

# VAISHNAVA HAVELIS IN RAJASTHAN ORIGIN AND CONTINUITY OF A TEMPLE TYPOLOGY

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The emergence and spread of the Haveli temple type in northern India falls into a short span between seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and majority of the Haveli temples are found in the region of Gujarat and Rajasthan. The paper focuses on the emergence of this Vaishnava Haveli temple type in Rajasthan under the patronage of Rajput rulers. It specifically deals with two dominant precursors of this temple type in Rajasthan ie the seventeenth century Haveli temple of Srinathji at Nathdwara of the Pushti Marg sect and the eighteenth century temple of Govinda Deva Temple at Jaipur of the Gaudiya Vaishnava sect.

In each of the above cases, the original temple of the deity existed in the region of Vrindavan and the idol was shifted to Rajasthan under the protection of Rajput rulers to save it from the Mughal invasions during the reign of Aurangzeb. Because of this reason for the shifting of the temples, it is often believed that the new temple type that arose in Rajasthan adapted the subdued Haveli form, with no *shikbara*, to save the temples from further invasion. But rather than as a reaction to Aurangzeb's invasion, it was the Vaishnava philosophy of Devaotional worship that determined the change in temple typology of the period. It was the Bhakti philosophy of the Vaishnava sect and their belief in the Devaotional worship of Lord Krishna in his popular form that led to the Devaelopment of a temple following the medieval house form of the Haveli.

Shrinathji's Haveli temple at Nathdwara and Govinda Deva temple at Jaipur served as models for temples in the region from the eighteenth century, and thereafter the Haveli temple became an established temple type.

## THE VAISHNAVA PHILOSOPHY – PUSHTI MARG AND GAUDIYA VAISHNAVA SECT

Pushti Marg and Gaudiya Vaishnava were two important sects that originated under the Bhakti movement of Vaishnavism in the fifteenth century. Pushti Marg (literally 'path of divine grace'), also termed the Vallabha sect, was a movement started by Vallabhacharya (1479-1531 AD) in the fifteenth century. Its followers believed in the worship of Lord Krishna in his child form. Vallabhacharya evolved the basic method of *seva* (worship) followed in Pushti Marg. The fundamental principal was that the image of god was held to be a *svarupa* (original/ humane form) of Lord Krishna. Vallabhacharya divided the day into eight periods, and the *svarupa* of Krishna was open to the people for *darshana* (a glimpse of the god) during each period showing his daily activity at that time. Pushti Marg temples are called *Havelis* indicating the lord's residence and the places of preaching by Vallabhacharya are called *Baitbaks* (a term used for public seating in Havelis). It is said that the image of Srinathji was revealed to the Vallabhacharya on the hill of Giriraja in Vrindavan and was later on brought to Nathadwara. This image represents the highest form of the Lord Krishna known as Purna Purusottama. All other images of Krishna found in other Vaishnava temples are seen as powers and the manifestations of this form. Although, in this school, Krishna's consort Radha is also worshipped in the company of Krishna, she does not enjoy as much prominence here as she does in the Gaudiya Vaishnava sect.

The Gaudiya Vaishnava sect has its origin in the preaching of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1534 AD) who started the Bhakti movement in West Bengal in the district of Nadia. He founded his own tradition and taught Devaotion for Radha and Krishna, the divine couple of Vrindavan. The image of Krishna worshipped by this sect was discovered by Roop Goswami in Vrindaban in the sixteenth century. Vallabha who founded Pushti Marg sect was a contemporary of Chaitanya. The traditions of these two Vaishnava sub sects seem to have had much in common over their first two generations, a fact that is also reflected in their adaptation of the Haveli form as a temple type.

The most important temple of Gaudia Vaishnava sect that has the original idol from Vrindavan is the Govinda Deva temple at Jaipur built by Sawai Jai Singh. For this sect, the divine counterpart of Krishna is Radha, where Radha represents the complete energy and Krishna is the complete source of energy. According to the Gaudiya Vaishnava philosophy, Radha and Krishna are one but they have assumed two separate forms to enjoy loving pastimes. Gaudiya Vaishnavas form of worship aims to serve this divine couple in their amorous pastimes in the role of Radha's maids. Somewhat similar to the Pushti Marg sect, this form of worship also includes *darshanas* (glimpse of the Radha Krishna idol) at eight different times during the day depicting their activities of the day.

