350 m

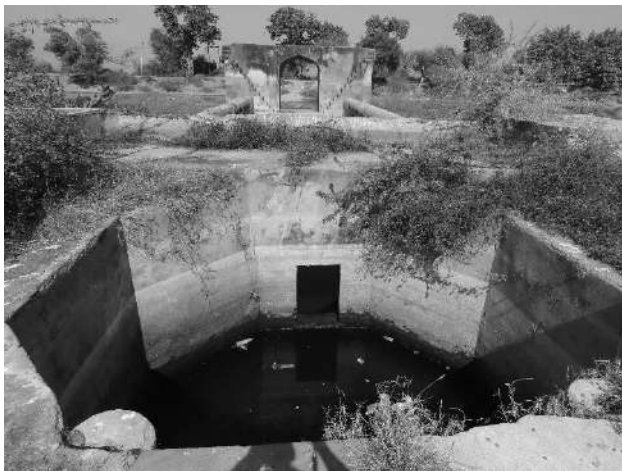
Period: Unknown



Dudu Baodi-view from the well shaft towards the entrance



Dudu Baodi-view of the archway at the entrance to the baodi



Dudu Baodi-octagonal well shaft with connection to the the stepped corridor



Dudu Baodi-A view of the Dudu stepwell inside the Dudu tank

The Dudu Baodi is located inside the Dudu Pond. Mozamabad, the birthplace of Amber King Man Singh, falls in Dudu where he was born in 1550 AD. The Dudu stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction, with its entrance in the north and the octagonal well shaft in the south. While the baodi appears to have been built in random rubble masonry with lime plaster, bricks have been used in the spandrels of the entrance archway. There is a single-storeyed pavilion tower at the entrance which has staircase on both the ends on the inside to go up. This entrance pavilion has a large pointed arch way. This pavilion has a chamber on either side. There is an inscription about the

stepwell on the right side of the entrance pavilion, but it is illegible. The ASI must protect it and provide translation of the inscription for information of the visitors.



Dudu Baodi-view from the top of the entrance arch gate



Dudu Baodi-view of the only pavilion tower from the entrance

The side walls are about two feet thick. The second pavilion tower at the edge of the octagonal well shaft is perhaps two-storeyed. Only the upper storey was visible due to water. The upper pavilion of the second tower has three multi-cusped arch openings towards the corridor. These arches are supported on rectangular stone columns. There are ledges on both the side walls, which extend through two small side openings flanking the three multi-cusped arches, ultimately leading to the stairs to the top of the pavilion on both sides. Nine arched niches of small depth have been provided on each side wall to enhance the beauty and to break the monotony. The water drawing arrangement exists even now with two sockets on the southernmost arm of the octagon.

The local government must include this as a tourist attraction and provide direction boards to reach the stepwell.

192. Gaurishankar Baodi

Naraina, Jaipur, Rajasthan

26° 47' 33" N, 75° 12' 09" E

Elevation: 380 m

Period: 17th century



Naraina-Gaurishankar Baodi-north-south part of the L-shaped baodi



Naraina-Gaurishankar Baodi-view from the well shaft

Naraina is famous as the place where Saint Dadu Dayal ji stayed and made his ashram. Naraina is one of the most important places for Dadu Sampradaya. The town is said to be around 2000 years old and has been the capital of Khangarot Rajputs. The pond was earlier known as Bindu Sagar and later on as Gaurishankar Talab. It is also known as Dadu Sagar. Naraina is nearly 75 kms west from Jaipur and 15 km from its tehsil town of Phulera.



Naraina-Gaurishankar Baodi-east-west part of the L-shaped baodi



Naraina-Gaurishankar Baodi-entrance pavilion

The stepwell is on the banks of Gaurishankar Talab by the side of a road and extends into the pond. The stepwell is L-shaped. The smaller leg of the stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the east. The entrance pavilion has two pointed arched openings in both directions along with a chamber on right side of the entrance. The steps go down after this pavilion and meet at the single-storeyed pavilion in the west. From this junction, the longer leg of the baodi is oriented in the north-south direction. The circular well shaft is at the northern end. The second pavilion tower, possibly two-storeyed with three arch openings, is just before the well shaft. The water drawing arrangement is in the north of the well shaft. The stepwell is built of stones and remains full of water all round the year.

The chattri of Jayatram of Dadu Panth was built in Vikram Samvat 1739 (1682 AD). He died in Vikram Samvat 1689. It is said that the stepwell was also built during that time. We can assume that it was built in the 17th century.

193. Bhoot Baodi

Moruda, Jaipur, Rajasthan

26° 50' 12" N, 75° 09' 44" E

Elevation: 380 m

Period: 400 years old

This stepwell is just before the beginning of Moruda village, while coming from Naraina. Nobody knows about its history. It's a normal practice in villages to say that so and so stepwell was made by bhoots (Djinns). So, this one is also called as the Bhooton ki Baodi. This stepwell is located in the middle of agricultural fields. The farmer working in the fields mentioned that



Moruda-Bhoot Baodi-looking towards west

the stepwell is four generations old. Taking 100 years for one generation, it becomes around 400 years old. The stepwell is square shaped and built of big stone blocks. The different sizes of the stone blocks could be estimated around 6'x 4'x 6', 3'x 3'x1' and 3'x 3' x 2 ½'. No plaster has been used. The stepwell is eight levels high above the lowest water level. Each level is of about 6 ft high. Thus, the depth of the stepwell is around 50-60 ft. It was mentioned by the farmer that the water level reaches up to 6 ft below the top. The water drawing arrangement is on the west. The stone blocks have been arranged in the form of steps on all the sides. The stepwell is very simple and no sculpture or carving can be seen.



Moruda-Bhoot Baodi-looking towards south

194. Marwa Baodi

Marwa, Jaipur, Rajasthan
 26° 47' 45" N, 74° 56' 52" E
 Elevation: 400 m
 Period: Unknown



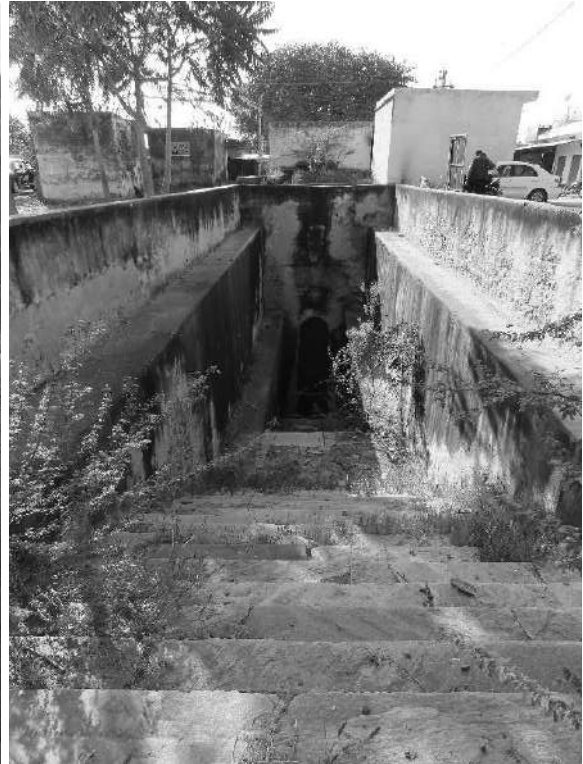
Marwa Baodi-view from the well shaft



Marwa Baodi-view of well shaft from the top
 showing connection with the corridor



Marwa Baodi-showing connection between well shaft and stepped corridor



Marwa Baodi-view from the entrance

The stepwell at Marwa is at the tri-junction of roads. The village is around 100 km away from the state capital at Jaipur. The village also possesses a fort on a hillock. The stepwell has been built in random rubble masonry with lime plaster and is oriented in the east-west direction. The entrance is from the east while the circular well shaft is in the west. The steps go down from the entrance deep into the well shaft. There are two landings provided in three flights of steps. The I, II, and III flights have 24, 11, and 12 steps respectively. The riser is around one foot while the tread is around 1 ½ feet. The tread is with flag stones. It is the simplest stepwell with no decorations. The only unique thing is the narrow and high archway made into the well shaft. The well had some water but it was full of garbage. No direction board for the stepwell is available.

195. Chor Baodi

Salemabad, Ajmer, Rajasthan

26° 43' 01" N, 74° 47' 41" E

Elevation: 420 m

Period: Vikram Samvat-971 (924 AD)⁷⁴



Salemabad-Chor Baodi-third pavilion tower when viewed from the well shaft



Salemabad-Chor Baodi



Salemabad-Chor Baodi-view of the well shaft from the bottom

⁷⁴ Inscription at the stepwell



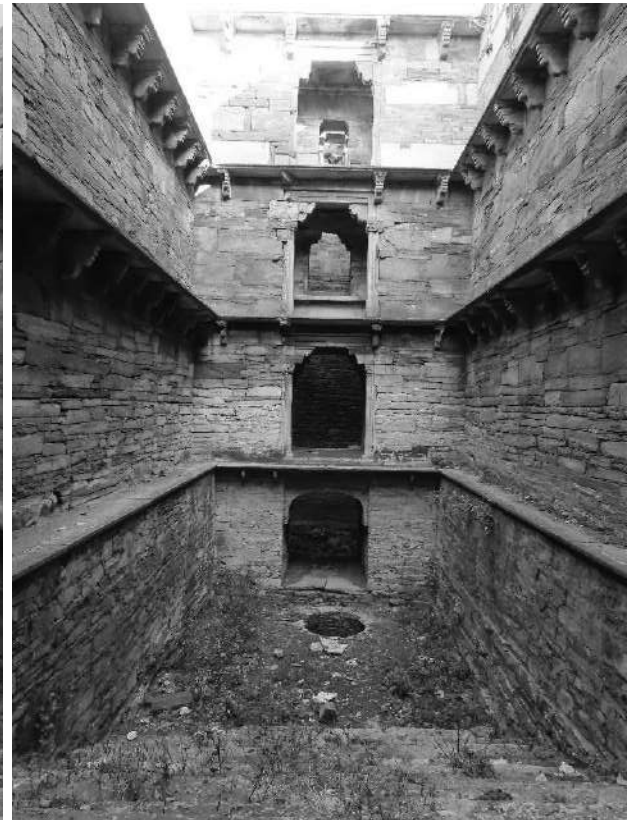
**Salemabad-Chor Baodi-first pavilion tower when
viewed from second tower**



Salemabad-Chor Baodi-first pavilion tower



**Salemabad-Chor Baodi-third pavilion
tower**



**Salemabad-Chor Baodi-fourth pavilion
tower**

The Salemabad⁷⁵ village is 20 km away from its tehsil town of Kishangarh and 40 km from the district town of Ajmer. The inscription available on a column of the lower storey of the second pavilion tower in the stepwell mentions Vikram Samvat 971. The stepwell has no dome or arch which were brought to India by Muslims. The stepwell has no sign of Muslim architecture. It has ample use of corbelled arches in the openings. The inscription is also in a language somewhat similar to the Devnagari script. Thus, we can safely assume that the construction of this stepwell dates before the advent of Muslims in India. In view of this, the Salemabad stepwell may be one of the oldest in Rajasthan.



Salemabad-Chor Baodi-upper storey of the second pavilion tower



Salemabad-Chor Baodi-second pavilion tower from well shaft side

There are four pavilion towers in the stepwell. The first pavilion tower is single-storeyed, the second is two-storeyed, the third tower is three-storeyed, and the fourth tower is four-storeyed. The pavilions in the first, second, and third towers have three corbelled arch openings in both the directions--towards the entrance and the well shaft--while the fourth tower has only a single opening, which acts as the connection between the stepped corridor and the circular well shaft. A small opening has been provided near the two side walls on both the sides of the three openings or the pavilions, which serves as a thorough passage through the ledges along both the side walls at each level or storey. These ledges, at all the three levels, are supported on brackets. The ledges were used to traverse the whole length of the stepwell and access the pavilions along the two side walls. All these corbelled arches are supported on octagonal stone columns. Their bases and capitals are beautifully carved. The column shafts are octagonal in shape. Different parts of the columns are joined by iron clips. No plaster has been used.

⁷⁵ According to legends, Sher Shah Suri, the King of Delhi, visited this place around 500 years back. Sher Shah Suri ruled from 1540 to 1545 after defeating Humayun. He died in 1545 AD. The area, then known as Sri Nimbark Teerth, was a jungle at that time. Sher Shah had no son and he had come to visit a Sufi saint at Ajmer who advised him to visit Acharya Sri at Sri Nimbark Teerth. Acharya Sri blessed him with a son called as Salim Shah. Sher Shah visited Sri Nimbark Teerth again and asked Acharya Sri to establish a village named as Salemabad after his son. Thus, the place came to be known as Salemabad. Salim Shah Suri is also known as Islam Shah Suri who ruled after the death of Sher Shah Suri in 1545 until his own death in 1554. Sri Nimbark Teerth is also described in old Hindu scriptures, i.e., Purans.



Salemabad-Chor Baodi-entrance



Salemabad-Chor Baodi-carved parapets

A damaged sculpture of Lord Ganesha exists in the niche on the right-side wall in the first pavilion tower, while the left side niche is empty. Parapets have been provided towards the entrance in the pavilions on the upper storey of the second tower and on the two upper storeys of the third tower. These parapets are carved with floral motifs. Sitting benches with back towards the well shaft have been provided in the top two levels of the fourth pavilion tower. However, the benches are in a damaged condition. The staircases have been provided in the fourth tower on both the sides, connecting all the levels to the top.

