# Jainism in Ancient Punjab

# Purshottam Jain/Ravindra Jain\*

India has been the birth-place of four major religions of the world: the Sramanic tradition has been the oldest and it has produced Jainism and Buddhism, the other two being Hinduism and Sikhism. Of these four, Jainism is the oldest religion as we find mentioned in ancient Indian literature. The name of Lord Rishabhdev, the first Tirathankara of the Jain faith, is found mentioned in the Puranic literature of Hinduism. Similarly, Buddhist scriptures also refer to the tradition of Lord Parshvanath as well as to Lord Mahavira who is written as Nigganth Naat Putta (lit. the son of Nat family of Nirgranth, an earlier nomenclature of Jain tradition).

### **Boundaries of Ancient Punjab:**

Let me state at the very beginning that the ancient Punjab was a much larger entity than the Punjab of today though it never had any permanently marked boundaries. In ancient times the region was known as Saptasindhu (lit. the land of seven rivers) as we find mentioned in the Vedas; thereafter it became known as Panch Nad (lit. land of five rivers); and during the Mughal times, it came to be called Punjab. Ancient Punjab included the entire Pakistan, Punjab, parts of Sindh, Jammu region of Kashmir, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and the Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh.

According to Digambar Jain sources, some parts of Punjab were known as Arath (Attock), Unnikar (Sherkot region in the Jhang district in Pakistan), Kamboj (Rajauri Rampur), Kuru (Thaneshwar, Hisar and Meerut district), Kekeya (territories between the river Beas and Satluj which included Shahpur, Gujrat and Jehlum districts), Balhik (the north-west areas beyond Sindh and between the Beas and Satluj), Sindh and Sovir. The territories beyond the Sindh, which had Veet-Bhayapattan, is these days known as Bhera.

We can divide as following the times of evolution and spread of the Jain faith:

Malerkotla, Punjab.

(i) The Tirathankara Era:

As history stands witness, the Jain Tirathankaras have been closely associated with the Punjab. The first Tirathankara Rishabhdev ended his year-long fast at Hastinapur at the hands of Prince Shreyansh Kumar. The grandson of Rishabhdev and son of Bahubali, Bahubali, had Texila as his capital. The holy place Hastinapur is also famous as the birth-place of Lord Shantinath, Lord Kunthunath, Lord Arahanath.

Among them, Lord Mahavira visited Punjab several times; during his first visit, he stayed at Thuna (Thaneshwar). Having received Kevaljnana or Spiritual Enlightenment, he traveled, on the request of King Udayan, long distance of two thousand miles and reached Veet-Bhayapattan, the capital of Sindh-Sovir passing through the Maru Desh (the modern-day Rajasthan). He initiated the royal family and many among the masses into the Jain faith. During his third preaching visit, he reached Rohtak (in modern-day Haryana). According to local legends, he is also believed to have visited Shwaitambika, the capital of Ardhakekay (now known as Sankal or Sialkot). Thus, during the times of Tirathankaras and their immediate disciples, Jainism had become an important religion of north-west India: the situation remained so up to the 8th century.

(ii) Preaching through Jain Kings:

All the 24 Tirathankaras of the Jain faith belonged to royal families. That is why numerous kings and queens, princes and princesses got initiated into the faith and contributed towards its spread. In this regard, the oldest extant reference is found in an inscription in the Khandgiri cave and Udyagiri (Orissa): the reference is about King Kharavela who conquered the Uttarapath region between Mathura and Kandhar in the second BC.Except Ashoka, all kings of the Maurya dynasty were Jain by faith. Chandragupta Maurya received, during the last years of his life, initiation at the hands of Acharya Bhadrabahu. King Samprati is known as Ashoka of the Jain faith as he did a lot in preaching Jainism far and wide. After the Maurya and Gupta eras, Jainism had to pass through a difficult time. Its areas of influence now shifted to Rajasthan and south India. One major reason was political upheaval and invasions from the north-west.

