



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS OF JAINA IDENTITY AND STYLE

In the fifth-sixth century BCE a man was born in eastern India who substantially reformed the religious practices, thought and life of large parts of the population. His alternative path to salvation was so appealing to many, that the new religion swept over the entire vast continent and within a few centuries dominated much of India's religious, philosophical, literary as well as political discourse. Despite the ban on travelling by transport for teachers of the ascetic community, twentieth century migration of the largely mercantile lay community has led to the spread of this religion to far away countries such as Africa, Europe, and North America.

Nevertheless, Mahāvīra's reformed religion of Jainism is still regularly presented as a local Indian phenomenon,<sup>1</sup> and more often described as a passive and absorbing, rather than an active and creative force. The influence the comparatively small religious community of the Jainas has had on Indian culture, however, stands in no relation to its present or past numerical size. One of their main contributions lies in the wealth and splendour of their temple architecture, shaped by and acting as a reflection of distinct Jaina ritual practices, a distinctive view of images and a highly-developed form of religious giving. The Jaina temple is a unique type of building and wherever followers of the faith migrate, their places of worship act as potent symbols of Jaina religious identity.

The Jaina community accounts for less than half of one percent of the entire population of India, and this does not seem to have been very different in the past. The enormous influence this small religious minority has had on Indian culture and history is only partially expressed by the vast corpus of Jaina literature, the lists of Jaina kings and ministers connected with large building projects, and the names of Jaina teachers and philosophers associated with radical religious thought and influential philosophies. Although Jainism is not an actively converting religion,<sup>2</sup> it has influenced and is still having an effect on Indian as well as Western thought in a variety of ways. Mahātmā Gandhi for instance, adopted the Jaina doctrine of *ahimsā*, non-violence, as an important concept and force in his fight for independence. Even in the West, peace-activists, nature preservation campaigners and animal rights lobbyists from all around the world employ Jaina ideas on the protection of life, sustainability and ecology as shining examples of proper conduct. Unfortunately, in relation to the great achievements listed here, relatively little attention has been dedicated to the academic study of the Jainas, and the emphasis in available studies has largely been on the Śvetāmbara form of Jainism and the region of north-western India. Particularly large concentrations of Jainas are settled in the western Indian states of Rajasthan and Gujarat, but also in the central region consisting of the modern states of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, and in Karnataka in southern India.<sup>3</sup> Partly due to the entrepreneurial spirit of the Jainas, but also due to famines and persecution, Jaina families have settled in all parts of the subcontinent and in recent centuries also in Africa and in the West.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Khan, for instance, wrote "Jains and Jainism never step[ped] out of India due to their orthodox beliefs and their humbleness" (Khan 2001: 224), whilst Dhavalikar pronounced the same view by saying that "Jainism, which did not go out of the country, is still a flourishing religion in India" (Dhavalikar 2003: 87).

2 On this issue, see for instance Dundas (1992: 30).

3 According to the 2001 Census of India, there were only 4.23 million Jainas out of a total Indian population of about one billion. The highest concentration of Jainas were recorded in Maharashtra (1,301,843) and Rajasthan (650,493), followed by almost equal numbers living in Madhya Pradesh (545,446) and Gujarat (525,305). Next in line comes the modern state of Karnataka (412,659) with the most sizeable Jaina population in the south ("Census of India 2001," updated on 27th September 2005, accessed on 14th October 2005, [http://www.censusindia.net/results/2001census\\_data\\_index.html](http://www.censusindia.net/results/2001census_data_index.html)).

4 Sharma, referring to the Census of India for 1971, points out that it even registers Jaina families living in very

This study will focus on the temple architecture of image-worshipping (*mūrti-pūjaka*) sects. Jaina temples are found in all modern states of the Indian subcontinent and represent an unbroken continuity which can be traced from at least the beginning of the Common Era up to the present day. Whilst the availability of building materials, local styles and temporary fashions have influenced the decorations, and to a certain extent also the layout of the structures, Jaina temples in India are distinct and clearly differ from the building traditions of other religious groups in the subcontinent. These differences are predominantly found in the typical arrangement of architectural and ritual space in the Jaina temple, which is characterised by consisting of highly evolved and complex spatial constellations, favouring continuous additions and expansions on horizontal as well as on vertical levels.