The condition of the second pavilion tower is very precarious. The right most column towards the entrance in the lowermost storey of the second tower and the second column from the left in the middle storey of the third pavilion tower have broken down, and the tower is somehow hanging, albeit dangerously. Though the column on the bottom storey has been supported on makeshift masonry, there is no support on the middle storey. The authorities must pay immediate attention to provide stability to the structure otherwise it will fall down, resulting into irreparable damage to the original architecture. While repairing, it has to be made sure that the repair is in line with the existing architecture. A small circular auxiliary well exists before the main well shaft. The well is however completely dried due to heavily built-up area, which has come up on all the sides, preventing the recharging of the stepwell. Overall, the upkeep of the stepwell is not up to the mark. In my opinion, this stepwell is of great cultural and heritage value, and must be protected and promoted as a tourist attraction.

196. Bum Baodi

Merta City, Nagaur, Rajasthan

26° 38' 31" N, 74° 01' 55" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: 16th century

Altitude: 310 m



Merta City-Bum Baodi-view from the well shaft, restricted by walls erected all around the stepwell



Merta City-Bum Baodi



Merta City-Bum Baodi-circular well shaft is visible behind the pavilion



Merta City-Bum Baodi-beautifully carved twin-pillared column

Merta City is the birth place of the famous Saint Mira, who was married to the descendants of Maharana Pratap of Mewar. Medantaka Nagabhatta Pratihara of Pratihara dynasty made it his capital. Alauddin Khilji took control of it in the 13th century. Rao Jodha of Jodhpur granted Merta as jagir to

his son Rao Duda, who built a palace and Dudasar pond. Rao Veeramdev ruled afterwards. Mira Bai--the famous poet and devotee of Lord Krishna--was his niece. When Maldev Rathore became the king of Marwar, he annexed Merta and built Malkot fort. Maldev ruled over Merta from 1542 to 1562, when he lost it to Akbar. This stepwell is said to belong to the 16th century and built during the construction of Malkot.

According to the legends, a saint called 'Bum Baba' used to live at the stepwell and therefore the stepwell came to be known as the Bum Baodi. At present, it is under private control. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its circular well shaft in the east. The main entrance is from the west. However, the steps also descend from the north and the south at the entrance. The Kundal Talab is on the east of this stepwell from which the water filters into this baodi. There are three temples dedicated to Lord Shiva, which are situated nearby. A Jain temple is also situated nearby. The effect of the Jain architecture can be seen in this stepwell. The stepwell was full of water up to the first storey even in March. Local population enjoy taking bath in the stepwell in summers. The first pavilion tower appears to be missing now as only its columns can be seen near the entrance. The second pavilion tower is double-storeyed. A big circular arch exists on its second storey, while the bottom storey was not visible due to standing water. There are three niches in each of the side walls where pigeons have made their nests. Ledges have been provided on two levels along the side walls. The twin-pillared columns are beautifully carved. Kirtimukhs can be seen on the top of the column shafts, which indicates an effect of the Jain architecture. If the pigeon menace is controlled, its water can remain clean.

197. Suwa Baodi

Merta City, Nagaur, Rajasthan

26° 38' 28" N, 74° 02' 03" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: Unknown



Merta-Suwa Baodi-view of the well shaft in May

The Suwa Baodi is situated on the opposite side of the Kundal Talab to the Bum Baodi, inside a private farm house. It got its name due to the presence of a large number of parakeets, called suwa in the local language. The stepwell is full of water and still in use for irrigation.



Merta City-Suwa Baodi-view from the east



Merta City-Suwa Baodi-auxiliary well behind the main well shaft



Merta City-Suwa Baodi-pavilion with two side entrances



Merta City-Suwa Baodi-view of the entrance from east

The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its main entrance in the west and the well shaft in the east. There is another small entrance from the south side wall to the top pavilion. Perhaps the second such entrance from the north has been closed. The pavilion tower is two-storeyed. The upper pavilion has five openings, supported on stone columns, towards the entrance, out of which an opening on either side is connected to the entrances from the north (now missing) and the south side walls. There are three openings looking towards the well shaft. The bottom storey of the tower has a pointed archway, which was almost fully under water at the time of my visit in March. The steps from the entrance continue to descend to the water level in the well shaft through the pointed arch. Two levels of ledges (walkways) around the well shaft could be seen in the month of May after



Merta City-Suwa Baodi-view of the pavilion from the entrance

reduction of water level. The steps connect these two levels in the well shaft. An auxiliary well shaft has been built on the eastern side of the main well shaft which are connected to each other. Water is pumped out for irrigation from this auxiliary well shaft. The main well shaft is quite big in size. It was mentioned by a boy working in the farm that there is a gallery inside the well shaft for moving around at the landing level of the bottom storey, which can be seen only when water level goes down.

This stepwell is really fulfilling the purpose of its construction even in modern times and is worth visiting.

198. Rajlani Baodi

Rajlani, Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

26° 41' 10" N, 73° 37' 13" E

Elevation: 320 m

Period: 16th century



Rajlani baodi-third pavilion tower



Rajlani baodi-second pavilion tower



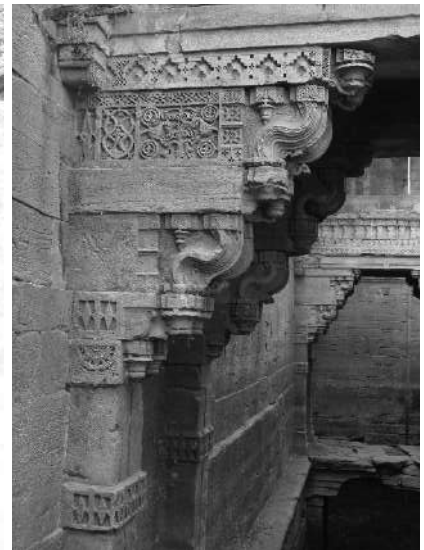
Rajlani baodi-view of the first pavilion tower from the second tower



Rajlani baodi-another carving on the side wall



Rajlani baodi-right hand side view of the upper storey of the second pavilion tower



Rajlani baodi



Rajlani baodi-left hand side corbel of the lower storey of the second pavilion tower



Rajlani baodi-twin-pillared column of the first pavilion on right hand side



Rajlani baodi-left hand side of the first pavilion tower

The Rajlani stepwell is located in Rajlani village of Bhopalgarh tehsil and Jodhpur district. Rajlani is 15 km away from Asop. According to the inscription available on the right-side wall of the stepwell, it was built during the times of King Maldev by his commander Jaitra or Jaita Singh for the use of public. The construction of the stepwell was commenced in Vikram Samvat 1594 and completed in Vikram Samvat 159776. Rajlani was called Haribari or Hirabari in the olden times. People in the far-off villages used to ask for 'raj'(dust) of this place by saying 'raj lana' through the persons visiting this place, which gave the name Rajlani to this place. The inscription also mentions the number of labourers who worked and various quantities of the materials consumed in the construction of this stepwell. According to this, 151 skilled artisans: 171 male labourers and 221 female labourers, worked in the construction of the baodi, and 521 maund iron, 1146 maund ghee, 221 maund opium, 721 maund salt, 121 maund jute, 2555 maund wheat, and 11121 maund other food grains were consumed in its construction. The cost of construction has been shown as 1,25,111 fadiye, which is equivalent to Rs. 15,000/- at that time. A maund was a measure of weight during the British period and was equal to 40 seers or 37.3242 kg.

The stepwell is also called the Bheru ji ki Baodi because Kala Gora Bheru ji is worshipped here. The sculpture of Lord Ganesha and Goddess Kali exist in the niches in the side walls. People are offering a lot of oil on these sculptures and due to this the sculptures are completely unrecognisable. Public offers oil even on the inscription because of which it is turning illegible.

⁷⁶ Inscription at the stepwell



Rajlani baodi-view from the top of the first pavilion tower



Rajlani baodi-shikhar over the niche on the left hand side of the first pavilion tower



Rajlani baodi-right side of the carved corbelled arch of the first pavilion tower



Rajlani baodi-dancing person carved on the side wall

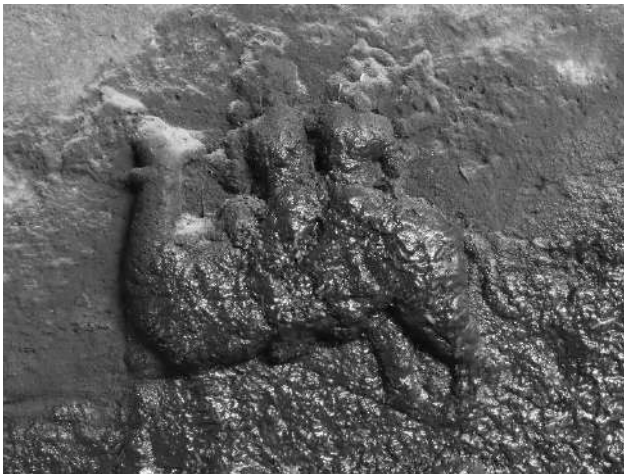
The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the entrance from the east and the well shaft in the west. The stepwell has been built in stone masonry without the use of plaster. There are three pavilion towers. The first, second, and third towers are single, double, and three storeyed respectively. The single-storeyed first pavilion tower is supported on eight columns, out of which four are embedded in the side walls. The main opening is supported through brackets in such a way that the width of different parts of the brackets keeps on increasing upwards, thus making use of the corbelled arches to support the load. This was before the Muslims brought the architecture of arches.



Rajlani baodi-sexually intimate scene carved on the side wall



Rajlani baodi-view from the entrance



Rajlani baodi-camel with two riders carved on the side wall



Rajlani baodi-carving on the side wall

The corbels or the brackets as well as the columns are very intricately carved. The second pavilion tower is two-storeyed. The right side support of the lower storey has been damaged and supported on stone masonry. Similarly, the lowermost storey of the third pavilion tower is damaged and needs restoration. At some places, the side walls are bulging and this may lead to irreparable damage. The stepwell needs urgent attention for repairs and upkeep. There are beautiful carvings on the stone blocks of both the side walls. The uppermost pavilions are connected with the top through staircases. Ledges have been provided for access at each level along the two side walls making the side walls thicker, unlike the other stepwells where the ledges are supported on brackets. Benches with carved back supports have been provided on the top storeys to sit and enjoy the cool environment of the stepwell. There is a pond on the right side of the stepwell from which water gets filtered into it. There was water in the stepwell even during March.

199. Bheru ji ki Baodi

Sathin, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 27' 10" N, 73° 34' 27" E

Elevation: 270 m

Period: Vikram Samvat 1568 (1511 AD)



Sathin-Bheru ji ki Baodi-view of the pavilion tower from the entrance



Sathin-Bheru ji ki Baodi-view of the entrance from the pavilion tower



Sathin-Bheru ji ki Baodi-view of the stepped well shaft from the tower



Sathin-Bheru ji ki Baodi-view of the stepped well shaft from the tower



Sathin-Bheru ji ki Baodi-top storey of the pavilion tower



Sathin-Bheru ji ki Baodi-view of the pavilion tower from the well shaft



Sathin-Bheru ji ki Baodi-middle storey of the pavilion tower with temple in the niche

The Sathin village, also spelled as Satheen, falls under Bhopalgarh tehsil of Jodhpur district in Rajasthan. It is 70 kms away from Jodhpur. According to the legends, the stepwell was built by Roopa Devi, a queen of Godawas of Malwa region in Madhya Pradesh, who had visited the temple of Kala Gora Bhairav with the desire to get a son. The priest of the temple, Rajpuri ji Maharaj, asked her to construct a stepwell after the birth of a son. The priest asked the queen to disburse the money to the labourers from her fist (mutthi) without counting, which she did. A small temple of Rajpuri ji Maharaj has been built at the entrance of the stepwell, which contains a wooden stick which can cure the effect of any poison. This wooden stick is still in good shape, without any termite attack--

even after 500 years of construction of the stepwell. The stepwell is also known as the Kala Gora Bhairav Baodi as Kala Gora Bhairav God is worshipped here.

The stepwell was built in Vikram Samvat 1568 (1511 AD), according to the inscription available in the middle pavilion⁷⁷. A fair is held for three days in the village every year in Magh month--a month before Shivratri. Devotees come here with their prayers to get children. The stepwell has been built of stones without use of any plaster. At the entrance, two small temples exist on either side--one on the right side being dedicated to Lord Shiva. Thereafter, very wide steps lead to the three-storeyed pavilion tower. Walkways have been made at each level of the storeys along the side walls to approach the pavilions. The lowermost storey is supported on 12 columns, of which six are embedded in the side walls, while the middle and upper storeys are supported on 18 columns, of which six are embedded in the side walls. All these are stone columns and square in cross section. Steps descend from the landing of the bottom pavilion downwards to the water level in the well shaft, which is quadrangular in shape. The stepwell is oriented in the northwest-southeast direction. The entrance is from the northwest while the well shaft is in the southeast. Perhaps, because of the resident deity, the stepwell is well kept and is neat and clean.

200. Prachin Baodi/Lakha ji Baodi

Pipar City, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 23' 20" N, 73° 32' 26" E

Elevation: 260 m

Period: 9th century



Pipar-Prachin Baodi

⁷⁷ Inscription available in the stepwell

The Pipar City, a tehsil town, is 60 km away from the district headquarters of Jodhpur. The Prachin Baodi (Ancient Stepwell), also known as the Lakha Baodi, is situated behind the sabzi mandi (vegetable market) in between the temples of Lord Mahadev and Lord Hanuman.