Raj Tarangini, the author of famous book Kalhan, refers to the state of Jainism in Kashmir and Kandhar areas. He has given the names of many kings among whom one is that of Ashoka who lived before the Mauryas. He was the great-grandson of King Jainism in Ancient Punjab Jajalsin who had declared Jainism a state religion within his shakuni He founded the city of Srinagar as his capital and he also kingdom. Jain temples erected throughout his territorian kingdom. Jain temples erected throughout his territories. Another of Kashmir, Lalitaditya, also made significant contains got many of Kashmir, Lalitaditya, also made significant contribution to king of Jainism. the spread of Jainism.

King Kumar Pal (c. 11th-12th century) of Solanki dynasty was the disciple of Kalikalsarvagaya Acharya Hemchandra, the royal the discipler and renowned Jain scholar. According to one tradition, preceptor 1440 temples built and got 1600 temples repaired. His he got included Sindh, Sovir, Supad Laksh (Katasraj), Uchanagar (Kandhar), Jalandhar, Kashmir, Kangra (Trigartadesh) and Himachal (Kanulas) and Filmachal pradesh territories. He also declared Jainism state religion within his kingdom.

Muni Jin Vijay discovered a volume, titled Vigiapati Triveni. wherein there are considerable details of the spread of Jain faith in Punjab. In Samvat 1484, five disciples of Acharya Jin Bhadra - Jai Sagar, Megh Raj Gani, Satya Ruchi, Mati Sheel and Hem Kunjar visited various holy places of Jainism in Sindh and Punjab. Here we also find a reference to the Jain idols installed in the fort of Kangra.

Vastu Pal and Tej Pal, both of them being real brothers and ministers, also got many Jain temples constructed throughout the country during Samvat 1275-1303. References to temples in Punjab are also found herein.

# Some Sects which preached through Punjab:

Yati tradition has been the most important for the spread of Jainism in Punjab. The munis belonging to this tradition lived in monasteries and, during the Muslim rule, looked after and preserved the Jain literature, temples and idols. They donned the robes of ascetics and preached the faith through astrology and medical help. Jiva rishi was one among the more important in the Yati tradition. Megh Muni and Gang Yati of Phagwara have been famous scholars of Ayurvedic literature.

### Important Centres of Yatis:

Some of the important centres of the Yati tradition were at Lahore, Samana, Multan, Pinjour, Rohtak, Hansi, Hisar, Asthal Bhohal, Jind, Narnor, Ranilla, Delhi, Kurukshetra, Sunam, Sirsa, Patiala, Malerkotla, Ludhiana, Bhatinda, Patti etc.

### Kharter Gaccha:

The Acharyas of Kharter Gaccha were among the important preachers of Jain faith: they preached Jainism in the Punjab and Sindh area. Acharya Jinchand Suri, a disciple of Acharya Jineshwar Suri, initiated King Ananga Pal (Madan Pal) of Delhi in AD 1169. Acharya Jinkushal Suri also belonged to this tradition and he is believed to have possessed miraculous powers and he composed several books on different aspects of Jainism. Acharya Jin Dutt Suri initiated Abhey Singh of Punjab, who owned about 1000 villages, into the Jain faith. Acharya Jinchandra initiated Gosal Singh Bhati, the king of Sindh, into the faith along with 1500 other families. Another Acharya, by the name of Jin Chand Suri, of the Gaccha tradition had a deep influence on Emperor Akbar: on Phagun sudi 12, Samvat 1648, he and 31 other munis were present in Akbar's court and influenced him. The Emperor sought his blessings at the time of conquering Kashmir. The Acharya also had a royal decree issued against hunting at places of Jain pilgrimage. This Gaccha has produced many writers, pilgrims and social reformers.

Tapa Gaccha:

This Gaccha had very cordial relations with the Mughal emperors. Babar had himself honored a nun, Anand Meru by name, of this tradition. Humayun had bestowed honor on Muni Padam Sundar. The name of Acharya Hir Vijay of this Gaccha is found mentioned in the Ain-a-Akbari (Part II) and he had met the emperor, in Samvat 1639 at Fatehpur Sikari, along with 67 of his disciples. He also spent a chaumasa (four month period) in Lahore. On a request from Emperor Akbar, he left his disciple, Shanti Chandra, in Punjab for the preaching of religion. On another request of Akbar, he deputed Acharya Vijay Sen Suri to Lahore.

