



Bhagwaan Parasvnath's Tonk at sunrise. The Tonk sits majestically atop the highest summit south of the Himalayas. For hundreds of years, it comprised only of a pair of charan paduka on a rock (see below). Later, a temple was built around it. The temple has another set of charans. Below left: Charan in the inner cave. Gentleman in white, Atul Jain of Indore, was on his 100th yatra this January.

FROM SHIKHARJI TO SIDDHACHALAM

By Jaipat Singh Jain



There is no pilgrimage like Shikharji. There will never be. Jains believe that 20 of our 24 Tirthankars of this cycle of time undertook tapasya and attained moksha here.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of yatris visit this sacred land in the wilderness of Jharkhand. Yet, it is probably not the most visited of Jain pilgrimages. Yatris are deterred by the insecurity or inconvenience of travel or stay, or by the appearance of differences among Jain sects.

This essay presents some photos and findings of a recent field trip by some of Siddhachalam's volunteers and builds on work being done by Siddhachalam to improve our understanding of this most sacred of pilgrimages. In 2009, Siddhachalam commissioned a well-known cartographer in India to map Shikharji's Tonks and placed that map in the public domain. The results of that exercise, together with review of satellite images and field trip, validated a belief that the layout of Siddhachalam mirrors the layout atop the summit of Shikharji.

In our most recent field trip made in January this year, we completed the task of ascertaining the coordinates of each Tonk of Shikharji, including its elevation, latitude, longitude, direction, among other details.

Siddhachalam's objective is to faithfully replicate Shikharji's trails and Tonk without losing sight of Acharya Sushil Kumarji's lofty vision of bringing together all who believe in the message of the Jinas. It seeks to bring

alive the bhaava (feeling) of teerth darshan and yatra experience to America so that our future generations have a better chance of knowing and preserving their rich heritage.

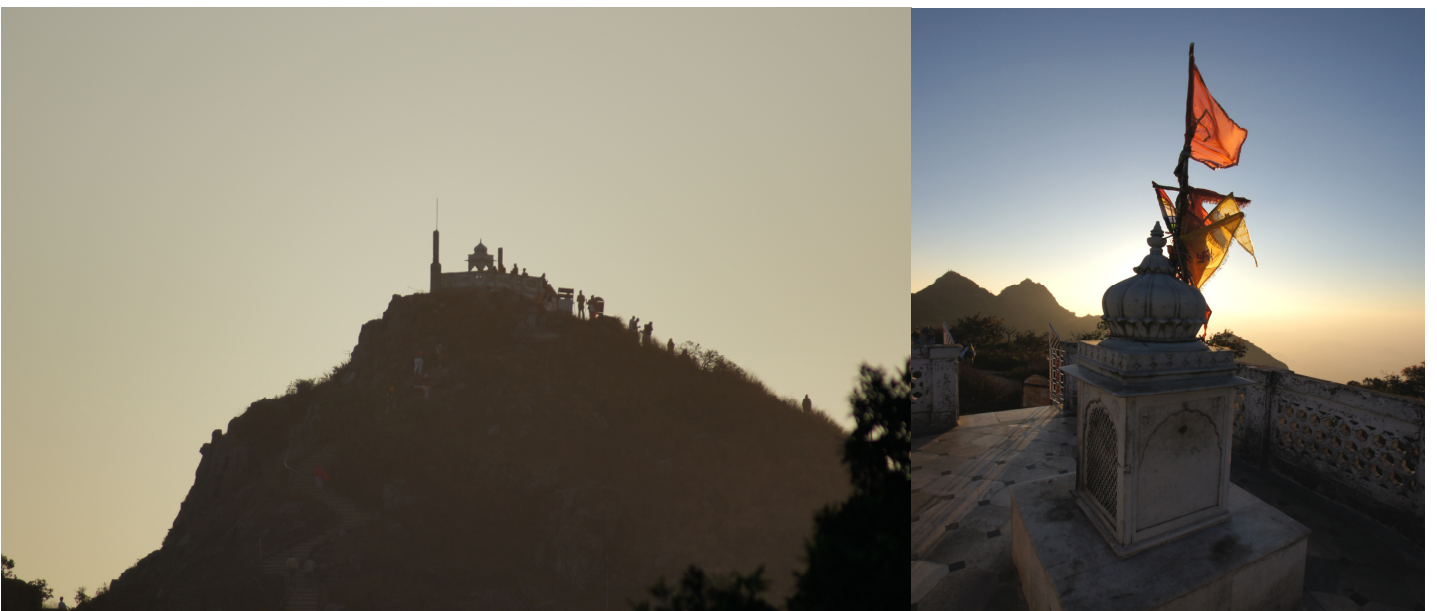


Shikharji is part of Parasnath Hills in Jharkhand. The left peak, barely visible in sunrise mist, is that of Shri Chandraprabhu (#12) and the peak at the right end is that of Shri Parasvnath (#31). Between these two peaks are all of the other Tonks. A bird's eye-view distance between the Tonks of Shri Chandraprabhu and Shri Parasvnath is approx. 1.15 miles in Shikharji and 0.5 miles in Siddhachalam.

Elevation and Distance

Our field study affirmed that the highest summit atop Shikharji was that of Bhagwaan Parasvnath (approx. 4,537 ft. above sea level inside the cave). The charan paduka inside the cave is placed in the north-south direction. Jal Mandir (#20; approx. 4,066 ft.) and Tonk of Ganadhar Shubh Swami (#19; approx. 4,076 ft.) are in the valley, almost exactly as in Siddhachalam (elevation approx. 613 and 617 ft., respectively, in Siddhachalam). The increase in elevation between Jal Mandir and Parasvnathji's Tonk at Shikharji and Siddhachalam was approx. 11.6% and 13.4%, respectively.

