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The Jain History, Art and Architecture in Pakistan: A Fresh Light¹

Abstract

This paper attempts to understand the history, art and architecture of Jains in Pakistan with the new perspective. Among ancient religions of Indian Subcontinent, Jainism is the only one that remained a practicing religion in Pakistan till the country gained independence in 1947. Historical records clearly mention presence of jain community in major cities of Pakistan. Archaeological data consisting of jain temples, community halls and other shrines also throws light on the contribution of jains in the socio-religious, cultural, architectural and artistic activities of the country. Researches related to Indus Valley, Gandhara, Islamic and Hindu art and architecture have overshadowed the study of jain archaeology. Purpose of the present paper is to share what we intend to do regarding the study of Jainism in Pakistan. No major work has been done for the systematic exploration, identification and documentation of the jain built heritage of Pakistan. The Department of Archaeology, University of the Punjab is taking this initiative for the first time to make detailed study of history of Jainism, its rise and decline. The study would highlight glory of the religion and contributions of its followers in social, cultural, economic, artistic and architectural fields. Comparative and analytical study of the jain archaeology would also be made keeping in view variety of the jain building traditions. Awareness among research scholars and local community would also be given to play their role for the preservation of Jain heritage scattered in different parts of Punjab as well as of Sindh province. Moreover, suggestions and expertise would also be offered to preserve and conserve what we have of Jainism in Pakistan.

Keywords:Jain, Jainism in Pakistan, Jain Archaeology, Jain Heritage, Temple, Jain Art

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Introduction

Previous scholarship about tangible and intangible heritage studies in Pakistan has widened our understanding about different groups of people who settled here. We have examples from Stone Age culture which we usually term as “Pre-Historic Period”, followed by Proto Historic period in the form of Indus Valley Civilization. Historic Period of present-day Pakistan is also very rich starting from Vedic times up to colonial period. Some of the important invasions and foreign dynasties such as Achaemenians, Greeks, Scythians, Parthians, Kushan made political history more vibrant. Revival of Hinduism which later on eclipsed by dominant and everlasting Muslim rule and short span of Sikh and British period of the country has been very well documented regarding their historical, social, religious, artistic and architectural contributions.² In this wider perspective there exists a considerable gap and a missing link in the form of study of Jainism. No Serious Study has yet been taken except a “Pilot Project” carried out by Peter Flugel and Muzaffar Ahmad, a preliminary account of which was published last year³. In addition to this⁴ has written about Jain temples in Pakistan.

Jainism is an ancient [Indian religion](#) that is historically contemporary to Buddhism, and no less important than the later. Jains trace their history through a succession of twenty-four victorious teachers known as [tirthankaras](#), with the last being [Mahavira](#) (500 BCE).

Just like Hinduism, origin of Jainism is shrouded in mystery. In this context different scholars of different religious movements have different views. Jain scholars and followers, considering naked tradition, believe Jainism to be the oldest religion of the world. Specifically, to Indian Subcontinent, they are of the opinion that Jainism has its roots in Indus Valley Civilization. However, historical and archaeological evidences of this opinion are yet to be presented to convince other groups of scholars.

Historical records in the form of religious text and archaeological evidences do lead us to believe that more than one religious movements were active during Sixth century B.C.E, in ancient India. Among these, the philosophy introduced by *Mahavira* also went close the hearts of community and they started embracing it. The philosophy developed into religion and came to be known as Jainism. Beside historical evidences, the first archaeological remains of the religion in Pakistan, are associated with a site known as *Sirkap*, in Taxila, dated second century B.C.E. A later part of this ancient phase of Jain presence in Pakistan can be seen in *Murti*, district Chakwal, from where the transferrable remains have been shifted to Lahore Museum.

Then we have second major phase falling between eighth to twelfth century B.C.E. During this period, Jainism found a new place in the country in the area of Tharparkar, Sindh. Based upon the rich heritage in the form of Jain temples, it can be suggested that during the medieval period, Jainism enjoyed highest status and proper Jain community lived that for centuries. In the next phase of the development of Jainism (from Mughals to British Period), in ancient India, (specifically talking about present day Pakistan), we have sufficient historical evidences of the presence of Jain community in different cities of the country. Furthermore, numerous Jain temples, community halls, houses which once

belonged to jains are still surviving in many cities of Punjab and Sindh. These abandoned settlements in the form of very important archaeological remains throw light on various aspects of the jain community living here till 1947.

Early Muslim, Sultanate and Mughal periods show Jainactivity, predominately in Tharparkar district Sindh where it still has a few followers today. Some Jain presence is notable during the Mughal rule in Lahore, Sialkot, Gujranwala, and Multan.