This Gaccha came into existence after the Kharter Gachchha. The first person to seek initiation in this tradition was Muni Buddhi Vijay who first got initiated into the Sthanakvasi tradition. It was thereafter that he came into this Gaccha and got the new name of Buddhi Vijay. He belonged to a Jat family. After him, Acharya Atma Ram alias Acharya Vijay Nand Suri, a Kapoor Khatri, was another renowned name in this tradition. His father was employed in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He came under the influence of Jain munis at a very young age and got initiated at the hands of Muni Jiwan Lal at Malerkotla. During the few years he remained in the Sthanakvasi tradition, he studied various Agams and their exegetical studies. It was during this study that he found idol worship being a part of Jain religion ever since ancient times. He along with his 21 companion ascetics received initiation from Muni Buddhi Vijay

at Palitana. He preached idol worship at the time when every other preacher, especial Swami Dayanand was condemning it. He accepted every challenge from the Arya Samaj and participated in various scholarly polemical debates with the Arya Samajists. One such debate was to be between him and Swami Dayanand at Ajmer, but unfortunately the latter passed away before he could reach Ajmer. He authored about 16 books. He was a known poet and social reformer. He got Jain temples built in almost all Punjab cities and towns. His disciple from Gujrat, Acharya Vijay Vallabh, was also a known patriot and educationist. He set up a chain of colleges, schools, orphanages and hospitals.

Muni Panyas Jai Vijay, Acharya Samudra Vijay, Acharya Vijay Indra Suri and Acharya Ratankar Suri in the past and Acharya Nityanand, Acharya Dharam Dhurandhar Vijay and Acharya Jainand Vijay, these days are renowned names in this Gaccha. Acharya Nityanand has got many institutions set up which include temples, colleges and hospitals. He is a great author and preacher.

## Loka Gaccha and Sthanakvasi Tradition:

In India, 14th and 15th century was the period when there was a strong movement against idol worship. It was also around that time the Loka Shah (1475-1482) was born in the Jain tradition. We do not have much biographical information available about him, but whatever little is available is the work of his opponents. Loka Shah was also against idol worship and he had no faith in pilgrimages and other religious rituals and rites. He initiated 45 persons into the tradition through his preaching. This figure reached 1120 during his lifetime. However, his opposition to idol worship did not go on for long and his disciples joined the Yati tradition. Even today we find some temples built under the inspiration of Loka Shah's disciples who came to Lahore in Samvat 1560. That is why their branch came to be known as Uttrardh Loka Gaccha.

The tradition of Three Munis is also quite popular in Punjab. In this tradition, the first name is that of Acharya Rati Ram who belonged to Marwar and he had great influence over the Nawab of Malerkotla, Sube Khan alias Munir Khan. In this tradition, the more popular among the writers has been Muni Nandlal who was originally a Kashmiri Brahmin. However, his disciple Muni Roop Chand became known as highly enlightened possessing many miraculous powers. It has also been in this tradition that Acharya Sushil Muni, who preached Jainism throughout the world, was born.

The second tradition is that of Acharya Ganga Ram. In this tradition were born several writers and poets such as Up-parartak Chandan Muni Punjbi who wrote in Punjabi as well as in Hindi.

The third tradition is related to respectable Acharya Amar Singh. The more important persons in this tradition were Acharyas Bajrang ji, Loveji Rishi, Somji Rishi, Hari Dasji, Brishbhanji, Bhawani Dasji, Maluk Chandji, Mansa Ramji, Bhoj Rajji, Mahan Singhji, Khushal Chandji, Chhajj Malji, Ram Lalji, Amar Singhji, Ram Bakhshji, Moti Ramji, Sohan Lalji, Kashi Ramji, Atma Ramji, Nand Rishiji, Davinder Muniji, and the present Shiv Muniji. In this tradition, a special mention needs to be made of Acharya Atma Ram who prepared detailed exegesis, in Hindi, of the Jain Agams. Among the more prominent sadhus of this tradition can be named the disciples of Maya Ramji who himself came from a Jat family of Haryana. Under his influence many persons especially from the socalled low castes became sadhus.

