

## **Jaina art: A lost Tradition of peace and tolerance in Pakistan**

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Abandoned *Jaina* temples along the major trade routes in the provinces of Punjab and Sind in Pakistan exhibit a particular genre of art in the form of sculptures, large frescos, and painted miniature scenes of meditation and offerings based on the narratives mentioned in *Agamas*, the sacred *Jaina* texts. Respect for all forms of life and non-violence in the extreme possible way is the essence of *Agamas* and hence the main theme of the art they represent. Chauri bearers instead of warriors, lotus pools instead of skull garlands, Swastika instead of swords and guns, offerings of vegan food and flowers instead of bloodshed, lions and goats wandering peacefully instead of tearing the weaker ones apart, are a few of the fading away scenes that can be seen in the crumbling *Jaina* temples of Nagarparkar, Gauri, Virawah, Multan, and Rasulnagar. Immediate conservation of these temples can not only preserve these masterpieces for study purposes but can also play an important part in coping with the situation of intolerance, extremism and violence in the region. The present paper, based on a detailed systematic survey of *Jaina* Heritage in Pakistan carried out by the author of this paper in collaboration with SOAS, London and an in-depth study of its art and architecture in the Department of Archaeology, University of Punjab, throws light on the above-mentioned aspects of the *Jaina* art of Pakistan with special reference to the possibilities and efforts of its conservation.

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