At the time of the Sikh expansion individual Jains played important economic and political roles. And significant mercantile communities established themselves in the Punjab, mainly dealing in cloth, grains, general merchandise, jewelry, and banking. New settlements emerged alongside the trade routes in Sindh and in the Punjab in British period. Before Partition, the Jaincommunity was less than one percent of the total population in areas which were included into Pakistan. At the eve of partition almost the entire Jain population migrated to India, except for a few households in Nagarparkar.

A preliminary study⁵ has identified Jain Temples in Jhelum, Narowal, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Pipnakh, Rasalnagar, Kasur, Bhera, Multan, KhanqahDogran, Lahore, D.G. Khan, Virawah, Nagarparkar, Bhodesar and Karachi. Artefacts from these temples have been transferred to Lahore Museum and Umerkot Museum.

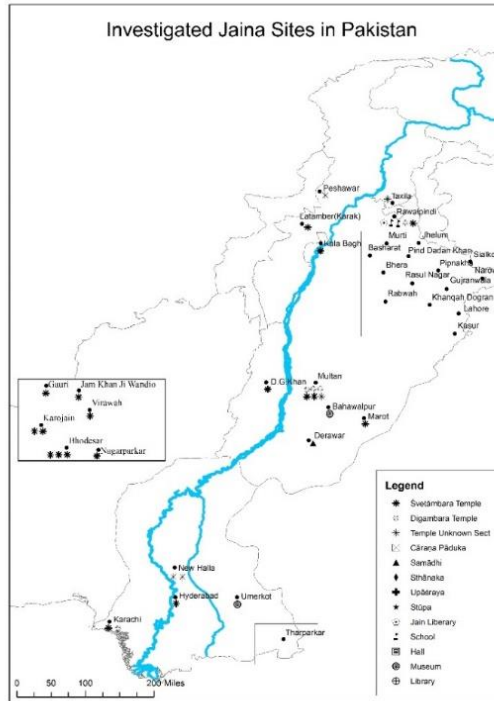


Figure 1: Map of the Jain Sites in Pakistan (Flugel and Ahmad 2018)

Jain built heritage presents elaborate architectural and artistic work, scattered all over Pakistan. Only the Jain heritage Nagarparkar, Sindh has been documented.⁶ Other than that, no thorough work on the documentation of Jain heritage, demography and history in Pakistan has been done so far. Research work on this ignored chapter of our history can result in filling in some of the gaps we currently find in our history.

Significance or Importance

As far as significance of the present research is concerned, this would be useful to fill the missing link in the history of built heritage of Pakistan where we hardly find role of Jainism. This can be achieved by documenting structural and decorative details of the Jain religious buildings, comparing and critically analyzing them with regional and contemporary temples of the sub-continent. The comprehensive analysis would not only widen our scope of understanding complete range of architectural tradition of the area but also help to specify indigenous and borrowed element in Jain art and architecture. Our preliminary studies of Jain temples in Pakistan has revealed that during construction of these edifices, no strict rules were followed as far as building scheme is concerned. Temples built, in territorial limits of present-day Pakistan, either during medieval or later period, show definite impact of non-Jain elements particularly Hindus. Several Hindu deities are to be seen on the Jain temples of Nagarparkar, Sindh. Moreover, Jain temples in Punjab represent influence of Muslim and Sikh architectural traditions. More extensive study of Jain heritage of Pakistan shall be made in near future in order to highlight genesis of Jain art and architecture.

We intend to document the history of Jainism in Pakistan and then study the artistic and architectural details of its built heritage. Hence, department of archaeology, University of the Punjab can play key role in documentation, analytical studies and ultimately the conservation of the Jain Heritage in Pakistan. In future, after international collaborations with Jain Institutes and personnel, our department can establish “Center for Jain Studies”, the first of its kind in Pakistan.

In this connection department has planned study of Jainism at different levels and from various source. First step to get information from archival records. The demographic study would enable us to get an idea of the number of Jains lived in Pakistan including the time period and time frame. Maximum information would be collected about gender of the community, how many Males? How many females? How many Children? And in which cities and states of present-day Pakistan. This shall also help us to establish data about their total number of population whether increased or decreased. Furthermore, the study would also help us in determining social, religious, economic, artistic and educational contributions of the Jain community living in Pakistan.

Basic source of the research at this stage is the information given in census of Pre-partition period. At first data specific data of the Jain community living in various cities of Punjab has been collected. Following details has been prepared as case study from 1911 Census⁷.