#### in Jainism: Various Sects

Soon after the passing away of Lord Mahavira, Jainism was divided into two major sects - Shvetambar and Digambar. Shvetambar sect is further divided into three sub-sects - Idol worshippers; Sthanakvasi; and Tera Panthi.

The idol worshippers believe in worshipping idols, going on pilgrimages and believe in 45 Agams. On the other hand, the other two sub-sects believe only in 32 Agams.

The Digambars are also sub-divided into various groups, among them Tera Panthi and Bis Panthi being more important. Apart from some minor variations in beliefs, they agree on all major doctrines. The Digambars do not consider authentic the Agams believed in by the Shvetambars. They believe that the original Agams have been destroyed for ever whereas the Shvetambars believe that some part of the Agams is still extant.

The Digambars have faith in the texts authored by their Acharyas, among whom the name of Acharya Kundkund is more famous. Jainism has ever been against believing in caste system, untouchability, and animal sacrifice. That is why people of almost all castes and classes have been part of it. The people of Aggrawal sub-caste, an important sub-caste in the Punjab, are dominant among the Digambars. They are believers in Vedic as well as Jainism side by side. The Aggrawal sub-caste originated at Agroha, near Hissar, in modem- day Haryana: old debris of the town can still be found.

Maharaja Aggrasen of the Mahabharat era was the originator of this sub-caste. He himself opposed sacrificial ceremonies. It was in Samvat 217 that Raja Diwakar, in the dynasty of Aggrasen, accepted Jainism under the inspiration of Acharya Lohita. The Kashtha Sangh of the Digambar sect also originated at Agroha because it was here that Acharya Lohita had installed a wooden idol. The Bachan Kosh, authored by Malaki Chand in 1680 Samvat, provides details about the life of Acharya Lohita. During the Mughal period, Raja Masud got many buildings in Hissar erected with the material taken from the ancient temples of Agroha. References to Agroha town have also been made by a sadhu-poet:

Marriages and such other ceremonies in the families of most of the people of the Aggrawal sub-caste are still performed according to Brahmanic rituals because there is no mention of any such ceremonies.

Nattal Shah of Delhi also got a huge temple of Rishabhdev constructed close to the Qutab Minar. Some material of this temple was also used in the construction of buildings within this Minar.

Jai Tomar Pasanahchariyu (Samvat 1354) refers to the molestation and destruction caused by Ferozeshah Tughlak at Agroha. Todar Mal, one of the nine gems of Emperor Akbar, also authored several books. Ranvir Singh got many temples erected in Saharanpur and Delhi. In the fifteenth century, the Aggrawals spread up to Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh, and they created many idols in the fort of Gwalior. During the Mughal period, Raja Harmukh got many temples built in Punjab and Haryana. Naval Ratan Chand wrote his Vardhman Puran in Samvat 1651.

The earliest reference to the work of preaching by the Digambars is extant in the form of an inscription at Velvul (Karnataka): herein Acharya Samant Bhadra refers to his victory in some polemical discussion at Patliputra and thereafter visited Malwa, Sindh and other regions. In the 10th century Vikrami, a sadhu of Ghandhar Kirti preached in the Hissar region. At the time of Muhammad Tughlak, Dhanval preached throughout the Delhi and Haryana territories: it was also through his persuasion that the Mughal king decreed that Jain temples should not be demolished.

Thus, there have been several scholars from the Aggrawal subcaste in the Digambar sect. Several among this sub-caste belong to the Sthanakvasi and Tera Panthi traditions. These persons are mostly engaged in business and trade. Among the Aggrawal scholars who have served Jainism been Gyan Muniji, Pandit Ratan Hem Chandji, The authors of this article also belong to this sub-caste.