#### SHIFTING OF DEITIES FROM VRINDAVAN

The earliest Haveli of Pushti Marg sect that had the original idol of Srinathji was at Giriraji in Jaitpura in the region of Vrindavan. It stayed in this location from the time of its discovery in 1508 AD until 1665 AD when it was moved due to fear of attack by the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb. The idol was taken on a journey through Agra and towns of Rajasthan for the 32 months and was finally placed in Nathdwara in 1669. During the shift from Vrindavan to Rajasthan, via Kota and Rampura, the cart carrying the original idol of Srinathji got stuck in the mud at the village of Sihar in Mewar. A Vaishnava priest accompanying the idol interpreted this accident as the desire of the god to dwell there and the statue was removed from its chariot. The local Rajput chieftain of nearby town of Delwara gifted the village and its lands to Srinathji, on approval of Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar (1652-80). About twenty years later the village housing Srinathji's idol was renamed Nathdwara (literally 'Gate to the Lord'). Nathdwara has served as the main seat of the Pushti Marg sect since that time. The sect flourished, and soon adopted the graceful lifestyle of the royal courts of Rajputs. The temple Devaotees serve this idol of Shrinathji as the beloved prince of Vraj from Vrindavan.

A similar shift of the idol of Govinda Deva, the deity of Kachchwaha Rajputs of Jaipur is observed around the same period. The first temple of Govinda Deva at Vrindavan (1535-90) was a significant architectural landmark built by the Kachchwaha ruler Man Singh I and had a distinct *shikharā*. In 1669, for fear of an invasion by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, the Kachchwahas decided to move the images of Govinda Deva and Radha Devi from this Vrindavan temple built by their ancestor to their own kingdom in Amber near Jaipur. R Nath (1996) traces the journey of Govinda Deva from Vrindavan to Jaipur, which took place between 1669 to 1713, and describes the various temporary temples that were constructed to house this deity at Radhakunda, Kaman, Govindagadha, Jamva Ramgadha near Jaipur, and Govindapura or Rupaheda. In 1713 the deity was installed at the eighth temple of Kanak Vrindavan on the Amber-Jaipur road, where it stayed until 1715, when it was finally moved to Jainiwas garden in the centre of Jaipur. According to Nath, it was during the transfer of the deity and the building of the third temple of Govinda Deva at Radhakunda that a new temple type evolved. This temple form was a combination of a Haveli and a garden and had no *shikharā*. In contrast to the traditional temple form with an enclosed sanctum and *shikharā* over it, the new form was open and spacious, reflecting the trend towards congregational worship characteristic of the *bhakti* movement.

## SRINATHJI AT NATHDWARA – SPACES AND RITUALS

The temple of Shrinathji in Nathdwara, more popularly known as Shrinathji's Haveli is in the form of a magnificent seventeenth century mansion. It is a simple structure and is built like a house with several courtyards. It is said to have been designed on the lines of the original house of Krishna's father, Nanda, in Vrindavan. The temple is thus also known as Nanda Bhavan or Nandalaya (the house of Nanda). The spatial planning of this temple has more parallels with the palatial setting of a ruler's abode as opposed to a traditional Hindu temple. It is reminiscent of the Palace/Haveli architecture of the region with sequential entrances and interlinked courtyards.

The innermost central courtyard is called the Ratan Chowk. A triple arched *tibari* (semi covered spaces with three arches) on the western end of this courtyard leads to the innermost sanctum (the *nij mandir* in the southwest corner) that houses the deity. The deity in the sanctum faces north. The triple arched *tibari* is the main audience chamber of the Haveli that often gets transformed for special festivals. The entrance to the sanctum is indirect, unlike the conventional temples and the arrangement reinforces the Pushti Marg philosophy that the deity should not be directly visible. The Ratan Chowk has two entry points – a northern one called the Hathi Pol and an eastern one (used by the ladies) called the Suraj Pol. Each of this entrance leads to an outer courtyard, ie the Kamal Chowk in the north and the larger Goverdhan Chowk at the eastern end. (Figure 1). Kamal Chowk is the main courtyard where Devaotees can sit and wait for their *darshan*.