The stepwell is in the form of a kund and has been built of dressed stone blocks. It is surprising to think as to how such big stone blocks were transported to the site. These stone blocks are almost 5 ft long. Steps have been provided on all sides. There are five levels of steps on all the sides, where steps descending in two directions have been built in pairs. Such type of arrangement of steps avoided the clash of the ladies going to fetch water or bringing up the water as they could follow different steps. This also allowed a large number of ladies to do their daily chores at the same time. Overall, the kund is square-shaped. The rectangular well shaft is in the north of the stepwell. The water drawing arrangement can still be seen above the well shaft. A trough for animals also exists. According to the legends, the stepwell was built by the Thakur of Nonan in the memory of his daughter-in-law, around 300 years back. However, Jutta Jain Neubauer places its construction in the 9th century.⁷⁸

201. Balunda stepwell

Balunda, Pali, Rajasthan

26° 19' 5" N, 73° 56' 41" E

Elevation: 300 m

Period: Vikram Samvat 1700 (1643 AD)



Balunda Stepwell-second pavilion tower and two projected balconies on the side walls



Balunda Stepwell with temple on the left

⁷⁸ Neubauer, *The Stepwells of Gujarat*, page xiii



Balunda Stepwell-looking up the well shaft



Balunda Stepwell-first pavilion tower

Balunda was a small principality under Marwar State. It was founded by Rao Chanda on 15 April, 1573 AD. Rao Chanda was the son of Rao Viramdev of Merta, who was the great grand son of Rao Jodha--the founder of Jodhpur. Rao Chanda was the army commander of Rao Maldev of Marwar State. Balunda has a beautiful fort, temples, and about 15 royal cenotaphs. Balunda is 14 km from its tehsil town of Jaitaran and 110 km from Jodhpur.



Balunda Stepwell-Garuda stambha on the roght hand side of the entrance



Balunda Stepwell-a toran gate on raised platform

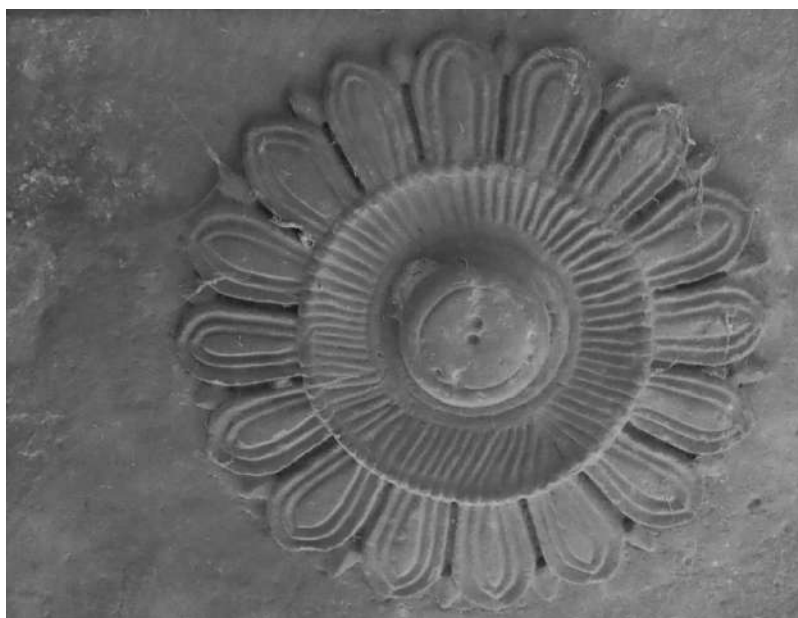


Balunda Stepwell-second pavilion tower with the well shaft in the background

A three-storey stepwell made of red sandstone, a Lord Shiva temple, and a carved toran (victory arch) are all situated inside the same complex in the middle of the town. According to the inscription available on the jal-stambha on the right side of the entrance, the stepwell was built in Vikram Samvat 1700⁷⁹, i.e., 1643 AD by Thakur Jagat Singh. Since he was a devotee of Lord Krishna, he

⁷⁹ Inscription at the stepwell

named the stepwell as the Shyam Baodi. The Shiva temple nearby has an architecture similar to the temples of Bengal. The stepwell has two pavilion towers. The first pavilion tower is single-storeyed and supported on eight stone columns, out of which four are embedded in the side walls. The columns are sleek and octagonal. They are connected with the capitals and bases through metal connectors. The shafts of the columns are in two parts connected to each other. No plaster has been used. The capitals and bases of the columns are carved. The second pavilion tower is double-storeyed. The upper pavilion of the second tower has carved parapet towards the stepped corridor. Floral medallions are carved on the beams and inside the roofs of the pavilions. Awnings have been fixed on the first pavilion tower and the upper storey of the second tower. Projected balconies have been provided in between the two pavilion towers on both the side walls.



Balunda Stepwell carving in the middle of a beam



Balunda Stepwell-carved base of the column

The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction, with its entrance from the north and the circular well shaft in the south. The Shiva temple is on the eastern side of the stepwell, while a beautiful toran (victory arch), on a raised platform, has been built on the right side of the stepwell. The water drawing arrangement is available in the well shaft, which has been built up through the corbelled arch. The well is completely dried up and filled up with mud. The stepwell cannot be revived as it is surrounded by heavily built-up area. However, it can certainly be promoted as a self-sustaining tourist attraction.

202. Baba ji ki Baodi

Narlai, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 18' 48" N, 73° 32' 12" E

Elevation: 370 m

Period: 17th century

The Baba ji ki Baodi at Narlai is located by the side of the main road inside the graveyard. There is a big banyan tree at the entrance. The stepwell has two pavilion towers. The first tower is single-storeyed while the second one is two-storeyed. The first tower has a big multifoil archway with a niche in each of the sidewalls, which are empty now. Similarly, the upper storey of the second tower has a similar big multifoil archway with two niches in the side walls. The lower storey of this tower was under water at the time of the visit in March. The rectangular well shaft is connected with the stepped corridor through arch opening. Medallions have been carved in the spandrels of the multi-cusped archways. Floral carvings adorn the springing and crown points of the arches.



Narlai-Baba ji ki Baodi-view of the second pavilion tower



Narlai-Baba ji ki Baodi-multifoil arch of the first pavilion tower

The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction, with its entrance from the north and the rectangular well shaft in the south. This has been built of dressed stones. Though full of water, the stepwell is perhaps being used for religious rituals and gardening.

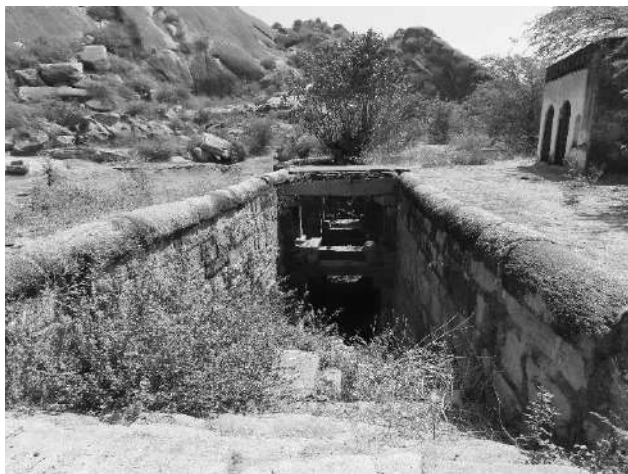
203. Botia Baodi

Narlai, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 18' 47" N, 73° 32' 18" E

Elevation: 370 m

Period: Vikram Samvat 1993 (1936 AD)



Narlai-Botia Baodi-entrance from the north



Narlai-Botia Baodi-second pavilion tower with connections to the well shaft



Narlai-Botia Baodi-view of the second pavilion tower and the circular well shaft



Narlai-Botia Baodi-rectangular tank between two pavilion towers



Narlai-Botia Baodi-first pavilion tower

Nobody knows why this stepwell was named Botia. Perhaps, this name is a corruption of 'Bhutiha' or 'Bhootia' meaning--the place haunted by ghosts. The stepwell is located on the bank of a pond

just at the foothills, at the end of the village. From an inscription⁸⁰ available on the small building by the side of the stepwell, Vikram Samvat 1993 has been written and accordingly it may have been built in that year. Other things in the inscription are not legible. So, the stepwell is around 90 years old.

The stepwell has been built of big stone blocks. Some of the stone beams of around 10 ft length span over the approximately 8 ft width of the stepwell. How were these big blocks transported to the site or set in place is an example of the workmanship of the artisans of that time? The side walls have parapet rounded on the top. The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction, with its entrance in the north and the circular well shaft in the south. There are two pavilion towers. The first one is double-storeyed and the second is three-storeyed. The stepwell is a simple one without any decoration, and is built in the Nanda style. The water drawing arrangement is in the south of the well. A peepal tree has taken roots in the well shaft, which is likely to damage the stone masonry. There is no direction board for the stepwell and it is very difficult to find it.

204. Da Vav

Narlai, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 19' 06" N, 73° 32' 45" E

Elevation: 350 m

Period: 17th century



Narlai-Davav-two entrances on north and south



Narlai-Davav-view from the well shaft on the east

The stepwell known as the DaVav is situated in the agricultural fields of Narlai--a former principality of Jodhpur State, nearby Rao Raja's fields and still being used for irrigation. The stepwell is built of large blocks of dressed sand stone. This is a trimukhi vav--a stepwell with three entrances, built in Jaya style of architecture. The main entrance is from the west while the other two are from the north and the south. The well shaft is in the east. The farmer irrigating the fields

⁸⁰ Inscription available in the building near the stepwell

mentioned that there is water in the stepwell all round the year. He also informed that his ancestor, late Wagha Ram Sheraji, got this stepwell from the Maharaja of Jodhpur during Indira Gandhi's time, after he won the court case. There is no electric tube well in the surrounding area and that's why this stepwell still has water and is fulfilling the purpose of its construction.



Narlai-Davav-toran gate



Narlai-Davav-Lord Ganesha's statue in the niche inside small temple on right hand side of the entrance



Narlai-Davav-kirtimukh carved on the beam of the toran



Narlai-Davav-main entrance from west

Apparently, no plaster has been used to join the stone blocks which have been joined, possibly through metal connectors. Even the stone blocks used as parapet top are very heavy. The parapet top is rounded. There are two small temples on both the sides of the main entrance on the west. Lord Ganesha's damaged statue adorns the niche on the right-side temple, while the one on the left-side is empty. A beautiful carved toran--victory arch--exists on the main entrance.

The columns of the toran are embellished with chains and hanging bells. The toran part is also decorated. Floral designs have been made on the beam, while a small sculpture of a Jain Teerthankara is on the top of the toran. The keertimukh also adorns the toran beam. The keertimukh is a lion faced motif--considered to be fierce and monstrous and made above the main gate or door frame of the sanctum of the Jain and Hindu temples from as back as the third century. Thus, the architecture of the toran indicates towards the impact of the Jain architecture on the stepwell. Another empty niche exists inside the body of the first pair of steps descending from the entrance after the first landing. One more niche can be seen on the right-hand side wall after the first landing. The left side wall of the stepwell has collapsed and needs urgent repairs. The stepwell is one of the few important and surviving stepwells, which have three entrances built in Jaya style of architecture and its preservation is of paramount importance. There is no information about the year of its construction. However, it can be assumed to belong to the 17th century like the Amba Vav, located just next to it, which is similar to it in construction.

205. Amba Vav

Narlai, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 18' 57" N, 73° 32' 48" E

Elevation: 360 m

Period: 17th century (1666 AD)



Narlai-Amba Vav-entrance from north looking towards south



Narlai-Amba Vav-view while looking north from the rehat

The Amba Vav is situated inside the Amba Bagh (Amba Garden) owned by Rao Raja of Narlai principality of Jodhpur state. The garden estate had a number of mango trees earlier because of

which it was possibly named as Amba Bagh (the garden of mangoes) and similarly the stepwell also came to be known as the Amba Vav.

According to the inscription available at the entrance, the stepwell was built in Vikram Samvat 1723 (1666 AD)⁸¹. Another inscription mentions about a queen named Ratna De ji, who perhaps became sati in Vikram Samvat 1749 (1692 AD). The inscriptions are not very legible.



Narlai-Amba Vav-rehat in the south of the stepwell



Narlai-Amba Vav-sculpture of Lord Shiva with Parvati in a niche below the rehat

The Amba Vav is built on the lines of Da Vav, i.e., with large stone blocks. The top of the parapet of the side walls is circular like that of Da Vav. Similar to the Da Vav, there is a pair of steps descending in two directions after the first flight of steps and first landing, with an empty niche in its body. There are five niches on each of the side walls, out of which a few have sculptures of the Hindu deities. The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction, with the entrance from the north and the well shaft as well as the water drawing arrangement of a rehat, in the south. Since the owner of the estate organises tourist visits, a working water drawing arrangement is ensured as it used to work in the past. There are steps inside both the side walls to go down. A sculpture of Lord Shiva with his consort, Parvati exists in the niche below the rehat in the south. The stepwell remains full of water all round the year and water is used for irrigating the garden and other purposes.