Towns Arranged Territorially

Table I. Jain Population in Punjab

Town	District	Population			Jain	
		Persons	Males	Females	Males	Females
Lahore and Cantonment	Lahore	228,687	143,240	85,430	283	184
Multan and Cantt	Multan	99,243	56,280	42,063	188	200
Rawalpindi and Cantt	Rawalpindi	86,483	57,451	20,032	524	439
Sialkot and Cantonment	Sialkot	84,860	58,130	26,730	708	602
Gujranwala	Gujranwala	29,472	16,271	13,201	895	318
Jhang	Jhang	25,014	13,212	12,702	4	...
Kasur	Lahore	24,783	18,769	11,014	88	81

Table II. Population by Religion (Jains)

Province	Persons	Males	Females
Punjab	39,637	21,319	18,318
Punjab States	7,188	3,916	3,177

Table III. Age, Sex and Civil Condition of Jains in Punjab

Age and Religion	Population			Unmarried		Married		Widowed	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Jain Total	1,248,182	643,553	604,629	317,197	181,705	268,938	269,627	57,418	153,297
0-1	39,663	19,944	19,719	19,719	19,623	52	81	5	15
1-2	18,537	8,966	9,571	8,902	9,485	43	81	21	5
2-3	32,530	16,096	16,434	15,870	16,289	88	178	38	17
3-4	31,747	15,632	16,115	15,473	15,848	113	247	46	20
4-5	29,051	14,678	14,373	14,491	13,977	129	361	58	30
Total 0-5	151,528/564	75,316	76,212	74,723	75,179	425	948	168	92

5-10	142,186	72,098	70,088	70,851	65,314	1,094	4,513	153	261
10-15	125,354	69,129	56,225	63,160	34,483	5,616	20,836	353	906
15-20	108,125	58,976	49,149	39,595	3,708	18,608	42,735	773	2,706
20-25	122,530	62,310	60,220	25,718	994	34,446	51,882	2,146	7,344
25-30	116,480	61,068	55,412	15,205	536	42,175	43,564	3,598	11,312
30-35	107,173	54,509	52,664	9,058	439	40,542	36,176	4,991	16,040
35-40	79,181	42,772	36,409	5,069	251	32,616	22,397	5,087	13,761
40-45	86,850	42,376	44,474	4,774	279	30,409	20,928	7,193	28,267
45-50	52,377	28,800	23,577	2,775	131	19,880	9,891	8,145	13,649
50-55	65,257	31,933	33,324	3,031	159	19,751	8,882	9,151	24,283
55-60	26,217	14,519	11,698	1,048	61	8,618	2,960	4,353	8,677
60-65	37,697	16,745	20,952	1,268	84	8,769	2,677	6,708	18,101
65-70	11,308	5,969	5,339	411	38	3,019	649	2,539	4,652
70 and over	15,919	7,033	8,886	423	56	2,970	583	3,640	8,247

Table IV. Education of Jains

Age	Total			Literate			Illiterate			Literate in English		
	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F
Jain Total	1,248,182	643,553	604,629	342,705	318,585	24,120	905,477	324,968	580,509	13,239	13,030	20,909
0-10	293,714	147,414	146,300	10,852	8,610	2,242	282,862	138,804	144,058	69	54	15
10-15	125,354	69,129	56,225	36,323	31,643	4,680	89,031	37,486	51,545	1,612	1,573	39
15-20	108,125	58,976	49,149	41,437	97,622	3,815	66,688	21,354	45,334	2,939	2,901	38
20 and over	720,989	368,034	352,955	254,093	240,710	13,888	466,896	127,324	339,572	8,619	8,502	11,707

From the above-mentioned information, scope of the work is being expanded as per the same formula. Following Censuses shall be studied one by one:

- 1881
- 1891
- 1901
- 1911
- 1921

- 1931
- 1941
- 1951

Once the data is collected of the Jain community living in Pakistan, based upon the Study of Jains, exploration, identification and comprehensive documentation of the

Jain settlements shall be made first in the province of Punjab and later on in Sindh. Moreover, main centers of the Jains shall be identified and studied in terms of tangible heritage. Identification of Jain Heritage which includes locations and whereabouts of Jain religious and Secular Buildings is one of the key elements of this research being carried out by the Department of Archaeology, University of the Punjab.

Courses and Research Work Related to Jainism

We do have subjects like Ancient Religions of South Asia, focusing on Buddhism, Hinduism and also part of Jainism. Since the knowledge about Jain religion and community is limited, we are working to design detailed courses in order to provide base line knowledge to our students and scholars. Once they are familiar with it, the level of understanding can be advanced to next level and they will be offered research topics. In this connection, initial step has been taken by my department and for the first time, five research scholars of the department of Archaeology have been assigned dissertation topics related to various aspects of the study of Jainism in Pakistan.