## JAINA IDENTITY AND JAINA STYLE

Questions of Jaina identity and Jaina style have been much debated, unfortunately, however, not always in a very profound way. Much of the early Indian literature aims at establishing and solidifying distinct Buddhist and Hindu identities through a clear differentiation from ‘the other,’ usually characterised as being Jaina.<sup>5</sup> Because the Jaina ascetic community is advised to wash as little as necessary, Jainas in general have often been described as untidy and been characterised as social elements standing in clear contrast and opposition to commonly accepted forms of social and religious behaviour. Despite these early attempts at delineating religious groups, which aim more at defining Hindu and Buddhist identities than at accurately describing Jaina practices, Indian census forms have for decades counted Jaina followers as Hindus, and even Jainas themselves have often described themselves as followers of a particular form of Hinduism. Scholarship on Jaina communities, conducted over the past ten to twenty years, has clearly shown that Jainism and Jaina culture have not developed in isolation. Jainas have always maintained active relations and exchanged ideas and practices with the wider community surrounding them. This interaction has not only taken place in terms of commerce and governance, but also in the areas of art and religion, where concepts, rituals and divinities have been taken over from other groups. These ideas, however, were modified and adapted to fit the Jaina religious and ethical context. As part of this process, for example, Jainas have transformed the blood-loving Hindu goddess Kālī into a vegetarian divinity by the name of Padmāvati, and have composed their own versions of the great epics of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, reflecting a distinctly Jaina worldview.<sup>6</sup> Recent scholarship has succeeded in defining much more clearly the uniqueness not just of the Jaina community as a whole, but also of many smaller delineated factions within it.<sup>7</sup>

Even less research has been conducted on Jaina art and architecture, than on philosophy, religious thought and ritual. The perception conveyed in the available art-historical literature is still that Jaina temples do not differ from their Hindu counterparts other than in their iconographic treatment. An undertone often implies that Jaina art is inferior in quality when compared with Hindu achievements. In a lecture on Jainism at Oxford University, Marcus Banks suggested that Jaina art simply is ‘art made by Jainas,’ Klaus Bruhn described Jaina art as ‘Jaina-sponsored,’ M. C. Joshi has written that Jaina temples simply differ from *Brāhmaṇical* structures in their iconographic treatment, and according to E. B. Havell: “the Jains in their temple building usually followed the structural traditions of the Brahmanical sects.”<sup>8</sup> It is correct that South Asian architecture is best characterised by region and period, and not by religious denomination, as the builders of religious structures normally worked for followers of different religious traditions. The available literature on Jaina architecture, however, does injustice to the material by denying it a sufficient individuality of its own. The strong similarities between the decorations of Hindu temples and Islamic mosques in Gujarat dating from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries have been amply highlighted. Nobody, however, would deny the clear differences in the layout and the ritual use of these temples and mosques,

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remote areas of the subcontinent which have not usually been associated with the spread of Jainism. Prominent amongst these are for instance those living in Mizoram, located between Bangladesh and Burma, in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and in Arunachal Pradesh. This census only lists a single location allegedly entirely devoid of Jainas, namely the territory of Lakshadveep, situated in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Kerala (Sharma 1991: 223). Also in 2001, no Jainas were recorded in this locality.

5 For a helpful and detailed example of this debate, which also refers to more questionable approaches to the issue, see Dundas (1992: 3-10, 135).