⁸¹ Inscription at the stepwell

206. Sumer Vav

Sumer, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 19' 21" N, 73° 38' 09" E

Elevation: 410 m

Period: Unknown



Sumer Stepwell

This stepwell is located in the Lohagar Mahadev Temple complex inside the forest area, 2 km away from the Sumer village of Pali district of Rajasthan. This stepwell is a smaller version of the famous Chand Baodi at Abhaneri and also looks like the Toor ji ka Jhalra of Jodhpur. There are six levels of the pairs of steps, descending in both directions in this stepwell against 13 levels in the Abhaneri stepwell. There is a three-storeyed koot (pavilion tower) in the west near the circular well shaft. The upper two storeys of the pavilion tower are supported on eight columns each, while the bottom storey has an opening into the well shaft. The upper two storeys also have an opening each into the well shaft connecting it to the stepped kund. Some steps have also been provided inside the well shaft below the bottommost opening. The shaft of the four columns in the front has three types of sections. The bottom part is square, the middle part is octagonal, and the top portion is



Sumer Stepwell-pavilion tower

circular. The stepwell has been built with dressed stones, with steps descending from all the sides. The stepwell is situated behind the Lohagar Mahadev Temple. The water of the stepwell is used for gardening and other purposes. In the background, there are hills which look beautiful in rainy season.



**Sumer Stepwell-sculpture of deity
Durga**



Sumer Stepwell-another sculpture

Remains of the beautiful sculptures of the old temple, demolished by Mughal King Aurangzeb, according to the priest, are lying inside the temple complex.

207. Dhimri ki Baodi

Ghanerao, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 14' 10" N, 73° 32' 05" E

Elevation: 380 m

Period: Approx. 17th century



Ghanerao-Dhimri ki Baodi-view of the first pavilion tower from the second



Ghanerao-Dhimri ki Baodi-view of the second pavilion tower from the first tower



Ghanerao-Dhimri ki Baodi-water flowing arrangement in the east



Ghanerao-Dhimri ki Baodi



Ghanerao-Dhimri ki Baodi-view of the first pavilion

The Rao Rajas of Ghanerao⁸² built several stepwells--21 in number--in this area for public welfare. These stepwells might have been built from the 17th century onwards. Ghanerao is 20 km north of Ranakpur which is famous for its Jain temples.

The Dhimri ki Baodi is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the west and the square well shaft in the east. At the entrance, around one-metre-high platforms have been built on either side, perhaps to be used as a sit-out for taking rest or for discussions. It has two koots (pavilion towers). The first koot is single-storeyed, while the second koot is double-storeyed.

There are 20 steps from the entrance up to the first pavilion tower with a landing in between. Each pavilion on the upper storey has three multi-cusped arch openings in both directions, while the lower pavilion of the second tower has corbelled arch openings. Side walkways of about a meter width have been provided in between the two storeys. The top walkway along the side walls have been supported on brackets. The edges of the walkways have been carved with geometrical patterns. Two medallions--round shaped floral motifs--exist in the spandrels of all the archways. A niche on each side wall has been provided in the pavilions. However, there is no sculpture of deities inside anyone of them. The water drawing arrangement is available at the eastern end of the stepwell. Water is standing in the lower storey of the stepwell but it's very dirty, covered with moss and waste thrown by the people. Otherwise, the stepwell is in excellent physical condition.

⁸² Ghanerao, earlier known as Ghanora, a thikana (principality) was founded by Gopal Das Rathore, a Mertiya Rathore and descendent of Veermal of Merta, in 1606 AD. The area is called Gorwad Pradesh, situated in between Mewar and Marwar States. Ghanerao was granted by Maharana Amar Singh of Mewar to Gopal Das Rathore as his father Pratap Singh fought against Akbar in 1568, when he attacked Chittorgarh. The main purpose of establishing Ghanerao thikana was to protect the Kumbhalgarh fort nearby.

208. Brahmapuri Baodi

Ghanerao, Pali, Rajasthan

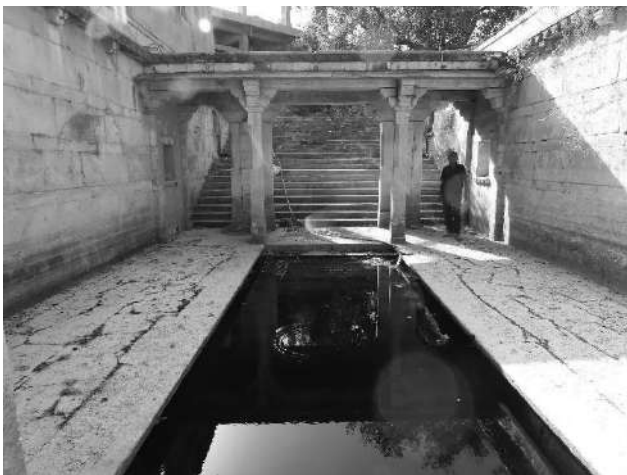
25° 14' 08" N, 73° 32' 02" E

Elevation: 380 m

Period: 18th century (1757 AD)



Ghanerao-Brahmapuri Baodi-view of the second pavilion tower from the first



Ghanerao-Brahmapuri Baodi-view of the first pavilion from the second tower



Ghanerao-Brahmapuri Baodi

The Brahmapuri Baodi is quite similar to the Dhimri ki Baodi in layout and also located within 500 m of it. Built of stone blocks in Nanda style of architecture, this stepwell is oriented in the east-west orientation, with its entrance in the west and the well shaft in the east. According to the inscription, which is perhaps in Sanskrit language and available at the entrance, it was built by Murlidhar Prasad in Vikram Samvat 1814 or Saka Samvat 1680 in the month of Baisakh on Shukla Paksh Panchami which is equivalent to 1757 AD.⁸³



Ghanerao-Brahmapuri Baodi-side pavilion below water fetching arrangement



Ghanerao-Brahmapuri Baodi-water drawing arrangement in the east



Ghanerao-Brahmapuri Baodi-sculpture of Lord Ganesha in a niche in the first pavilion tower



Ghanerao-Brahmapuri Baodi-showing water drawing arrangement in the east and one of the two side pavilions below it

⁸³ Inscription at the stepwell

Like the Dhimri ki Baodi, it also has two pavilion towers. The first tower is single-storeyed, while the second tower is double-storeyed. It also has one platform on either side of the entrance, though lesser in height but bigger in area as compared to the Dhimri ki Baodi. As soon as we descend towards the first pavilion, there is a niche on each side wall, which is empty. Similarly, there are two niches in the first pavilion, of which the one on the right side has a sculpture of Lord Ganesha. The pavilion is supported on eight columns, of which four are embedded in side walls. However, the front two columns are unique because they are very wide as compared to the columns of other stepwells in Ghanerao and it appears as if the space between two the columns has been filled up with stone blocks, thereby making it a wider column. In case of the second tower, two such columns are towards the well shaft. All other columns are of square section in the lower portion and octagonal in the upper part. Another difference with the Dhimri ki Baodi is the presence of pavilions on three sides of the well shaft. The side walks are much wider, around 2 m wide, in between two pavilion towers, than the Dhimri ki Baodi.

The lower storey was full of water at the time of my visit in March. The water is being used by the public as noted by the pipes dropped into the water. The stepwell is in excellent physical condition.

209. Dungaria Baodi

Ghanerao, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 14' 02" N, 73° 31' 58" E

Elevation: 380 m

Period: 19th century



Ghanerao-Dungaria Baodi-first pavilion tower in the foreground



Ghanerao-Dungaria Baodi-galleries surrounding the well shaft

The Dungaria Baodi was built perhaps in the memory of Maharaja of Jodhpur Dungar Singh, who reigned from 1872 to 1887, and died at the age of about 33 years. This stepwell has also been built in Nanda style of architecture with a single entrance from the north direction. The rectangular well shaft is in the south. While the columns, beams, and arches are of dressed stone and marble, the side walls are in random rubble masonry. The stepwell, located by the side of the main road near

Maharana Pratap's statue, is said to have been repaired recently by the Member of Parliament, Sri Mahendra Singh ji of Sirohi. During the repair, it appears that the first pavilion has been renovated completely, while maintaining the same architecture of the columns and multifoil arches.



Ghanerao-Dungaria Baodi-second pavilion tower



**Ghanerao-Dungaria
Baodi-sculpture of
Bhairav ji in the first
pavilion**



**Ghanerao-Dungaria
Baodi-sculpture of
Lord Ganesha in the
first pavilion**



**Ghanerao-Dungaria
Baodi-the first pavilion**



**Ghanerao-Dungaria
Baodi-jal stambha
outside stepwell**

A jal-stambha having the images of Lord Ganesha, Kal Bhairav, and Shivlinga exists right at the entrance. The stepwell has two pavilion towers. There are five multifoil arch openings in both directions in the upper storey pavilions. The pavilion on the lower storey of the second pavilion has

only three openings on the columns and beams, supported on capitals. The sculptures of Lord Ganesha and Kal Bhairav are kept in the niches of the first pavilion on the left and right sides respectively. The well shaft also has multi-cusped arch openings on three sides. Floral medallions decorate the arch spandrels. The water is being used through pumping. Because of the use of diesel in pumping, the water is polluted. A lot of waste is lying scattered in the stepwell, which needs to be prevented.

210. Dholi Vav

Ghanerao, Pali, Rajasthan
25° 13' 58" N, 73° 32' 30" E
Elevation: 390 m
Period: Unknown



Ghanerao-Dholi Vav-view from the entrance with goats



Ghanerao-Dholi Vav-second pavilion tower when viewed from east



Ghanerao-Dholi Vav-the first pavilion tower when viewed from east



Ghanerao-Dholi Vav-water drawing arrangement in the east with a beautifully carved projected balcony



Ghanerao-Dholi Vav-carved column base



Ghanerao-Dholi Vav-inside the projected sit-out in the east



Ghanerao-Dholi Vav-beautiful capital of the columns



Ghanerao-Dholi Vav-view through the projected balcony

The Dholi Vav is located just outside Ghanerao in the midst of agricultural fields. At the time of my visit in March, the lush green fields were surrounding the stepwell. This stepwell is still being used for irrigation as there is sufficient yield of water for the purpose. It has been built in Nanda style of architecture, with its entrance in the west and the rectangular well shaft in the east. A jal-stambha or Gaurda-stambha with the images of Lord Ganesha, Kal Bhairav, and Shivalinga exists on the

right side of the entrance. There are two pavilion towers: the first tower is single-storeyed and the second being double-storeyed. The pavilions have three openings supported by corbelled arches. The decorated columns are square in the lower portion and then octagonal and circular in the upper portion. Corbels are also beautifully decorated. Floral designs decorate the shaft of the columns. At the eastern end of the stepwell, there is a verandah with an intricately carved projected balcony in its middle. This chamber



Ghanerao-Dholi Vav-showing Jalstambha outside

has a small opening with multifoil arch on each side, connecting the side walkways. The top ledge is supported on brackets, while the lower storey has walkways in the form of wide side walls. Nearly two feet high parapet has been provided on both the side walls. The parapet and the ledges are adorned with geometrical designs along the length. A trough has been provided on the south for animals. Round stone brackets with holes have been fixed on the outside along the side walls for holding flags on special occasions. The Dholi Vav is perhaps the biggest stepwell of Nanda style in Ghanerao, which is in good condition and still functioning.

211. Suraj Kund

Ghanerao, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 14' 04" N, 73° 32' 21" E

Elevation: 390 m

Period: 18th century as per legends

The Suraj Kund is situated at the main chowk of Ghanerao, known as the Suraj Chowk. There are five temples surrounding the Suraj Kund, namely Amba temple, Hanuman temple, Padmanath temple, Lord Shiva (Bhooteshwar Mahadev) temple, and Lord Krishna (Lal Bari) temple.

According to legends, the kund was built by Thakur Padam Singh in the memory of his mistress, Suji or Suraj Kunwar. Thakur Padam Singh ruled over Ghanerao from 1720 to 1742 AD. Thus, the kund might have been built during the 18th century.

The Suraj Kund has been built in the style of Jhalaras of Jodhpur and the Bhinmal Kund. The main entrance is from the east, while the water drawing arrangement is in the west. Two other entrances are from the north and the south. Pairs of steps descending in two directions have been provided on three sides--on the east, the north, and the south. There is an eight feet high parapet, built on

three sides above the first landing. The steps descend in the middle of these three sides. A niche has been provided on either side of the three entrances inside each side wall. These niches are all empty except the one on the right side of the entrance from the south and the one on the left side of the northern entrance. These two niches house the sculptures of Lord Ganesha and Kal Bhairav. The entrance from the north has been completely blocked by the houses erected up to the side wall of the kund. A jal-stambha with the images of Lord Ganesha, Kal Bhairav, and Shivalinga exists inside a room on the right side of the main entrance from the east.

Water is available in the kund, though it was covered with moss and dirtied due to the waste thrown by the people. A trough for the animals along with a gaumukh exists on the southern side of the kund. The kund can be cleaned regularly by the local panchayat and the surroundings be made livelier.



Ghanerao-Suraj Kund-jal stambha



Ghanerao-Suraj Kund

212. Maili Vav

Ghanerao, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 14' 04" N, 73° 32' 14" E

Elevation: 390 m

Period: 18th century as per legends.