The main entrance to the temple is through the Naqqarkhana on the eastern side of the Goverdhan Chowk. The presence of Naqqarkhana again is an adaptation from earlier palaces and *havelis* where this space served to announce the entrance of the visitors.



Figure 1: View of Suraj Pol as seen from Goverdhan Chowk, Shrinathji's Haveli

Two other idols of Lord Krishna are placed in smaller adjacent courtyards in the same temple complex and these smaller temples are called the Haveli of Navnit Priyaji on the southern side and the Haveli of Shri Vitthal Nathji on the northern side of the complex.

The main temple known as Srinathji's Haveli evidently functions more as the Lord's residence as observed in its spatial planning as well as in the prayer rituals. The prayers take place in accordance with the daily activities of the deity. The daily routine in a Pushti Marg Haveli is a sequence of eight *darshans* that allow eight glimpses of the daily activities of the deity. There are no ornaments or clothes carved on the idol itself, as found traditionally in earlier representations of the Indian gods. Rather, the prayer rituals include the dressing up of the deity i.e. the *sringara*. Tailors sit above the Govardhan chowk and make new garments for *sringara* (dressing up and decorating of the deity) during different times of the day. The idol appears not so much as a divine form but as that of an ordinary human being residing in a house.

Daily *darshans* include eight different times of the daily routine of the Lord from the morning breakfast, midday meal to the last one in the evening after his dinner. The priests in the temple dress up the deity in different manner depending on the time of the day and the season of the year. This includes special, light, cotton clothes for summer months and heavy, quilted ones for the winter.

The spatial planning and rituals in this earliest example of Haveli temple in the region, clearly indicate that this temple architecture is a response to the philosophy of the Pushti Marg sect where the deity resides as a human form in his Haveli and being served by the Devaotees. The temple form is a recreation of the house form or Haveli with entrances to different rooms, *rasoda* (kitchen) for preparing the *prasada*, interlinked courtyards for various activities of the house, outside *baithak* for preaching and outer spaces for keeping the cows of Krishna.

## GOVINDA DEVA TEMPLE – SPACES AND RITUALS

The planning of Jaipur with Govinda Deva temple in the centre was a deliberate statement of the Kachchwaha Rajputs that the new city was Devaoted to their family deity Lord Govinda Deva and, the ruler of Jaipur will always serve as the Lord's *dewan* (minister). Even the seal of the Jaipur ruler, Sawai Jai Singh, stated '*Jaisimba sharanam, Govinda Deva chanranam*', i.e. Jai Singh's shelter is at the feet of Govinda Deva.

Though a number of controversies exist about the date of the actual placement of the deity in the present temple at Jai Niwas garden, it can be accepted that Jai Singh, a strong Vaishnavite and a firm believer in Vedic rites, would have only started building the city after consecrating the centre with the idol of Govinda Deva. Sawai Jai Singh had started envisaging his dream city around 1715 with his favourite hunting ground or Jai Niwas as part of the city. Observing the ritual of demarcating the religious centre as the genius loci of a new city, it is evident that Jai Singh installed the image of Govinda Deva at Jai Niwas in 1715. In this respect, R Nath (1996) has cited some important evidence.

The unique architectural style of the Govinda Deva temple marked it as a dominant precursor of a new and widespread temple type in Rajasthan, the *shikhara*-less *haveli* temples of the eighteenth century. This temple was named Govinda Mahal (literally Govinda's palace), and is located on the uppermost terrace of a Mughal style terraced garden with water channels and fountains. It is axially aligned with an earlier rectangular structure called the Badal Mahal or the hunting pavilion at a lower level and the Talkatora water body at the northern end. This arrangement is a deliberate recreation of Vrindavan, located at the centre of the Jai Niwas garden, magnificently poised on the northern edge of the highest terrace. The square temple building itself is an open, pillared *barabdari*, composed of white marble pillars and engrailed cusped arches with a small central enclosure as the sanctum. It has a five-arched pillared



Figure 2: Exterior View of Govind Dev Temple, Jaipur

hall on both its south and north sides, and sets of closed rooms on the other two sides. There is no *shikhara* or any other superstructure on this square flat roof. The construction is extremely simple with beautiful stucco engravings on the walls. (Figure 2).