6 For information on the Jaina versions of the great epics consult for instance Dundas (1992: 203).

7 Dundas 1992: 228.

8 This refers to a lecture on Jaina *tīrtha-paṭas* which Banks delivered at Queen Elizabeth House at the University of Oxford in Michaelmas Term, 1998. For the other references, see Bruhn (1993: 53), Joshi (1975: 242) and Havell (1913: 16).

and the ability of even an uninformed observer to differentiate between the two, although both types of building have been ornamented with the same artistic motives. It is the same case with Jaina temples. They are as much part of a shared local artistic tradition as Gujarati temples and mosques, but are nevertheless clearly identifiable as distinct Jaina forms of expression of a shared common heritage. They are distinct in having been shaped by separate Jaina perceptions of religion and by having been adapted to specific Jaina ritual practices. As such, the differences clearly go beyond characterisations attempted by some, such as Paul Dundas's description that, "Today, Jain temples are most obviously recognisable through the gleaming marble out of which they tend to be constructed."<sup>9</sup> This statement is true for much of north-western Indian Jaina architecture but clearly expresses a Śvetāmbara-centric viewpoint and may not go far enough. In order to characterise Jaina temple architecture, one has to penetrate below the surface of the iconography of the sculptures decorating the facades, and below the stone cladding their surface. M. A. Dhaky, insisted that there are clear differences between Jaina and Hindu temples.<sup>10</sup> He characterised *raṅga-maṇḍapas* and the *bhramantikā* cloisters created in front of chains of small shrines as uniquely Jaina,<sup>11</sup> but did not define the differences more clearly than calling them "an inexplicable way," or "that subtle 'differing way'."<sup>12</sup> This enquiry aims to go further in describing these differences, and in providing more substantial evidence for the distinctive nature of Jaina temple architecture. As will be demonstrated in much detail in the following chapters, the distinct features of the Jaina temple lie in its characteristic spatial organisation.

### JAINA ARCHITECTURE IN THE AVAILABLE LITERATURE

Most studies on Jaina art and architecture conducted so far have focussed on the geographical area of north-western India, delineated by the modern states of Rajasthan and Gujarat, and the period between the first centuries CE and the thirteenth century. During this period, most attention has been dedicated to the Jaina temples on Mount Ābū, which are commonly regarded as representations of a, if not, the high point of the development of Jaina temple architecture in India. Also dating from this so-called 'golden age,' are the temples at Kumbharia and Ghanerao, which also figure prominently in the available literature. But even with regards to these structures, the existing publications focus largely on the treatment of the basement and wall mouldings and the sculptural panels decorating the temple buildings. They are not concerned with the spatial layout and the architectural fabric of the temples. An exception of a later Jaina temple which is well-known and praised by art historians, is the fifteenth-century Ādinātha Temple at Ranakpur. The only other Jaina temple sites which commonly get mentioned in general studies on Indian art and architecture, are the Jaina temples on Mount Śatruñjaya and those at Shravanabelgola in Karnataka. Others refer to the cave at Badami and the Jaina temples at Khajuraho but do not discuss them.<sup>13</sup> Noteworthy exceptions in this context are the reports of early British surveyors, such as Percy Brown and James Fergusson, who generally were much more open towards and admiring of all types of Indian architecture, and as such less judgemental and limited in their perception than many later writers on the architecture of the subcontinent. Their accounts regularly list water structures and bridges, Sikh *gurudvārās* and also Jaina temples.<sup>14</sup> Fergusson, in his *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (1876, reprinted in 1976) dedicated an entire chapter to the discussion of Jaina material, which includes temples not just in Rajasthan and Gujarat, but also at smaller and lesser known sites in remoter parts of coastal Karnataka. Due to a relatively large number of publications on Jainism in recent years, we are today in the fortunate position of knowing much more about the religion and its ritual, than those early explorers. Based on our present understanding, some of their interpretations can today seem somewhat far-fetched and remote which, however, should not diminish the value of these early surveys. Three very useful books, which represent first attempts at counterbalancing the arbitrary emphasis on the north-west of India, are the three volumes compiled by A. Ghosh (1974 and 1975), the joint publication edited by U. P. Shah and M. A. Dhaky (1975), and the book by Kurt Titze (1998). Ghosh has chapters on north, west, east, central and southern India. Although the aim was to cover the development of Jaina art and architecture from the third century BCE to 1800 CE, the chapters rarely mention sculptures or temples