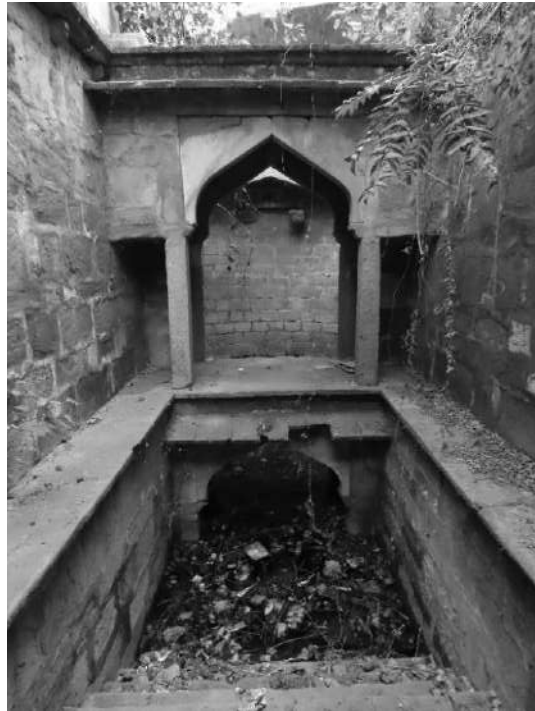
Ghanerao-Maili Vav-the first pavilion tower



Ghanerao-Maili Vav-view of the entrance



Ghanerao-Maili Vav-steps coming down from the road entrance through a series of arches



Ghanerao-Maili Vav-the second pavilion tower



Ghanerao-Mailli Vav-circular well shaft showing water drawing arrangement

The Mailli Vav is situated inside the village beside the Ram-Laxman temple, which is nearly 300 years old, according to legends. Maili means 'one which is situated inside'. Considering that the vav and the temple would have been built at the same time, we can assume that the vav is also around 300 years old and might have been built in the 18th century. The stepwell is built of ashlar stone masonry in Nanda style of architecture. It is oriented in north-south direction, with the entrance from the north and the circular well shaft in the south. There is some water in the well, but it was full of leaves. The stepwell has two pavilion towers. The first tower is single-storeyed and has a large pointed archway in both directions, supported on sleek square stone columns. Spandrels have been decorated with floral medallions. The second pavilion tower is double-storeyed with pointed archways in both the storeys. The ledges of approximately 2 feet width have been built along the side walls between the first and the second pavilion towers. The water drawing arrangement on the south of the well shaft is intact. The entrance to the stepwell is through a series of four pointed archways and a long flight of steps.

213. Jali Vav

Ghanerao, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 14' 04" N, 73° 32' 03" E

Elevation: 380 m

Period: Unknown

The Jali Vav is, certainly, the most beautiful stepwell in Ghanerao but, at the same time, it can be termed as the dirtiest one, not only in Ghanerao but anywhere in India. Every inch of the stepwell is full of rotten waste--be it the pavilions or the water surface. It only confirms that we, Indians, don't care at all about our culture and our wonderful monuments.



Ghanerao-Jali Vav-first pavilion and the dirty water



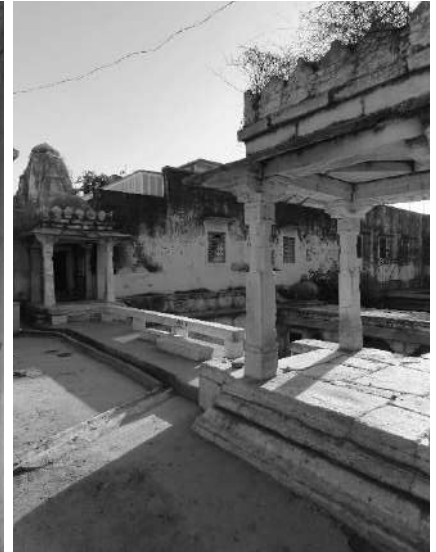
Ghanerao-Jali Vav-view of the second pavilion tower



Ghanerao-Jali Vav-sculpture of Lord Hanuman ji in another niche of the first pavilion



Ghanerao-Jali Vav-sculpture of Kaal Bhairav in a niche of the first pavilion



Ghanerao-Jali Vav-small temples on either side of the entrance

There is a toran gate (victory arch) on the right side of the entrance to the stepwell. The toran gate is profusely decorated with carvings. A small temple adorns either side of the entrance. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance from the east and the well shaft in the west.



Ghanerao-Jali Vav-trough for animals



**Ghanerao-Jali Vav-pillared corridor on all sides
before the well shaft**



Ghanerao-Jali Vav-decorated columns

There appears to be three pavilion towers in the stepwell. The first pavilion tower has three openings in either direction. It has a niche on either side where the sculptures of Lord Ganesha and Lord Kal Bhairav adorn the left and right-side niche respectively. Lord Ganesha's temple is projected into the pavilion. The second pavilion tower is double-storeyed. Pillared corridor, supported on twelve columns, surrounds the space between the second and the third pavilion towers. The lower storeys could not be seen due to standing water. But the third tower before the well shaft could have three storeys. The columns are decorated with carvings. The cross section of these columns changes seven times with the shapes of square, octagon, and circle. It is a beam-column construction supported on two layers of corbels making up the capitals. In a way, it can be said that corbelled arches have been used in the construction of this stepwell. The well shaft is rectangular. Its top has been covered due to construction of a dharmashala over it. This, again, shows the indifference of the administration towards maintenance of heritage monuments.



Ghanerao-Jali Vav-toran dwar

214. Tarachand Baodi

Sadri, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 11' 04" N, 73° 27' 13" E

Elevation: 360 m

Period: 1597 AD



Sadri-Tarachand Kavedia Baodi-
looking towards well shaft



Sadri-Tarachand Kavedia Baodi-
view while entering from north



Sadri-Tarachand Kavedia Baodi-looking west

Sadri is considered as the entrance to Mewar from Marwar and known as the birth place of Bhamashah who funded Maharana Pratap in the fight against Mughal king Akbar. Bhamashah and his younger brother Tarachand helped Maharana Pratap in his wars against the Mughal king Akbar. They fought in Haldighati along with Rana Pratap. They offered the money and the loot, they got from Malwa to Maharana Pratap to reorganise his army to fight Mughals. Their father Bharmal was in charge of the Ranthambhore fort. Bhamashah was made the Governor of the Godwad region between Mewar and Marwar. After him, Tarachand was made the Governor of Godwad. Tarachand was a great connoisseur of music, art and culture. He commenced the construction of the Tarachand Baodi at Sadri during his life time but it was completed by his son, Surtan and its 'Pran-Pratishtha' ceremony was held on Thursday, Vaishakh, Krishna Paksha 2, Vikram Samvat 1654, Saka Samvat 1620 which means 1597 AD. Tarachand lived from Vikram Samvat 1604 to 1648. He died very young and was cremated at the site of this stepwell only where his chhatri now exists. Along with him, his five wives and six singers also immolated themselves.



Sadri-Tarachand Kavedia Baodi-water drawing arrangement on top of the well shaft



**Sadri-Tarachand Kavedia Baodi-
south side entrance**



**Sadri-Tarachand Kavedia Baodi-
north side entrance**



**Sadri-Tarachand Kavedia Baodi-
carved bracket of water drawing
arrangement**

The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its circular well shaft in the east. There are two side entrances from the north and the south. At the junction of the flight of steps from two directions of entrance, a double-storeyed pavilion tower exists. The stepwell is said to be five-storeyed. A rehat used to run in the well shaft earlier, which was used for irrigating a garden. Two storeys of the second pavilion tower adjoining the well shaft can be seen as others are under water. These two pavilions are supported on eight columns each. The water drawing arrangement and the carved brackets still exist inside the well shaft. The stepwell was built outside Sadri, but due to the developments with time, it has now come well inside the town.

215. Jaital Vav

Sewari, Pali, Rajasthan

25° 05' 42" N, 73° 17' 48" E

Elevation: 340 m

Period: 944 AD

The Jaital Vav at Sewari is said to have been built by a lady named Jaital Kunwar, who immolated herself i.e. committed Sati in Vikram Samvat 1001. The stepwell was commenced in Vikram Samvat 997 and completed in Vikram Samvat 1001 (944 AD).



Sewari-Jaital Vav-upper two storeys of the third pavilion tower



Sewari-Jaital Vav-lower two storeys of the third pavilion tower



Sewari-Jaital Vav-a temple in the second pavilion tower



Sewari-Jaital Vav-another niche in the side wall



Sewari-Jaital Vav-a niche in the side wall

The four-storeyed stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the entrance in the east and the well shaft in the west. The stepwell is now used as a temple. It has three pavilion towers. The

first tower is two-storeyed, while the second and the third towers are three and four-storeyed respectively. Overall, it has 32 pillars and 64 steps. Sculpture of Jal Devi (Water-Goddess) is installed in the right-side niche and that of Khetla ji in the left niche of the lower pavilion of the first tower. The top of the niches has beautiful carvings.

216. Baodi at Bawari

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 37' 15" N, 73° 10' 51" E

Elevation: 260 m

Period: Unknown



Baodi at Baori-showing the steps coming down from the entrance and the only pavilion below it

Bawari is the newest tehsil headquarters in Jodhpur district, about 48 km from Jodhpur and 20 km from IIT Jodhpur. Both the words---Baodi and Bawari--sound similar in Hindi. That is why I have spelled them differently. However, it appears that the name of the town originated from the presence of a baodi there. There are quite a few villages or towns named as baodi. This stepwell is very simple in construction, in Nanda style of architecture. It has its entrance in the southeast direction and the well shaft in the northwest direction. So, the stepwell is oriented in the NW-SE direction. The well shaft is quadrangular in shape and dug deep into the rock. It is surprising to think that people in those days, could cut so deep into rock without any modern methods at their disposal. It is hard to imagine the rocky strata just one metre below the sandy soil. Secondly, how were they able to finalise the location or estimate the presence of ground water, is worth pondering.



Baodi at Baori-steps going down towards the well shaft cut deep into the rock



Baodi at Baori- the niche in the pavilion



Baodi at Baori-simply decorated column



Baodi at Baori-pavilion



Baodi at Baori-view from the entrance

After descending a few steps from the entrance, there is a single-storeyed pavilion tower supported on beams and four columns. The columns are square in section and simple in decoration. The steps go deep into the stepwell after this pavilion. The people have made the stepwell as a dumping place for waste. Though, a boundary wall protects it, people enter through the open gate and throw their waste inside the stepwell. Considering the type of construction, the baodi must have been built before the arrival of Muslims in India. The stepwell is built of stone masonry and the beams and columns are of dressed stone blocks. Some water could be seen in the deep well shaft. This baodi, belonging to the early days of the development of water structures, need to be protected from getting vanished due to its filling by waste thrown in by the unconcerned public.

217. Panna Baodi

Anwana, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 39' 51" N, 73° 08' 37" E

Elevation: 270 m

Period: 1926 AD

The Panna Baodi is located by the side of the main road in Anwana village, 57 km from Jodhpur and 6 km from Bawari village. This stepwell was built in Nanda style of architecture for public welfare by the descendants of Maheswari Malpani Meghraj, namely, Panna Lal, Murlidhar, Shankar Lal, Damodar, Laxmi Narayan, Ganga Vishan, and Shiv Narayan in the memory of their fathers, Jairamdas, Balkrishna, and Jagannath, residents of Poona during the period of Maharaja of Jodhpur Ummed Singh, Thakur Sagat Singh, Ram Singh, and Bheru Singh. There are some other names of their descendants written in the inscription available on one of the side walls. It was inaugurated on 15-07-1926 (Vikram Samvat 1983, Ashadh Sudi 3, Guruwar) and its management was entrusted to Mohan Lal ji, Gulab Chand ji Shrimali of Pheechwala village⁸⁴. The name of the baodi has been written as the Panna Baodi.



Anwana Baodi-jal stambha at the entrance



Anwana Baodi-going down the dirty stepped corridor



Anwana Baodi-looking up the steps



Anwana Baodi-looking towards the well shaft

A jal-stambha with the image of Lord Ganesha and others has been fixed on the right side of the entrance. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the entrance from the east and the quadrangular well shaft in the west. The stepwell has been dug deep into the rock and then the

⁸⁴ Inscription available at the stepwell

dressed stone masonry has been used over the rock. The steps go down to the water level with two landings in between. There is very little water in the stepwell now, since a school building has come up beside it. The water level goes up during rainy season. However, people have been dumping waste into the stepwell which needs to be prevented.

218. Lavera Khurd Stepwell

Lavera Khurd, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 41' 46" N, 73° 15' 57" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: 17th century



Lavera Khurd Baodi-view of the entrance from the well shaft



Lavera Khurd Baodi-well shaft with drawing arrangement

The stepwell at Lavera Khurd is said to have been built in Vikram Samvat 1749 (1692 AD) during the period of Maharaja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur⁸⁵. It is situated in the midst of agricultural fields. It was built by Bhatiyani Kishan kanwar, the wife of Ajab Singh, descendant of Rao Jodha, in the memory of her father Raghunath Bhati from Vikram Samvat 1743 to 1749 at a cost of Rs. 3,000/-⁸⁶ during the reign of Aurangzeb and the would-be king of Jodhpur, Maharaja Ajit Singh. The stepwell was initially named as the Raghunath Ri Baodi. Her father, Raghunath Bhati, gave his life in Vikram Samvat 1736 to save his child Ajit Singh in Delhi. There are two villages by the name of Lavera-- Lavera Khurd (small) and Lavera Kalan (Big). This one is situated on the road from Jodhpur on the opposite side of the village. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in

⁸⁵ Solanki, Bhartiya Bavadiyan, page 93

⁸⁶ Bhati, Rajasthan ke Paramparagat Jal Sansadhan page 74

the east and well shaft in the west. A beautiful chhatri adorns the right side of the entrance. The steps descend to the water level from the entrance with a landing in between.