In Nath's words (1996, 181) "This simple design marks the culmination of the evolutionary process from the *mandira* type of Radhakunda to the *barabadari* type of the Jayanivasa garden, and reflects the utmost simplification of the Vaishnava temple; almost the entire formalism of the classical Hindu temple as prescribed by the *vastu* texts has been dropped, and it has become an incarnation of *bhakti*, pure and simple."

Though often classified as a Haveli temple (Asher 2001), the built form is more like a *barabdari* in the centre of a Mughal garden with a central square platform as the inner sanctum space and a passage around it for circumambulation. The architectural vocabulary of the temple parallels with the Mughal public audience hall with pillared façade, where either the deity or the ruler is positioned for *darshan*. It has been observed (Asher 2001) that Sawai Jai Singh's Diwan-I-Aam or public audience hall in the City Palace at Jaipur and the design of the Govinda Mahal probably had a similar source of inspiration.

The rituals in the Govinda Deva temple at Jaipur are somewhat similar to the ones observed in Shrinathji's Haveli, except that Lord Krishna's image is shown here in adulthood, accompanied by his companion Radha. The *shrinagaras* of Govinda Deva and his consort Radha are performed seven times during the day called Mangal, Dhoop, Sringer, Rajbhog, Gwal, Sandhya and Shayan, depicting the various activities of the divine couple from morning till evening.

However, the concept of the temple as a residence of the Lord is not as evident in Govinda Deva's temple as in Srinathji's Haveli. The entrance is also more direct here as observed in conventional temples. The landscaped surroundings and setting of the Govinda Deva temple aims to recreate the ambience of



Figure 3: A Haveli Temple on main commercial street of Jaipur

its original location in Vrindavan whereas the architectural form of the *barahdari* reflects an audience hall of the ruler. Though not truly resembling a Haveli, it has been categorized as this type because it is a flat roofed temple without *shikhara*, and belongs to a period that saw the construction of the Haveli temple type. Considering the peculiarity of this temple form and its strategic location in the Jaipur plan, this should be classified in the unique category of a *barahdari* temple, probably the only one of its kind in the region.

#### SPREAD OF THE HAVELI TEMPLE AND PRESENT TRENDS

During the eighteenth and nineteenth century several other temples in Jaipur belonging to different religious sects rejected the *shikhara* form and followed the flat roofed courtyard type planning. The Haveli temple type thus became a trendsetter for Vaishnava, Dadupanthi and even Jain temples in the region around Jaipur. Researchers (Asher 2000) have attributed this change in Jaipur temples to Jai Singh's commitment to an 'economically dynamic non sectarian state'. One observes that in the planning of Jaipur, most of the temples on the main commercial streets were strategically located by Jai Singh, but only four temples located at major crossings have a *shikhara*. The rest of the temples in the city are Haveli temples. It is possible that the urban byelaws of the new city governed the temple form and these remaining temples had to follow the Haveli temple type advocated by the authorities. The pattern followed in these temples is not of the *Barahdari* style as found in the main Govinda Deva temple but of the typical Haveli temple type with a courtyard. All temples have a straight flight of steps from the main road and the façades are adorned by *bangaldar chhatris* (Figure 3).