9 Dundas 1992: 175.

10 Dhaky 1975: 319-320, 377-378.

11 Dhaky 1975: 349, 356

12 Dhaky 1975: 320.

13 This is for instance the case in Craven (1987).

14 Less satisfying in this respect is Havell (1913) who wrote on later architectural developments in India, a time during which many Jaina temples were constructed. Admittedly, he was particularly interested in Islamic developments, but refers to later Hindu temples whilst hardly anything is said about material from a Jaina background.

from after the sixteenth century and are generally critical and sometimes even dismissive of later temple structures. Also in Ghosh's publication, the emphasis clearly is on sculpture and temple ornamentation. Many of the articles in Shah and Dhaky are very useful, but again, they focus more on sculpture than on architecture and fail to provide a general overview. Titze's book succeeds in illustrating the spread of Jainism and its position in present day India. However, his book is relatively short, does not provide detailed information on sites and is not an art-historical or architectural investigation. Other reports are very useful with respect to single specific sites, such as T. N. Ramachandran's monograph (1934) on Tiruparuttikundram for instance, but do not set the structures into a wider context.

## AIMS AND SOURCE MATERIAL

In order to counterbalance and supplement the available material, this study has three main aims. Its first two primary incentives are to readdress and to correct the present geographical and temporal imbalances with regards to studies on Jaina temple architecture. This is achieved by providing chapters and detail, on all major regions of the subcontinent, and by discussing examples from the earliest surviving structures up to the present day. Through this, a first comprehensive overview of the development of Jaina temple architecture throughout the subcontinent is being provided. The third endeavour is more complex in nature, and aims at tackling the question of Jaina identity and style with regards to temple buildings in India. The basic questions are whether Jaina temples are distinct from the religious structures built by the followers of other religions and if so, in which way they differ.

This study lists large numbers of Jaina temples from all regions and all periods, of which numerous examples have never been mentioned in religious or art-historical publications before. Furthermore, it identifies clear resemblances and trends in the development of the Jaina temple and portrays it as a distinct conception unique to the Jainas. It does not seek to be a conclusive survey, or pretend to be exhaustive or complete. Jaina temples are found throughout the subcontinent, and countless new shrines have been constructed since the completion of this investigation. To produce an absolute and conclusive encyclopaedia of the architecture of any religious group in South Asia would be an impossible undertaking. The comprehensive overview provided in this study, aims at drawing attention to the wide distribution, the unbroken temporal development, and the distinctiveness of Jaina temple architecture. It is also hoped that this text will encourage many more detailed regional examinations, taking the subject even further.

The main source of information for this enquiry are the temple buildings of the Jainas in India in their present form of construction and preservation. Existing studies frequently endeavour to describe earlier and now lost stages of the building process, and try to paint pictures of now entirely destroyed temple edifices and deserted sites, on which little or no definite information are available to us today. This survey examines the temples in their contemporary form and describes their current ritual use. In their present form, there are hardly any Jaina temples which have not been substantially repaired or altered during recent centuries. Even the site of Mount Ābū, often treated as a pure example of a lost age of beauty, has countless additions made during the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. These are clear indications that for Jainas, temples have no museum character but are living sites of religious importance. In addition to the temple structures, undoubtedly the most important primary source for this investigation, historical accounts, Jaina pilgrimage texts and information from sacred manuals on iconography and architecture have been employed to supplement and explain the record of Jaina temple building available to us today.

The core chapters have been arranged according to geographical regions. These have been supplemented by introductions to the general theme, related scholarship, and the aims of the book, summarised in Chapter One, by a brief presentation of the core ideas of Jainism, contained in Chapter Two, a short discussion of Jaina images and iconography in Chapter Three, and an introduction to the Jaina temple complex, its associated buildings and supplementary elements in Chapter Four. Because the description, analysis and interpretation of the spatial constellations of Jaina temple architecture in the various regions present the focal issue of this work, the presentation of the additional introductory material had to be relatively short. This only focuses on those aspects of the religion and the wider context of Jaina religious sites and their associated sacred images, which are necessary for an understanding of the architectural data presented in the subsequent chapters. For additional information on these issues, the reader is advised to follow the reading provided in the footnotes and other publications listed in the extensive bibliography at the end of this survey. The four opening chapters are followed by the four core chapters, dealing with the architectural material of Jaina temples from the north-west (Chapter Five), northern and eastern India (Chapter Six), the central region (Chapter Seven), and the south (Chapter Eight). If the emphasis of this enquiry had been