This stepwell is similar to the Panna Baodi at Anwana as this has also been cut deep into rock and then dressed stone masonry has followed above the rock level. Both of them have no pavilion towers but only landings in between the steps. The well shaft is also quadrangular in both the stepwells. The jal-stambha is pitched a little away, around 15 m, from the entrance with the images of Lord Ganesha and Lord Kal Bhairav. A trough for animals has been built on the north side of the well shaft. The Sculptures of deities exist in the niches on either side of the entrance in the side walls. It is difficult to recognise the deities as a lot of oil has been poured over the sculptures over a period of time. Beam and corbels to support the water drawing arrangement on the west are still intact. However, the stepwell needs cleaning of the wild vegetation, which has taken roots in the stepped corridor.



Lavera Khurd Baodi-jal stambha in the field nearby

219. Lavera Kalan Stepwell

Lavera Kalan, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

26° 43' 45" N, 73° 15' 19" E

Elevation: 300 m

Period: 17th century (1663 AD)

Lavera Kalan village is located 65 km north of Jodhpur and around 300 kms away from the state capital at Jaipur. The stepwell at Lavera Kalan is situated near the beautiful chhatris of the thakurs of the thikana. The baodi, built of dressed stone masonry, is oriented in the north-south direction, with its entrance in the north and the rectangular well shaft in the south. According to the inscription available in the stepwell, it was built in Vikram Samvat 1720 or Saka Samvat 158487, i.e., 1663 AD, during the period of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Marwar who ruled from 1635 to 1678 AD. According to Dr. Bhati, the stepwell, named as the Bahu ji ki Baodi, was built during Vikram Samvat 1720-1733 (1663-76 AD) by Bhaktaid ji, the wife of Raghunath Bhati,



Lavera Kalan stepwell-second pavilion tower when seen towards entrance

⁸⁷ Inscription at the stepwell

Thakur of Lavera, at a cost of Rs. 21,000/-⁸⁸. The local population call this as the Lal Baodi due to the use of red sand stone in its construction.



Lavera Kalan stepwell-third pavilion tower when viewed towards entrance



Lavera Kalan stepwell-fourth pavilion tower just before well shaft



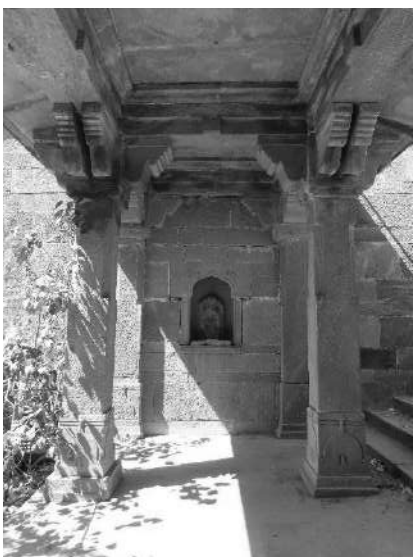
Lavera Kalan stepwell-lower portion of well shaft when viewed downwards



Lavera Kalan stepwell-well shaft when looked upwards



Lavera Kalan stepwell-inside fourth pavilion tower



Lavera Kalan stepwell-columns of the first pavilion

⁸⁸ Dr. Bhati, Rajasthan ke Paramparagat Jal Sansadhan page75



Lavera Kalan stepwell-with the first pavilion tower in foreground



Lavera Kalan stepwell-jal stambha

The stepwell has four pavilion towers. The first tower is single-storeyed, the second is double-storeyed, the third tower of three storeys, and the fourth pavilion tower is four-storeyed. There is two feet high platform on either side of its entrance, perhaps for the people to enjoy sitting and engage in conversations. The jal-stambha has been fixed about 10 m before the entrance. Every pavilion is supported on eight columns, out of which four end columns are embedded in the side walls. The red sand stone columns have carved pedestals and beautiful capitals. The capitals consist of twin brackets on two opposite sides and single brackets on the other two sides. The columns have square section in the lower portion and octagonal section in the upper portion. The section changes five times in the height. Pavilions have a bigger opening in the middle, while a smaller opening is on the either side of this central opening through which one can pass through, from one pavilion to another by walking on the ledges along the side walls. Pavilions have awnings on either direction for protection against the strong Sun rays and rains.

A niche has been provided after the entrance and before the first pavilion tower on both the side walls, which are empty at present. Similarly, there is a niche on either side in each top pavilion. In case of the first pavilion tower, sculptures of Lord Ganesha on the right and that of Lord Shiva along with Goddess Parvati are available. An inscription about the construction of the stepwell has been fixed in the first pavilion. Sculptures of deities are also available in the niches of the lower pavilion of the second tower.



Lavera Kalan stepwell-sculpture of Lord Ganesha on the right hand side niche of the first pavilion



Lavera Kalan stepwell-sculpture of Lord Shiva with Parvati in the left hand niche of the first pavilion

The stepwell has been built by column-beam architecture, obtaining the arching action through corbelled arches. However, an arch opening has been used in the bottom most level of the fourth pavilion tower, connecting the well shaft with the stepped corridor. Staircases have been provided to enter the top pavilions from the ground level on each pavilion tower.

The well shaft was completely dry at the time of my visit in March. Though the stepwell is in a good physical condition, some vegetation has taken roots near the first and the second pavilion tower, which needs to be cleaned. It appears that the public uses the stepwell as a drinking place as broken glass bottles are scattered here indicate the same. This has to be prevented.

220. Katan Baodi

Osian, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

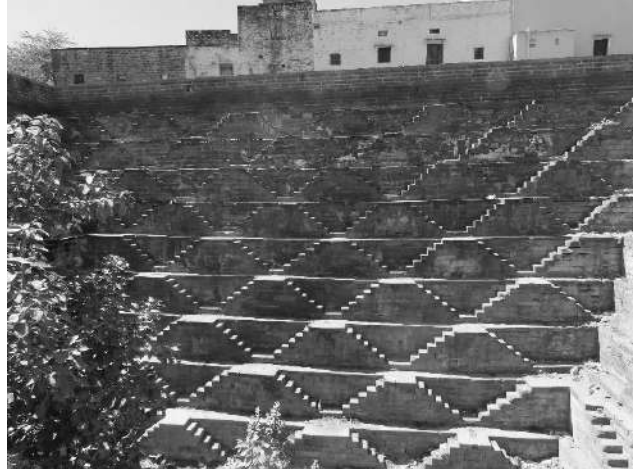
26° 43' 25" N, 72° 54' 41" E

Elevation: 340 m

Period: 8th century



Osian-Katan Baodi -view towards entrance



Osian-Katan Baodi - zigzag pattern of steps



Osian-Katan Baodi



Osian-Katan Baodi -view from the entrance side

The Katan Baodi of Osian is said to have been built in the 8th century⁸⁹. Osian town is about 80 km north of Jodhpur and famous for its historic Hindu and Jain temples because of which it is also called as 'Khajuraho of Rajasthan'. These temples were constructed during the Pratihara dynasty from the 8th to the 12th century. These temples are intricately carved.

⁸⁹ Neubauer, The Stepwells of Gujarat, page xiii



Osian-Katan Baodi -carved base of a column in the right hand side pavilion



Osian-Katan Baodi -another couple on the capital



Osian-Katan Baodi -view of the left hand side pavilion



Osian-Katan Baodi -another exquisitely carved column



Osian-Katan Baodi -another sculpture of an intimate couple



Osian-Katan Baodi -right hand side pavilion

The jal-stambha of the Katan Baodi has been fixed about 50 m before the entrance in the east. The circular well shaft and the water drawing arrangement are also located in the east, while a series of steps in pairs descend on three sides of the stepwell on the north, the south, and the west. Nine levels of these pairs of six steps in two directions each have been provided in three directions. According to the legends, 1000 ladies could fetch water from the stepwell simultaneously. The stepwell is now completely dry on account of the built-up area having come up on all sides and the water table going down due to the tube wells drilled up in the area.



Osian-Katan Baodi



Osian-Katan Baodi-sculpture of an embracing couple on the capital of a column in the right hand side pavilion



Osian-Katan Baodi -capital of a column

The Katan Baodi is very similar in construction to the Chand Baodi of Abhaneri near Bandikui in Rajasthan. Both stepwells have pairs of steps descending on a number of levels on three sides, while pavilions are on the fourth side. There are nine levels of steps in the Katan Baodi against 13 levels in the Chand Baodi of Abhaneri. The carvings in the pavilions on both sides on the east are more beautiful when compared to that of the Chand Baodi of Abhaneri. The columns are exquisitely carved and decorated with floral designs in ghat-pallav style. The load bearers in the capitals are really very beautiful as the couples in intimate position adorn the load bearers.

The Katan Baodi must be brought on the tourist circuit. Not many people outside Jodhpur area know about this beautiful stepwell and its history.

221. Hanuman Mandir Baodi

Jaswantpura, Jalore, Rajasthan

24° 46' 53" N, 72° 27' 03" E

Elevation: 290 m

Period: Unknown



**Jaswantpura-Hanuman Mandir
Baodi-view of the lower portion
of the fourth half tower**



**Jaswantpura-Hanuman Mandir
Baodi-view of the third half tower**



**Jaswantpura-Hanuman Mandir
Baodi-view of the first & second
half towers from entrance**

Just before the PM Sri Navodaya Vidyalaya of Jaswantpura, this stepwell is situated on the left side on the Revdar-Jaswantpura road at the foothills inside the Hanuman Mandir complex. It's a narrow stepwell of about 6 feet width, with four half-pavilion towers (ardha-koot), built of bricks. Rest of the stepwell and the side walls are built in random rubble masonry. The first half-pavilion is single-storeyed. Only the first storey of the second half-pavilion remains in place, while the second storey of the pavilion is missing. Similarly, only two storeys of the third half-pavilion are available. Thus, top storeys of the second and the third half-pavilions are missing. Though, some portions of all the four storeys of the fourth half-pavilion can be seen but they are not complete. The fourth half-pavilion opens into the circular well shaft, 3/4th of which has been covered on top. Water of the well is still being used for domestic purposes. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the east and the well shaft in the west.

222. Chandinath Baodi

Bhinmal, Jalore, Rajasthan

25° 00' 06" N, 72° 15' 57" E

Elevation: 160 m

Period: 8th century AD



Bhinmal-Chandinath Mahadev Temple Baodi

Previously known as Shrimal Nagar, Bhinmal, an ancient town has been the capital of Gurjardesh ruled by the Gurjar-Pratihara Rajputs and comprised of the parts of Northern Gujarat and Southern Rajasthan. The town is also famous as the birthplace of the Sanskrit poet Magha and astronomer Brahmagupta.

The Chandinath Baodi is situated inside the Chandinath or Chandishwar Mahadev Mandir complex. According to Jutta Jain-Neubauer, the stepwell was built in the 8th century⁹⁰, though it might have been in various forms over this period. The legends say that a king named Jagraj who suffered from leprosy and got cured after taking bath at this place, built the stepwell. According to an inscription in the temple complex, Jagraj set on the throne in Vikram Samvat 109 i.e. 62 AD. Hence, he might have built this stepwell in the first century AD. The stepwell is in the form of a kund like the Chand Baodi of Abhaneri. It is square in plan. The well shaft and the water drawing arrangement are in the south-east corner of the baodi. The well shaft is octagonal in the upper portion. The pairs of steps descend in two directions on three sides on the north, the east, and the west. There are nine levels of steps in the stepwell. The well shaft has three openings connecting the stepped portion.

⁹⁰ Neubauer, *The Stepwells of Gujarat*, page xiii

223. Dadeli Baodi

Bhinmal, Jalore, Rajasthan

25° 00' 38" N, 72° 15' 37" E

Elevation: 150 m

Period: Not Known

The Dadeli Baodi is located on the northern bank of the Jakhob tank. The baodi is oriented in the north-south direction, with its entrance in the north. The octagonal well shaft with water drawing arrangement is in the south. The northern and southern sides of the well shaft are wider than the other two sides. The steps descend to water level from northern side. At present, the eastern and the western sides are bulging out. These sides might have been provided with steps initially, but these might have been damaged due to the sides bulging out on account of earth pressure. There is a pavilion tower connecting the well shaft with the stepped portion. The pavilions on the upper two storeys are supported on eight stone columns of rectangular section, four out of which are embedded in the side walls. Niches which are empty at present, have been provided on either side of the upper two pavilions towards the entrance.



Bhinmal-Dadeli Baodi-view from the well shaft



Bhinmal-Dadeli Baodi-view from the entrance

The baodi appears to have been renovated recently. According to the legends, the child who drank the water of this stepwell used to be very clever, intelligent, and physically strong. Even today, some of the members of the princely states and thikanas use the water of the Dadeli Baodi before commencement of any important work. Before 1960, this stepwell used to be the only source of potable water in Bhinmal. The stepwell has enough water for use even now, as it is on the banks of the Jakhob tank.