## Oswals in Jainism:

The Oswals trace their origin to village Osia in the Jodhpur district of Rajasthan where Acharya Ratan Prabhav Suri initiated the entire village into the Jain faith: these people came from different castes and professions. In the beginning, this caste and 18 gotra, but several of them are profession specific. From Rajasthan, these people spread towards Sindh and east Punjab. They are predominantly Svetambars, with most of their customs and rituals having Rajasthani flavor whereas those of the Aggrawals are more Punjabi. Among the more renowned persons coming from this caste mentioned needs to be made of Poet Harjas Rai Kasur, Shanti Lal Nahar Hoshiarpur, Pandit Hira Lal Duggar, Shri Mohinder Kumar Jain Panchkula (Mast), Jagannath Nahar, Prof Prithivi Raj Jain who made their mark in the spread of Jain faith.

# Tera Panthis among the Shwetambars:

The founder of the Tera Panthi sub-sect among the Shwetambars was Acharya Bhikshu Swami who had taken initiation from Sthanakvasi Acharya Raghunath. Consequent upon some differences, he set up his own group along with his 13 companions. Acharya Bhikshu prescribed a code prescribing that all sadhus and sadhvis will henceforth be disciples of the Acharya and that they will preach religion only after seeking permission from him. In the earlier day, they preached in the Hansi and Hissar regions of Haryana. In 1947 CE/AD, the year India saw unprecedented riots at the time of partition of the country, Muni Amolak Chand of this sub-group planned his chaturmas at Lahore which could not be completed. In 1949, Acharya Tulsi started his Anuvrat movement and came over to Punjab. Thereafter many Tera Panthi sadhus started visiting Punjab. In the preaching of Tera Panthi ideology, Muni Dhan Raj, Chandan Muni, Muni Nag Raj, Sri Jai Chand, Vardhamanji, Rawat Mal ji are some of the more important names. Then Acharya Mahaprajna; traveled through various villages and towns of Punjab and spread the Tera Panthi ideology. At Present Maha Shramana is the Acharya.

#### Sadhvi Tradition:

In the Sthanakvasi tradition in Punjab, names of Sadhvi Bagata (Samvat 1750), Sadhvi Sita (1757), Sadhvi Khema (1800), Sadhvi Phulan (1877) and Sadhvi Gyana are well known. In the modern times in the Sthanakvasi tradition is the family of Sadhvi Parvati who was also the first writer in Hindi in the field of Jain literature. Her prominent disciple, Sadhvi Rajmati, had her own large family which included Sadhvi Sri 'Swarn Kanta, Sadhvi Sri Rajeshwari, Sadhvi Subhash. Sadhvi Jagdhish Mati, Sadhvi Sita and Sadhvi Kailashvati had done a lot in the field of preaching Jainism.

In the idol worshipping sect the names of Sadhvi Dev Sri, Sadhvi Sri Mrigavati, Sadhvi Sri Jaswant Sri, Sadhvi Sri Nirmala Sri, and Sadhvi Sri Parguna Sri were more important. In a few days Sadhvi Parguna Shri is visiting Punjab.

**Important Jain Patriots and Donors:** 

There have been several known patriots among the Jainas, Among them the most important name is of Diwan Todar Mall who is said to have purchased, for the cremation of the mother and two young sons of the tenth Guru of the Sikh faith, Guru Govind Singh, a piece of land by placing gold coins on it. Seth Hukam Chand Jain of Hansi had helped the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, in his fight against the British imperial rule: he along with his nephew was, as a result of this, hanged in front of his house (Now Jain Sathanak) by the British rulers. Other important Jains who took part in the independence movement of India include Sri Sant Ram, Sri Tej Chand, Sri Amar Chand, Sri Munshi Ram, Sri Meli Ram, Sri Sham Lal Advocate, Mrs Lekhawati, Mrs Om Prabha and Babu Suraj Bhan.