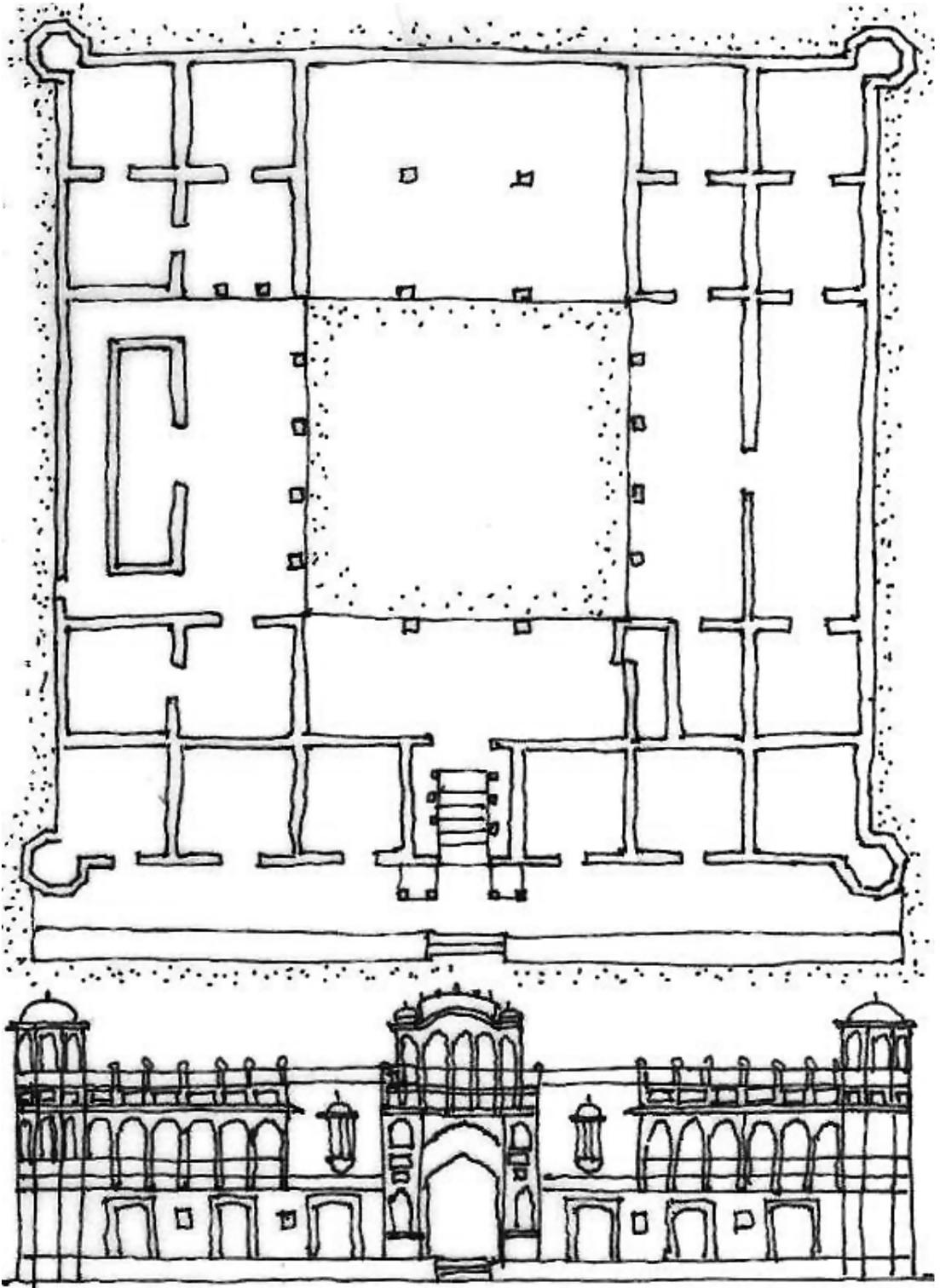


Figure 4: Plan and Elevation of Agarwal Haveli Temple, at Pushkar

As a direct influence of Jaipur, a similar transformation occurred in the temples of surrounding regions, as in Rjagarh, Alwar, Malpura and several towns of the Shekhawati region. In the religious town of Pushkar, the streets are lined with a number of Haveli temples. These temples belong to other sects besides Vaishnavas, and are built under Rajput or Marwari patronage. Examples are the Agarwal Temple, Bohra Temple and Raas ji ka Mandir (Figures 4, 5). Other parts of northern India such as Gujarat, Vrindavan and Varanasi, also have Haveli temples built in this period.

The twentieth century showed a sudden change in the temple architecture of the region under the patronage of the industrial groups like the Birlas. The post-independence period has resulted in the revival of earlier *shikhara* styles of temple, as seen in the Birla temples of New Delhi and Jaipur (Figure 6). While the original Haveli temples of the Vaishnavas continue, with great fervour, to perform the daily rituals of the Bhakti movement, it is interesting to observe the twentieth century temple creations of the Vaishnavite sects who pioneered this temple form. The Gaudiya Vaishnavas have stopped the Haveli temple type of construction and adopted contemporary versions of earlier temple types, with *shikharas* and *mahamandapas*, as evident in a number of ISKON temples in India and other parts of the world. This change in the temple form can be related to parallel changes in their philosophy and ways of worship. However, the Pushti Marg sect still follows the Haveli temple type. Temples of this sect are still known as Havelis, and Srinathji's worship is carried out throughout the day in eight *shringaras* in all temples. The most recent example of a Pushti Marg Haveli is the twentieth-century Vraj temple built on a 300 acre site in Pennsylvania, USA. A temporary Haveli was created in an older structure on the site. The permanent Haveli