224. Pratap Vav

Bhinmal, Jalore, Rajasthan

25° 00' 40" N, 72° 15' 46" E

Elevation: 150 m

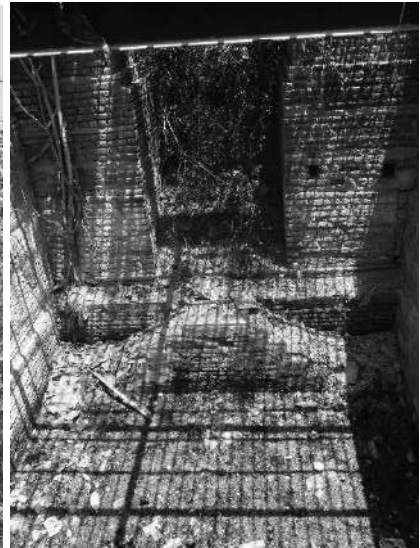
Period: 1925 AD



**Bhinmal-Pratap Vav-connection
with the well shaft**



**Bhinmal-Pratap Vav-entrance
gate**



**Bhinmal-Pratap Vav-entrance
into stepped corridor**

The Pratap Vav is located on the same side of the Jakhob Tank as the Dadeli Baodi, about 500 m away from it. It was built by Khemchandra in Vikram Samvat 1982 (1925 AD)⁹¹. It is covered by thorny vegetation currently and is difficult to enter. The vav is oriented in the east-west direction, with the entrance in the east and the octagonal well shaft in the west. Two openings connect the well shaft with the stepped corridor. An opening, after the entrance gate, leads to the rectangular corridor connected with the well shaft. There is a lot of water in the vav. The stepwell, built of bricks, is full of waste which is floating on every inch of water surface. Luckily, the whole vav has been covered with steel bar mesh which prevents its further abuse. This needs to be cleaned of the waste and the thorny vegetation grown all over.

⁹¹ Inscription at the entrance of the stepwell

225. Khetla ji ki Baodi

Goyali, Sirohi, Rajasthan

24° 54' 05" N, 72° 49' 59" E

Elevation: 280 m

Period: Unknown



Sirohi-Khetla ji ki Baodi-view from the entrance, showing first pavilion



Sirohi-Khetla ji ki Baodi-upper portion of the fourth pavilion tower and half pavilion in foreground



Sirohi-Khetla ji ki Baodi-second pavilion tower with a half pavilion tower



Sirohi-Khetla ji ki Baodi-decorated column



Sirohi-Khetla ji ki Baodi-lower portion of the fourth pavilion tower



Sirohi-Khetla ji ki Baodi-showing second pavilion tower and a half pavilion tower



Sirohi-Khetla ji ki Baodi-two todas at the entrance



Sirohi-Khetla ji ki Baodi-Rehat



Sirohi-Khetla ji ki Baodi-looking up the octagonal well shaft



Sirohi-Khetla ji ki Baodi-earthen pots of the rehat

While proceeding from Bhinmal to Sirohi by road, we were looking for some shop in a green secluded area to have a cup of tea. Instead, I pointed out to my driver at the possibility of the structure inside an Ashram looking like a stepwell. When we stopped, we really found this stepwell which is oriented in the east-west direction. Its entrance is from the east, while the octagonal well shaft is in the west.

The stepwell is built of bricks including the well shaft, except that the beams and columns are of dressed stones. The stone blocks are joined with metal connectors. There are two todas, one on either side of the entrance, just like in many of the stepwells in Gujarat. For the first time, I saw the presence of todas at the entrance in Rajasthan. It is a well-known fact that this area of Rajasthan has similarities of culture with Gujarat. There are many visitors from Gujarat to this area, for example, in Mount Abu. Sanchoe and Sirohi districts are the districts bordering Gujarat. The stepwell has four pavilion towers, which are single to four storeyed, starting from the first to the fourth. In between the two pavilion towers, there is a half- pavilion tower--ardh-koot--to support the side

walls against the earth pressure. So, there are three half-pavilions. Walkways of about one foot width have been provided along the side walls in the width of the side walls, without the use of brackets. Two niches in the side walls exist after the entrance before the first pavilion. Landings have been made after every 12 steps. A rehat has been kept in operation with earthen jars in the well shaft to show the visitors how it used to work in those times. A trough for animals and water tanks for general public exist on the south side of the stepwell.

Little water is there in the rocky portion of the well shaft. Mr. Bhaga Ram, the priest of the Khetla ji temple, told that water comes up during monsoon season. At present, not much of the built-up area surrounds the stepwell which allows water to seep in. The stepwell will go dry once it is surrounded by buildings. One can only hope, it will not be so.

226. Ratan Vav

Sirohi, Rajasthan

24° 53' 25" N, 72° 51' 52" E

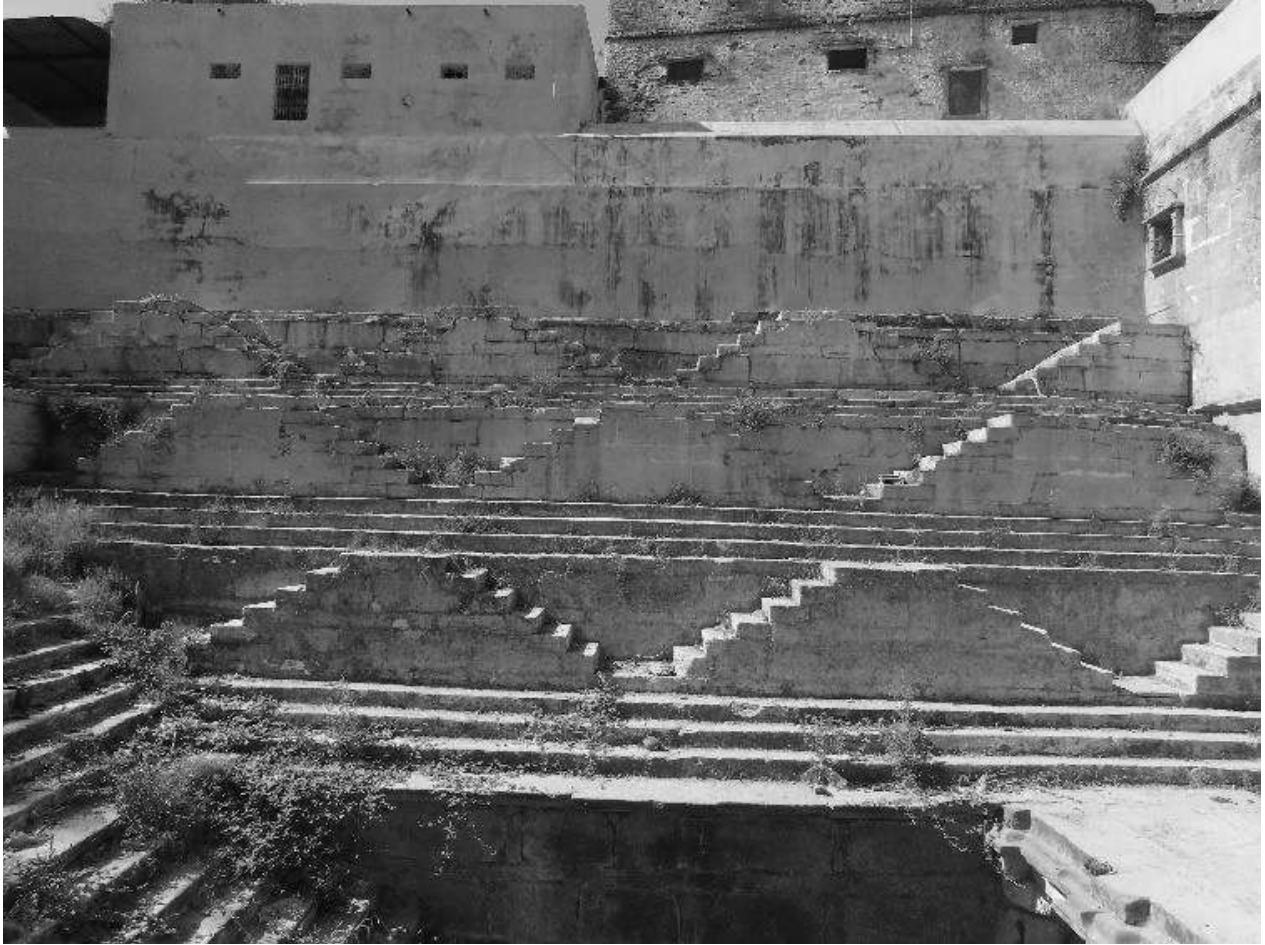
Elevation: 310 m

Period: 17th century (1675 AD)



Sirohi-Ratan Baodi

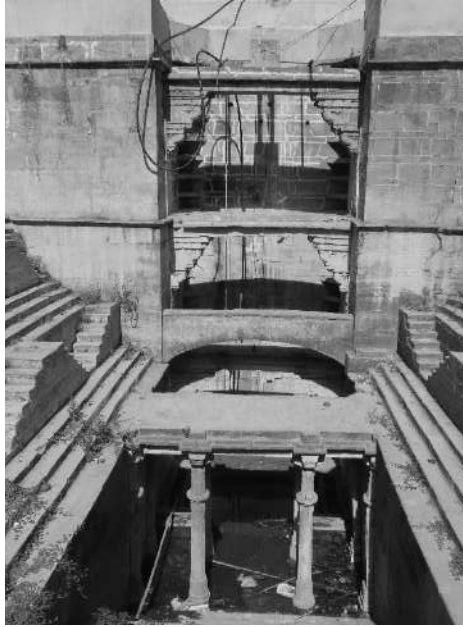
The Ratan Vav was built in Vikram Samvat 1732 (1675 AD) in the memory of Ratan Kanwar, queen of Maharao Akshayraj (Akheraj)-II⁹² who reigned from 1620 to 1673 AD.



Sirohi-Ratan Baodi -view from the well shaft

The Ratan Vav is located near Lal Darwaza and the statue of Maharan Pratap, behind Santoshi Mata Temple. Aravalli hills can be seen in the back drop of the stepwell. The well shaft and the water drawing arrangement are in the east, while the steps have been provided on all other three sides--the north, the south, and the west. Three levels of pairs of steps have been provided on the three sides after which steps descend in the corridor from the west to the water level. Clean water can be seen inside the well shaft. After the end of the steps descending from the west, there is a pavilion tower supported on eight numbers of high and sleek columns, of which four are embedded in the side walls. The well shaft has been supported by intricately carved built up brackets at two levels.

⁹² Rajasthan Patrika, Sirohi, 29 May 2025



Sirohi-Ratan Baodi -view of the pavilionand well shaft



Sirohi-Ratan Baodi -Bracket with intricate carving



Sirohi-Ratan Baodi -water drawing arrangement at the well shaft with brackets

There is an attempt by the nearby temple to open the entrance of the stepwell through it as there is no other entrance to the stepwell. I had to jump over the boundary wall to get into the stepwell. However, if the entrance is controlled by the temple, the future of the stepwell is bleak. Ultimately, it will be occupied and converted into buildings. The local authorities must stop this from happening.

227. Saraneshwar temple Baodi

Sirohi, Rajasthan

24° 54' 52" N, 72° 52' 12" E

Elevation: 300 m

Period: Late 13th century



Sirohi-Baodi outside Sarneshwar Temple-second pavilion tower

Sirohi state was founded in 1206 AD. Its third ruler, Maharaja Vijayraj built the Sarneshwar temple during his reign from 1250 to 1311 AD. The stepwell outside the temple would have been built around that time in the late 13th century. Alauddin Khilji defeated the Solanki kings of Gujarat in 1298 AD. He destroyed the Shiva temple of Rudramal and carried the Shivalinga draped in the blood-dripping cow hide tied with the elephant leg. The Maharaja of Sirohi with the help of Jalore and Mewar defeated him. Alauddin Khilji came back in 1299 AD to defeat the Maharaja of Sirohi with the intention of cutting his head and destroying the temple of Sarneshwar. Rabaris helped Maharaja defeat Alauddin Khilji again. The Maharaja decided to honour the contribution of Rabaris by allowing them to control the Sarneshwar temple for a day. The tradition is still being followed. The Rabaris gain control of the temple for a day during the annual temple festival.



Sirohi-Baodi outside Sarneshwar Temple-view from the entrance with first pavilion in the fore ground



Sirohi-Baodi outside Sarneshwar Temple-well shaft with openings into the stepped corridor



Sirohi-Baodi outside Sarneshwar Temple-third pavilion tower



Sirohi-Baodi outside Sarneshwar Temple-fourth pavilion tower with bottom storey under water

The stepwell is just outside the entrance to the temple, inside an agricultural field, on the left side of the road, opposite to the temple. There is no indication board for the stepwell and it is very difficult to locate it. The stepwell is still alive and is being used for irrigation. It is oriented in the east-west direction with its well shaft in the west and the entrance in the east. Built in Nanda style of architecture, it has four pavilion towers. The first tower is single-storeyed and the second is two-storeyed. The third tower is three-storeyed and the fourth is four-storeyed. Each pavilion is supported on eight columns, of which four are embedded. The stepwell is simple in decoration and has been built of stone masonry. The beams and columns are of solid stone blocks. The columns have different

type of cross sections along their height like square, hexagonal, circular, octagonal, and dodecagon. Each pavilion is supported on eight columns, of which four columns are half embedded in side walls. The pedestals of the middle four columns are different--they are polygonal--from that of the embedded columns, which are square in section. It appears that the parts of the columns--pedestal, shaft, and capital are joined through metal connectors. The shaft is also in two or three parts. Some of the columns, especially those embedded, are going out of shape, due to earth pressure. One of the embedded columns of the first pavilion might have collapsed due to the earth pressure and the same has been rebuilt with bricks--albeit poorly. The top two storeys of the fourth pavilion tower have been provided with sitting benches, facing the well shaft between the middle two columns of the corridor side. The stone ledges have been provided along the side walls at all the levels. The well shaft is connected to the stepped corridor through an opening between the middle two columns facing the well shaft. The water level was up to the top of the bottom most storey.