Among the donors some of the more renowned names are Lala Ramji Das, Seth Nauharia Mall, Seth Vidya Sagar Oswal, Seth Lachhaman Das Oswal, Seth Bhoj Raj, Seth Nath Ram Tundran, Lala Jagan Nath and others. Under the inspiration of the know educationist, Muni Chandji, they have set up numerous schools, colleges and hospitals. Devaki Devi, Sushila Devi and Leela Jain are some of more important names among Jain women donors.

In modern times, Jain Acharya Vimal Muni ji has made huge efforts in the preaching of Jainism in countries abroad by opening educational centers. He also set up Adeshwar Dham (Kup Kalan, Malerkotla) and many more religious and educational centers at Jagraon, Pathankot (Punjab), Udhampur, Ranbirsinghpura, Jalandhar and Jammu (Jammu and Kashmir).

### Some Jain Archaeological Centers:

It is always important to learn about a tradition through its archaeological centers. Quite significant material information has

become available about Jain faith at Hastinapur, Delhi, Hissar, Hansi, Kalyan, Ranilla, Dholwaha, Bhatinda, Samana, Sunam, Malerkotla, Sirhand, Pinjore, Jind, Narnaul, Asthalbahul (Rohtak), Baijnath Paproula, Deravar (Sind), Lahore, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Kangra, Taxila and several more places. These artifacts have been exhibited at various different museums.

#### Conclusion:

This article 'Jainism in Ancient Punjab' comprises the authentic source of study material. First of all, it tells us about the boundaries of ancient Punjab which were covering much larger area than today's Punjab. This article also tries to tell about the relation of first Tirthankar Rishabhdev and last Tirthankar Mahavira with the land of Punjab. During the time of many kings, the influence of the teachings of Jain religious teachers can be easily seen in the daily practices of the life of the people. The article depicts the names of those kings who disseminated the teaching of Jain religion. The contribution of the different Jaina sects to promote Jain religion in ancient Punjab has been highlighted in this article. Afterward the contribution of the Loka Gaccha and Sthanakvasi tradition has also been shown because both the traditions are prevalent even in the present-day Punjab. Some of the important names of the Munis and Acharyas have been mentioned with great honor to show their contribution to Punjab, because until their names are taken the description regarding the Jain religion in Punjab remains incomplete. To prove the authenticity of the article the archeological evidences, Pattavalis and original texts have also been used.

As of now, various Jain sadhus and sadhvis are doing their best to revive the pristine glory of Jainism in the region by preaching throughout the length and breadth of the state. In this context, special reference needs to be made to Acharya Sushil Muni and Acharya Vimal Muni. They tried to look at Jainism in the modern context and favoured the use of transportation for the sadhus and sadhvis so that they could take the message of Tirathankaras to the world at large. Acharya Sushil Muni also set up several centres in different countries which are playing a very important role in preaching the Jaina teachings.

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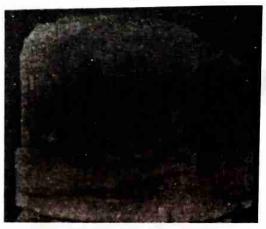
Lord Mahavira, 8-9th Century AD Khijrabad, Punjab



Tirthankara, 7-8th Century AD Hosiharpur, Punjab



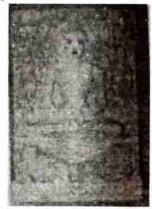
Beheaded Idol of Tirthankara, 9th Century AD Kuruksketra, Punjab



Lord Rishabh Dev, 9th Century AD Punjab



Lord Rishabh Dev



Lord Rishabh Dev (Jind) 9th Century AD, Punjab



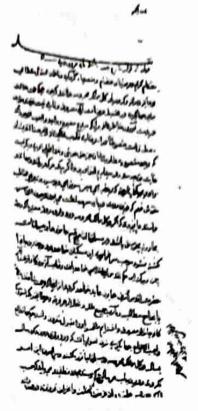
Lord Neminath, 11th-12th Century AD, Punjab

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Edict issued for the sake of Acharya Vijai Sen Suri (Suri Savai). Allahu Akbar. Abulmujaffar Sultan Akbar's Order. The copy of the excellent edict with the seal impression of Allah hu Akbar.