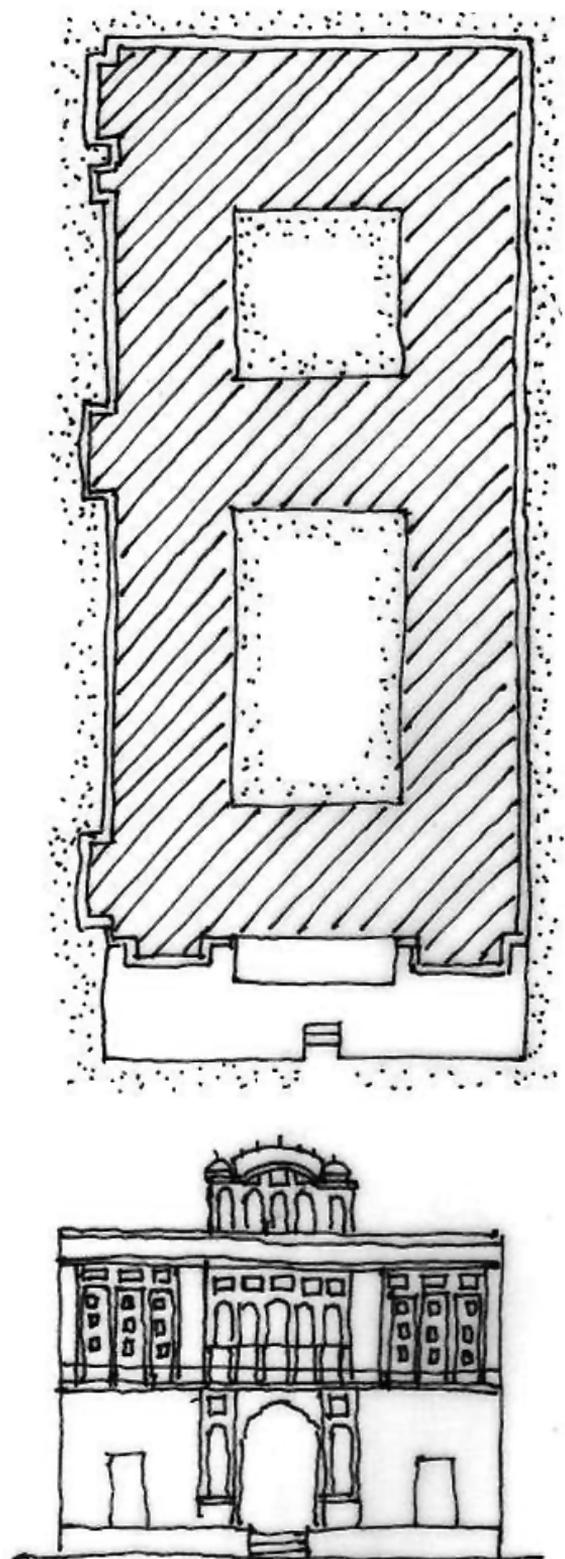


Figure 5: Plan and Elevation of Bohra Haveli Temple, Pushkar



Figure 6: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Birla Temple, Jaipur

was designed with the help of a priest brought from Srinathji's Haveli in Nathdwara. A procession carrying the image of the deity, carved in Rajasthan from a black stone, marked the inauguration of the temple. A horse-drawn carriage transported the idol to this Haveli followed by the Nathdwara priests sitting in a Rolls Royce.

## CONCLUSION

The replacement of the *shikhara* temple type by the Haveli temple type during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries marks an interesting phase in the development of temple architecture in northern India. An analysis of the Haveli temple type shows that this particular architectural form originated as a response to the Vaishnava philosophy of that period, and later spread to different regions of Rajasthan and other areas of northern India. This temple type was emulated by other sects, and several Dadupanthi and Jain Haveli temples are also found.

The revivalist trend of the twentieth century temples led to the revival of the earlier, temple form, with the *shikhara*. However, the Pushti Marg sect of the Vaishnavas, who were the creators of the Haveli temple type, still follow their established rituals and construct Havelis as the Lord's residence.

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