A yatra of all Tonks commencing and closing at Ganadhar Shri Gautam Swami's Tonk (#1) is approx. 5.6 miles (9 kilometers) in Shikharji and 1.97 miles (3.2 kilometers) in Siddhachalam.



Left: Shri Suvadinath (#9; approx. 4,445 ft.) is atop a high mountain peak. The Tonk is also distinguishable for its unique shape.

Right: Tonk of Shri Mahavira Swami (#26; approx. 4,388 ft.) at sunrise. In the distant background are peaks of Shri Chandraprabhu and Shri Suvadinath. The Tonk of Bhagwaan Mahavira Swami is representative of most Tonks in size and shape.

Set forth below are certain coordinates of the 30 Tonks and Jal Mandir.

| Tonk # | Name | Latitude | Longitude | Elevation (ft.) |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Shri Gautam Swami | 23°57'43.266N | 86°8'10.513E | 4313 |
| 2 | Shri Kunthunath Prabhu | 23°57'43.342N | 86°8'10.794E | 4314 |
| 3 | Shashvat Jin Shri Rishbhanan Prabhu | 23°57'44.526N | 86°8'12.04E | 4312 |
| 4 | Shasvat Jin Chandranan Prabhu | 23°57'42.87N | 86°8'12.767E | 4321 |
| 5 | Shri Naminath Prabhu | 23°57'44.782N | 86°8'13.573E | 4318 |
| 6 | Shri Arnath Prabhu | 23°57'43.824N | 86°8'16.011E | 4353 |
| 7 | Shri Mallinath Prabhu | 23°57'43.371N | 86°8'17.227E | 4357 |
| 8 | Shri Shreyansnath Prabhu | 23°57'43.417N | 86°8'18.174E | 4358 |
| 9 | Shri Suvidhinath Prabhu | 23°57'42.37N | 86°8'21.065E | 4445 |
| 10 | Shri Padam Prabhu | 23°57'41.221N | 86°8'23.333E | 4394 |
| 11 | Shri Munisurvath Prabhu | 23°57'40.523N | 86°8'24.676E | 4350 |
| 12 | Shri Chandra Prabhu | 23°57'51.99N | 86°8'47.763E | 4209 |
| 13 | Shri Adinath Prabhu | 23°57'40.267N | 86°8'33.039E | 4335 |
| 14 | Shri Anantnath Prabhu | 23°57'38.946N | 86°8'25.461E | 4467 |
| 15 | Shri Sheetalnath Prabhu | 23°57'38.633N | 86°8'25.479E | 4451 |
| 16 | Shri Sambhavnath Prabhu | 23°57'36.588N | 86°8'23.967E | 4321 |
| 17 | Shri Vasupujya Prabhu | 23°57'31.256N | 86°8'21.634E | 4169 |
| 18 | Shri Abinandan Prabhu | 23°57'29.279N | 86°8'22.3E | 4244 |
| 19 | Shri Shubh Swami | 23°57'35.439N | 86°8'19.254E | 4076 |
| 20 | Jal Mandir | 23°57'35.727N | 86°8'17.663E | 4066 |
| 21 | Shri Dharmnath Prabhu | 23°57'43.205N | 86°8'9.289E | 4346 |
| 22 | Shasvat Jin Shri Vardhman Prabhu | 23°57'43.281N | 86°8'8.548E | 4341 |
| 23 | Shasvat Jin Shri Varishen Prabhu | 23°57'42.269N | 86°8'8.706E | 4336 |
| 24 | Shri Sumatinath Prabhu | 23°57'42.791N | 86°8'8.256E | 4358 |
| 25 | Shri Shantinath Prabhu | 23°57'42.089N | 86°8'6.513E | 4390 |
| 26 | Shri Mahavir Swami | 23°57'41.801N | 86°8'4.865E | 4388 |
| 27 | Shri Suparshavnath Prabhu | 23°57'39.457N | 86°8'2.233E | 4474 |
| 28 | Shri Vimalnath Prabhu | 23°57'40.109N | 86°8'1.722E | 4468 |
| 29 | Shri Ajitnath Prabhu | 23°57'46.715N | 86°8'45.568E | 4392 |
| 30 | Shri Neminath Prabhu | 23°57'48.508N | 86°8'45.136E | 4389 |
| 31 | Shri Parasvnath Prabhu (inside) | 23°57'52.224N | 86°8'42.476E | 4537 |

Tolerance: ± 2%. Equipment used: Garmin Orgeon 550 GPS, model 010-00697-10

Credits for data collection: Pardeep Sharma, Megha Jain, Rashmi Jain and Vishnu Joshi. Analysis: Vivek Jain

Typical Tonk

The Model Tonk at Siddhachalam is similar to a typical Tonk at Shikharji in terms of size and shape. However, certain Tonks at Shikharji, such as that of Shri Parasvnath Swami, Shri Suvadhinathji or Shri Gautam Swami are markedly different from others. Some differences arose over time.



Combining data collection with bhakti is challenging. Picture shows volunteers Pardeep and Megha. There are several tonks at Shikharji that are either unmarked or are not enclosed within a perimeter. These are not being replicated at Siddhachalam.



The charan paduka in most Tonks is between four and eight inches in length. The perimeter of the Tonk of Shri Abhinandan Swami (#18) was damaged by lightning last year. Right picture, taken moments after the one on left, shows monkey eating almonds left by yatris. Note that the laanchan (symbol) of Shri Abhinandan Swami is vaanar (monkey).



Left: A view of Parasvath Tonk (background top) and other Tonks from the Tonk of Shri Suvadhinath. **Right:** Siddhachalam field trip volunteers, Rashmi, Megha and Ram at a rest stop after darshan of Tonk of Shri Chandraprabhu.