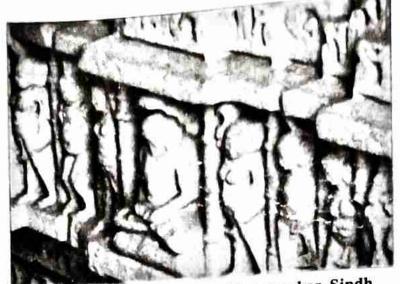
Samadhi of Hajrat Baba (Pir) Khajanchi Sarkar, Bhavda, Pasroor



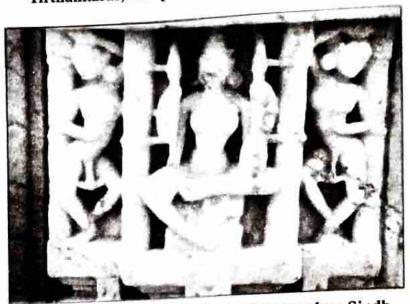
Edict by Badshah Jahangir. A copy of the edict according to bond 26 ferverdin Sun 5



Samadhi of Munishri Khajanchandji, Bhavda, Pasroor; now known as Hajrat Baba (Pir) Khajanchi Sarkar,



Tirthankaras, Temple wall, Nagarparkar, Sindh



Mata Sashan Devi Ka Gokhala, Nagarparkar, Sindh



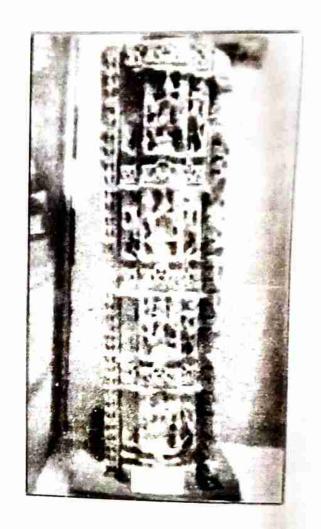
Jain Muni Atmaram Memorial Tomb at Gujaranwala



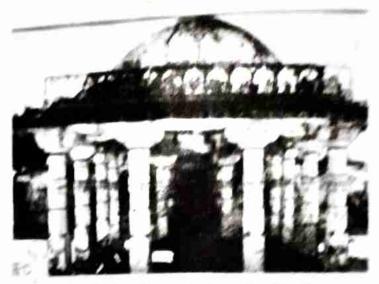
Jain Muni Atmaram Memorial Tomb Inscription, Gujaranwala



Digambar Jain Temple, Multan



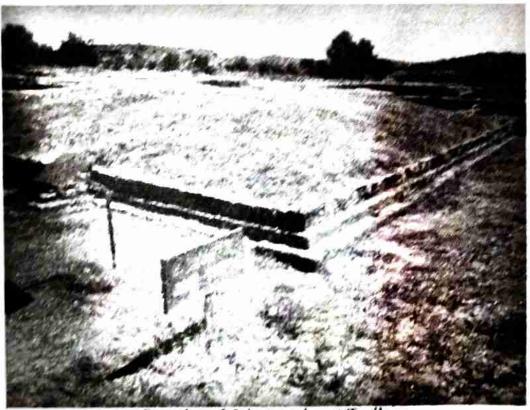
Decoarated Pillar, Jain Temple, Marot, Bahawalpur Museum