Jain Architecture in Pakistan

Jain buildings and their architecture in Pakistan is yet to be studied. At departmental level regular field visits are planned to visit Jain heritage and monuments located in different parts of the country. Visiting of the sites after exploration is followed by detailed documentation. A separate data base of the monuments is being prepared which will allow us to study salient features of the architectural tradition either introduced or adopted by the Jain community of Pakistan. For comprehensive study of the Jain architecture, following objects shall be achieved after completing visit of all Jain temples, community centers and other buildings:

- To prepare photographic database of the Jain heritage which includes scaled photography, including Aerial photography
- To prepare drawings of their buildings, Section, elevations, measurements etc.
- To understand style, scheme, rules and regulations of Jain architecture in Pakistan.
- To determine influence of and influence on Jain heritage.
- Establish Chronology of Jain Temples of Pakistan

The study of Jain architecture in Pakistan is useful not only for understanding Jain traditions but also for the reconstruction of social status of the Jains of that time.

Jain Art in Pakistan

Study of Jain Art in Pakistan is in fact least studied and we find nothing regarding what is depicted inside or outside the Jain religious and secular buildings. Jain monuments represent proper artistic treatment and in most of the cases in religious buildings each and every part of the building is profusely decorated with sculptures and paintings. The study of Jain art in Pakistan is also being carried out by the research students of the department of archaeology. The research would highlight significant features of Jain mythology and its application in art. For this purpose, the department has started establishing a collection of books about Jainism, its history, art and archaeology in Pakistan. Some of the basic titles include.⁸ From these sources, researchers can get a basic idea about Jain style of art, sculpturing, paintings, identification and style of representation of Tirthankaras, their attributes, attendants, rides, color and associated trees etc.⁹ Depiction of popular stories, their mythical and artistic significance can also be understood and then applied in the field. This certainly will help to understand Jain religion and to know about popular stories and themes depicted in Pakistan.

Our research has also revisited and highlighted Murti is a Site, near City named, Chakwal, from where many valuable art pieces have been discovered. There is an opinion that Murti was centre of Jain Art. Art production, either in stone or metal or wood originated from Murti and further developed and flourished in the whole country. We also have a plan to work on the authenticity and practical application of the theory advocating Murti as the main place of manufacturing.

Future Objectives and Role of Archaeology Department

There is no such place in the country where one can find books written on Jainism, its philosophy, art and architecture etc. We are making efforts to develop a full-fledged section. In future department of Archaeology certainly would be the place where most of the collection about Jainism in Pakistan could be available.

Furthermore, depending upon archival and field data, Cities, towns, settlements would be visited and documented, at provincial level, starting from Punjab. Main points which we intend to cover include:

Comprehensive demographic study of Jain community living in different cities of Pakistan

Recording and documenting oral history about Jain by finding people who had memories about Jains.

To find out/discover if any Jains are living. To know which sects of the religion were popular in which cities? What was their affiliation and how it affected the community and Muslims or followers of other religion? To explore and document tangible heritage (Religious and Secular Buildings) Digital mapping of the Jain heritage by using latest technologies including Google mapping etc. To co-relate historic information with the archaeological records. To preserve Jain heritage and develop Jain tourism in the country and give international recognition

to the Jain Heritage of Pakistan. To teach/train students, institutions, local community and develop their understanding and knowledge about Jainism. To understand and highlight contributions of Jains in Social, Religious, Economic and Cultural aspects of Pakistani Society To reconstruct circumstance condition of society during pre and post-independence period of the country

Beside the above mentioned, we have some selected objectives which include:

Introduce and promotion of role of Jainism in religious tourism of the country.

Trace legacy of Jainism in Pakistan and create awareness among general people about Jainism and Jain heritage.

Chalk out plan for preservation and conservation of Jain heritage

Preparation of a comprehensive monograph in different volumes on Jain Heritage of Pakistan

Use of sophisticated technology to prepare comprehensive data photographic data base, for future research.

These objectives and future plans to bring to light lost glory of Jainism and contribution of Jain community in the social, religious and economic condition of the cities where they were living before partition.

Conclusion

Unlike Buddhism which enjoyed royal patronage under the Mauryan King Ashoka and Kushan King Kanishka, Jainism remained a low-profile religion but never ended or mingled in any other religious movement. Followers of the religion established themselves as real ambassadors of peace and due to their ideology of nonviolence gained easy acceptance in society. In present day Pakistan, remains of Jain community in the form of their temples, community centers, houses, shops and professions need to be explored. Study of Jainism in Pakistan is as important as any other field. During almost a year of research work, we have found that heritage of Jains is getting destroyed by human and natural factors. People living inside or nearby these buildings have no idea about historical and religious significance of these buildings. As a result, no serious attempts are being made to safeguard this equally important chapter of historical, archaeological and religious history of our country. From the platform of Punjab University, proper institutional support is being given to this ignored part of our history. So far, we have been able to present our views at national and international level and our efforts are being recognized by Jain community of the world. This effort would not only help us to document Jain history of Pakistan but also strengthen our part in protecting heritage of our country regardless of religious association. For us it is our academic, religious, moral and national duty to work for the protection and awareness of the Jain heritage of the country and to acknowledge services of the Jain community in the socio-religious and economic history of Pakistan.

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