**Sirohi-Baodi outside Sarneshwar
Temple--intricately carved brackets
in the well shaft**



**Sirohi-Baodi outside Sarneshwar
Temple--showing columns**

There are 60 steps from the entrance to the well shaft with 15 steps in between the two towers. A landing has been provided in between each 15 steps. The first tower is after 15 steps from the entrance. Though the stepwell is bereft of any intricate carving, the four corbels supporting the water drawing arrangement at two places (as twin corbels) are ornate and beautifully decorated. Each corbel is built up of five parts, joined together. Beautiful floral and geometric designs have been carved on the corbels. A human couple, a drummer, and kirtimukh have been carved on these corbels. The kirtimukh indicates an effect of Jainism. The sculptures of the couple indicate that the stepwell dates back to the period before the area came under the control of the Muslims.

This stepwell is still fulfilling its purpose of construction, more so due to the absence of tubewells around the built-up area surrounding it. We have to ensure this for as many stepwells as possible for their survival.

228. Basantgarh Vav

Basantgarh, Sirohi, Rajasthan

24° 42' 59" N, 73° 01' 41" E

Elevation: 310 m

Period: 10th/11th century (between 950 and 1050 AD)

The Basantgarh Vav, also known as the Lahan or Lahani Vav, Saraswati Vav, and Swapna Baodi, is located near the temple of Lord Brahma in Basantgarh village, 14 km from Pindwara and 34 km from Sirohi. It is said to have been constructed between 950 and 1050 AD during the rule of Chahamana (Chauhan) kings. Jutta Jain Neubauer mentions its construction in the 10th century.⁹³ It is also said that Lahini, the sister of Parmar ruler of Basantgarh, Purnamal had renovated the Lahan vav in Vikram Samvat 1099 (1042 AD).⁹⁴



Basantgarh Vav

⁹³ Neubauer, *The Stepwells of Gujarat*, page xiii

⁹⁴ Solanki, *Bhartiya Bavadiyan*, page 36



Basantgarh Vav-view through the chatuski



Basantgarh Vav-load bearers in the column capitals of the pavilion



Basantgarh Vav-part fo the bracket for water drawing arrangement



Basantgarh Vav-part fo the bracket for water drawing arrangement

The vav is rectangular in plan. Built of stone blocks, it has steps of about one foot height on the three sides in the north, the south and the west directions. The well shaft and the water drawing arrangement is on the east. A 'chatuski'--a pavilion supported on four pillars, is in the west of the vav and was, perhaps, used for sitting. A small temple, having the sculpture of Lord Sheshshayi Vishnu, exists in the west of this four-pillared structure. The load bearers, i.e., the capitals of the pillars have images of beautifully carved figures. The kirtimukh also adorns one of the capitals. Two other small temples exist in the south-east corner of the vav. The doorframes of these temples are adorned with the images of lady dwarfpals. The corbels or the brackets of the water drawing arrangement on the west are built up of five parts and are exquisitely carved with human and animal figures in different actions. The stepwell has sufficient water and is used for irrigating the fields. People, especially children, enjoy taking bath in it.

229. Sakat ki Baodi

Sakat, Alwar, Rajasthan

27° 08' 42" N, 76° 30' 41" E

Elevation: 300 m

Period: Unknown

The Sakat ki baodi is located in the middle of the Sakat village, which is 17 km from Rajgarh and 65 km from Alwar. It was not on my itinerary but while going to visit Tehla from Bandikui railway station, I passed through Sakat village and sighted the stepwell in front of the village temple.



Sakat stepwell-four storeyed pavilion tower



Sakat stepwell-entrance



Sakat stepwell-view from the pavilion tower



Sakat stepwell-well shaft

The stepwell at Sakat is oriented in the east-west direction, with its entrance in the west and the well shaft in the east. Nobody knows who built it. But according to legends, there were three brothers in the village. One of them built this stepwell while the two others built the temple and a garden in the village. The stepwell, completely dry now, had enough water until 2000 AD. The water used to fill up to the top pavilion until 1965.

The entrance is through a big archway and it opens into a pavilion having three pointed-arch openings towards the well shaft. There is only one pavilion tower which is four-storeyed. The lower two storeys have an opening each into the well shaft, while the top two storeys have a pavilion each with three pointed-arch openings towards the stepped corridor, supported on four rectangular stone columns. The second storey from the top is also connected with the well shaft through an opening. The stepwell is built of random rubble masonry, as seen in the circular well shaft. Walkways have been provided on the three levels along the side walls in the thickness of the walls itself. Though it is appreciable that the villagers have taken care of the stepwell, unlike at other places, it needs to be cleaned at regular intervals.

230. Baba Khalqnath Baodi

Sakat, Alwar, Rajasthan

27° 08' 46" N, 76° 31' 25" E

Elevation: 300 m

Period: 16th century



Sakat-Baba Khaqnath ki Baodi-view from the well shaft towards entrance



Sakat-Baba Khaqnath ki Baodi-view from the top of the well shaft

This stepwell is located near the Baba Khalqnath ki Dungri (hillock) on the Sakat-Baswa Road. It is about a km away from Sakat village. Since the baodi has no name, I have named it as the Baba Khalqnath Baodi as it is located near the hillock on which the temple of Baba Khalqnath is situated. Dungri in Rajasthani language means a hillock.

The stepwell is built in simple Nanda style of architecture and oriented in the north-south direction, with its entrance in the north and the square well shaft in the south. According to the legends, it was

built during Mughal Emperor Akbar's period. Thus, it should have been built in the 16th century. Though located in the midst of agricultural fields, it has run dry now on account of the water table going down to about 1000 feet below ground level, due to continuous pumping through tube wells. The steps go down continuously to the well shaft through the corridor without any landing in between or any pavilion tower. The baodi is built of course rubble masonry with steps of stone.

231. Laseda wali Baodi

Tehla, Alwar, Rajasthan

27° 14' 33" N, 76° 24' 44" E

Elevation: 350 m

Period: Unknown



Tehla- Laseda Baodi-view from the entrance



Tehla- Laseda Baodi-circular well shaft



Tehla- Laseda Baodi-view from the well shaft towards the entrance

The Laseda wali Baodi is located near the temple of Lord Hanuman in Mandri Mohalla of Tehla. The stepwell is oriented in the north-south direction, with its entrance from the north and the circular well shaft in the south. It has only a half pavilion tower(ardha-koot) of single storey height, in the middle of the baodi, after first landing, to support the side walls. This ardh-koot has a niche on each side. There are seven niches in each side wall and three big arched niches in the south wall adjacent to the well shaft. A trough for animals exists on the east of the stepwell. The stepwell is full of water, though covered with moss.

232. Gopinath ji Mandir Baodi

Tehla, Alwar, Rajasthan

27° 14' 17" N, 76° 24' 50" E

Elevation: 350 m

Period: 18th century



Tehla-Gopinath Mandir Baodi-view from the entrance



Tehla-Gopinath Mandir Baodi-trough for animals and water drawing arrangement

This baodi is located in front of the Gopinath ji Temple in Regar Mohalla of Tehla. The stepwell is oriented in the east-west direction, with the entrance from the west and the well shaft with the water drawing arrangement in the east. The pulley to draw water from the stepwell still exists in the east. The stepwell was so full of water even in April at the time of my visit that no step was visible. The baodi is said to have been built along with the Tehla Fort atop the nearby hill. The fort was founded by Sawai Raja Jai Singh of Amber in 1707 AD after the death of the Mughal king Aurangzeb. Hence, this stepwell may be dated back to the 18th century.

Glossary

1. AD- Anno Domini.
2. Angan- A open courtyard or Kund before the well shaft of a stepwell.
3. Ardh-Koot or Ardh-Kuta- Also called a half-pavilion, it consists of an archway or an opening made with beam and columns, supporting the side walls against the earth pressure, without a pavilion to sit and may be without a landing.
4. Auxiliary well- A small well at the end of the stepped corridor before the main well shaft.
5. Baodi/Bavadi/Bawari/Vav/Vavdi/Kalyani/Pushkarni/Bowli/Bowdi/Baoli- Different words or terms for a stepwell, prevalent in different states/ regions of India.
6. Baradari- A pavilion with twelve (bara) doors (dar) or arched openings/entrances designed to allow free flow of air from all sides.
7. BC- Before Christ.
8. BCE- Before Common Era or before Christian Era.
9. Beam- A horizontal structural member to bear the weight/vertical loads from roof.
10. Bhadra- Stepwell with entrance from two directions.
11. Bhoot- An evil spirit, ghost.
12. Charas- Another method of lifting water through a large leather bag called charas tied at one end of the rope, with the help of bullocks.
13. Chaturmukhi/ Chatusmukhi- Vijaya type of stepwell with entrance from four directions.
14. CR Masonry- Coursed Rubble Masonry. It is the masonry where stones are fairly dressed and laid in courses.
15. Djinn- An intelligent spirit of lower rank than the angels (in Arabian mythology).
16. Dwi-mukhi- Bhadra type of stepwell with entrance from two directions.
17. Ek-mukhi- Nanda type of stepwell with entrance from one direction only.
18. Ft- Foot or Feet
19. Garuda-Stambha- A stone post fixed at the entrance of a stepwell, and which is used to offer water by the devotees after taking bath in the stepwell.
20. Goverdhan- A stone post fixed at the entrance of a stepwell, and which is used to offer water by the devotees after taking bath in the stepwell.

21. Hadoti-- An erstwhile State of Rajputana or Rajasthan before independence, also known as Jodhpur including the area of Kota, Bundi and Jhalawar districts.
22. Harwa- A community in Rajasthan who are expert water diviners.
23. Hizri era- Islamic Calendar started when Prophet Muhammed and his followers migrated from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE.
24. Jal-stambha- A stone post fixed at the entrance of a stepwell, and which is used to offer water by the devotees after taking bath in the stepwell.
25. Jaya- Stepwell with entrance from three directions.
26. Jind- Same as Djinn.
27. Kankar- A variety of lime stone, spongy in nature.
28. Koot or Kuta- A pavilion-tower supported on pillars and columns, constructed on a landing of the stepped corridor and having pavilions on a number of storeys. They support the side walls against the earth pressure. Pavilions are used to sit and access the water in the stepwell.
29. Kua- A term for a well, used in Hindi.
30. Kuvo- A term for a well, used in Gujarati language.
31. Ledge- Side walkways built into the side walls projected into the stepped corridor, starting from the entrance along the side walls and meeting the floor of the pavilions at different levels. Ledges are supported on brackets.
32. Maharaja- A great king- more powerful in status than Raja.
33. Maharana- Literally meaning 'Great Rana' - more powerful in status than Rana.
34. Marwar- An erstwhile State of Rajputana or Rajasthan before independence, also known as Jodhpur including the area of Barmer, Jodhpur, Jalore, Nagaur and Pali districts.
35. Mewar- An erstwhile State of Rajputana or Rajasthan before independence including the area of Udaipur, Chittorgarh, Rajsamand and Bhilwara districts.
36. MGNREGS-Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
37. MLA-Member of Legislative Assembly of a State
38. MP-Member of Parliament of India
39. Mukh-mandap- A pavilion at the entrance of the stepwell, having openings and space to sit.
40. Nanda- Stepwell with entrance from one direction only.
41. Niche- Constructed in the side walls and in the pavilions for housing sculptures of various deities. Small niches are used to keep lamps while bigger niches are used to keep clothing etc. Called 'gavaksh' in Hindi.
42. Od- A community in Gujarat who have been constructing the stepwells for centuries.

43. Paani wale Maharaj- An expert water-diviner who used to decide the location of wells and stepwells in Marwar region.
44. Pavilion- A space with arched or cobbled arch openings into the stepped corridor and supported on pillars and used to sit and access the water in the stepwell.
45. Pavilion tower- A multi-storeyed tower built on a landing having pavilions on each storey.
46. Pilaster- A vertical wall protrusion which looks like half pier or column with other half embedded in the wall. It has a base, a shaft and a capital like a column.
47. Pillar- A vertical structural member to support the load from beams. Also called a column.
48. Pran-Pratishtha- Infusion of life into the sculpture of a deity. A consecration ceremony of the stepwell after its construction.
49. Pratoli- lateral gateway (with or without steps) as entrance to a stepwell.
50. r.- Reign.
51. Raja- A king of a kingdom
52. Rana- Head or king of a kingdom
53. Rao- Chief of a small part of a kingdom.
54. Rehat- An equipment or arrangement for hauling up water from a well in earthen or iron buckets moving on a big wheel, with the help of bullocks. Also called Persian wheel.
55. Riyasat-A state or kingdom
56. Riyasatdar- Chief of a riyasat
57. RR Masonry-Random Rubble masonry. It is the masonry composed of roughly shaped stones laid without regular coursing.
58. Saka/Shaka Samvat- Hindu Calendar which started in 78 AD or 78 CE.
59. Saptamatrika- Seven goddesses.
60. Sati- A woman who immolates herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband.
61. Seervi- An expert water-diviner who used to decide the location of wells and stepwells in Marwar region.
62. Shikhar- The rising tower or spire above the sanctum of a Hindu or Jain temple.
63. Thakur- Head of a small part of a kingdom
64. Thikana- A small administrative part of a kingdom
65. Thikanedar- Chief of a small part of a kingdom
66. Toda-A pair of the ornate pillars, one on either side, of the entrance to mark the beginning of the stepwell. They have niches for placing lamps.

67. Toran- A doorway with a series of S-shaped arches joining in the centre. It is considered sacred in Hindu Religion.
68. Trimukhi- Jaya type of stepwell with entrance from three directions.
69. Vijaya- Stepwell with entrance from four directions.
70. Vikram Samvat- Hindu Calendar, started in 57 BCE, named after King Vikramaditya.
71. Well shaft- Well of circular or octagonal or Quadrangular shape.

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