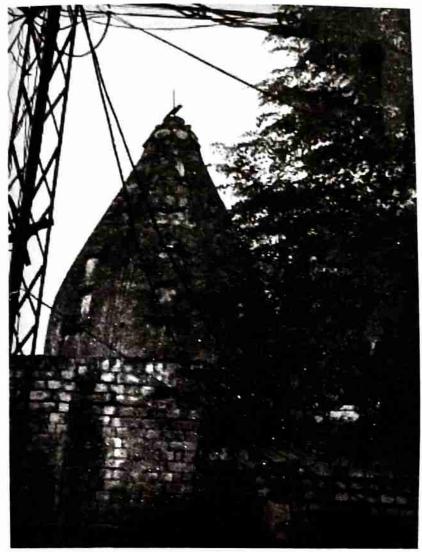
Godi Parshvanath Temple, Sindh



Artistic Dancing Girl, Bahawalpur Museum



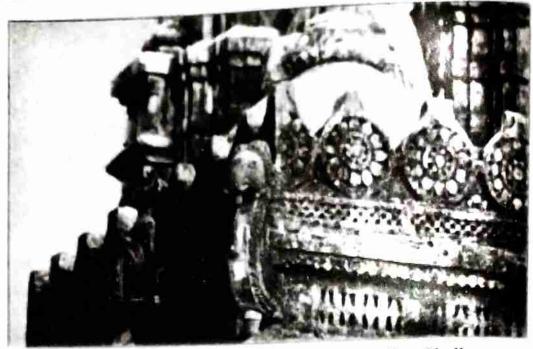
Remains of Jain temples at Taxila



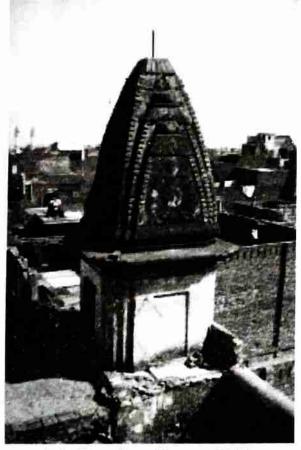
Digambar Jain Temple at Rawalpindi



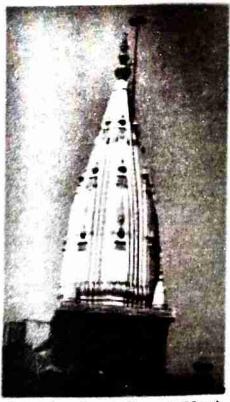
A Temple, Nagarparkar, Sindh



Side View (Close up) of a Temple, Nagarparkar, Sindh



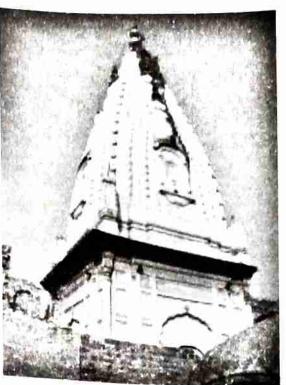
Jain Temple at Kasoor (Old)



Jain Temple at Kasoor (New)



Remains of Jain temples at Berawah



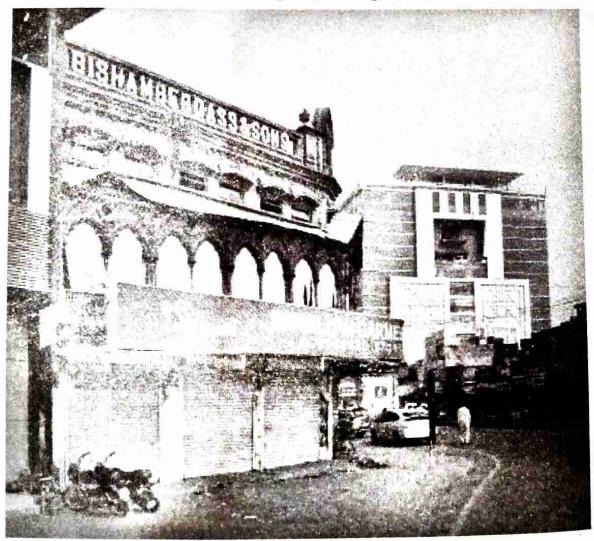
Remains of Jain temples at Berawah



Dadawari of Jinkushal Suri



Sri Chintamani Parshvanath Jain Svetambar Temple at Nava Kasoornagar (Ramnagar)



Remains of Digambar Jain Temple, Siyalkot Cant

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Editor Prof. (Dr.) Rishabha Chandra Jain



Research Institute of Prakrit Jainology & Ahimsa, Vaishali Basokund, Muzaffarpur (Bihar) · 844128, India