on the history and strictly chronological development of the Jaina religion, one would have started with a discussion of material from the east of India, the 'cradle of Jainism.'<sup>15</sup> As this analysis, however, deals primarily with the architectural evidence, it seemed more logical to start with the region of north-western India, which in the development of stylistic features associated with the Jaina temple has been and still is yielding a strong influence over many regions of the subcontinent. Without a knowledge of the Solañkī style and medieval developments in western India, many temple constructions of the sixteenth and later centuries, for example, in the east of India, cannot adequately be understood. Jainas who left Rajasthan and Gujarat and returned to the east from about the sixteenth century onwards, brought with them many of the aesthetic conventions and stylistic features characterised by western Indian principles of architecture.

The evidence presented in this central tranche of the study has almost exclusively been based on visual material collected during extensive fieldwork periods in the subcontinent between 1998 and 2006. The architectural chapters focus on the so far neglected aspect of space in the architecture of the Jaina temple. Footnotes, however, also refer to related studies on sculpture, architectural mouldings and paintings associated with Jaina temples. At the beginning of each of the four regional core chapters is a short introduction to the history of Jainism and the history of temple building in the specific area. This chronological approach is not maintained in the rest of the chapter, which is structured according to conceptual issues and themes relating to the layout and ever-increasing complexity of Jaina temple compounds. Temples mentioned in the brief historical and chronological part often get referred to again in the thematic sections later in the chapter.

The main aims were to demonstrate the distribution of Jaina temples throughout the subcontinent, to show that there is an unbroken tradition of Jaina temple construction still evolving and flourishing today, and to outline the unifying aspects and peculiarities of Jaina temple architecture throughout all periods and regions. This study does not aim at establishing a chronological order or linear history for Jaina temple constructions,<sup>16</sup> neither does it aim at establishing an encyclopaedia, both undoubtedly impossible endeavours. At the end of this detailed investigation is a concluding chapter, Chapter Nine; this provides a brief summary of the results, but in conclusion also opens up new avenues by looking at Jaina architecture in selected countries outside of the confined area of South Asia.

This study presents an original and novel approach to Jaina architectural material, and outlines entirely new concepts concerning the structuring of space in the Jaina temple. It provides information on an extensive number of sites and buildings which so far have not been mentioned and analysed in the available literature, and many of these are unknown even to Jainas outside the immediate region. In order to represent at least some of these little-known structures, this book is illustrated by almost one thousand colour illustrations. Of these photographs, all but five have been taken during fieldwork by the author, and have been submitted along with the theoretical text and two hundred drawings. As so little has been published so far, and so few of the sites mentioned here are known, there is a certain need for lists of temple names and sites in the text. Although such enumerations of structures can at times be somewhat tedious to read, it was felt that simply to describe new phenomena and concepts without providing hard evidence in the form of places and named temples, would not be satisfying and convincing to read. It is hoped that studying the following chapters, the reader will be able to share some of the wonder and enthusiasm which the author experienced on her travels and explorations into the unknown.

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15 For a discussion of the problems encountered when writing Jaina history, see Dundas (1992: 36, 191).

16 This has been attempted in the three-volume work edited by Ghosh. Although of great use to a student of Jaina art and architecture, even these three extensive volumes do not succeed in creating a complete picture. Too many examples of temples have been lost and the architectural record available to us today is very patchy. But even with regards to more easily available recent structures, this publication has many gaps. Although the final chapters of Ghosh's survey are intended to deal with material reaching up to the eighteenth century, hardly any structures dating from later than the sixteenth century are ever discussed by the authors dealing with individual regions.