Jaina attitudes towards animals

Ahiṃsā, *lāñchana* symbols and zoomorphic sculptures

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In this article, I examine attitudes towards animals in a Jaina religious context in India. The Jainas practice strict vegetarianism and with their core concept of *ahiṃsā* (not harming others), they go even further. They are not only meant to avoid doing violence to animals, but are also encouraged to actively care for them. As this is seen as a religious act, many of their temple complexes have bird-houses adjacent to shrines as well as shelters and animal hospitals close by.

- We also encounter animal depictions in the areas of art and architecture. In Jaina iconography, there are theriomorphic symbols associated with most of the twenty-four Jinas, the human but enlightened teachers and main objects of veneration in Jainism. As the fully-liberated Jinas all look the same, individual identifying symbols (*lāñchana*s) were introduced during the Gupta period. In addition to the Jinas, there are also Jaina gods and goddesses. Many of these, too, ride on beasts or even have part-zoomorphic forms themselves.
- A number of animal depictions also recur in the architecture of the Jaina temple. We typically find lion thrones (*siṁhāsana*s), which are either heavy stone-built altars—or in a Jaina context also lighter metal stands—on which statues are placed for veneration. The employment of the mythical and usually hybrid sea animal of the *makara*, for instance, is widespread in the design of arches (*makaratoraṇa*s) decorating the inside and outside of temple structures. Similarly composite creatures, known as *yāḷi*s, adorn the balustrades flanking temple structures. *Makara* or cow depictions also adorn water spouts found in Jaina sacred contexts. In addition, elephant depictions recur in the iconography of the goddess Lakṣmī (Gajalakṣmī) and prominent elephant sculptures are connected with the entrance gateways and porches of Jaina temple edifices and larger complexes.
- This shows that Jainas regard animals with great respect and invest many of them with particular sacred meanings. This gives them a prominent place in their philosophy as well as in the context of figural representations and temple settings.

Keywords: Jaina, Jainism, *ahiṃsā*, *lāñchana*, *siṁhāsana*, *makara*, *yakṣa*, *yakṣī*, Jaina temple, *kṣetrapāla*.

1. Introduction[1]

In South Asian art, depictions of animals are present from the earliest preserved remnants on decorated pottery, seals from the Indus Valley Civilization and in sgraffitos and wall paintings preserved in early rock-shelters. They form an essential part of human life as providers of food stuffs such as milk and eggs, and of materials for human protection (e.g. wool, feathers and skins) and for the production of tools (e.g. horn and ivory). Beasts also provide protection and companionship to humans. This chapter examines attitudes towards animals in a Jaina religious context. I shall refer to philosophical ideas, concepts of ethical behaviour, and as an art historian, I shall pay particular attention to visual material from the fields of Jaina sculpture and temple architecture.

The use of the word 'animal' as opposed to 'human,' drawing a clear line between the two and privileging one above the other, is nowadays viewed critically. In actual fact, one can argue that a separation between humans and animals has no ontological basis (Vallely 2014: 38-39). Similarly, the Jainas maintain that with respect to their souls and their ability to feel pain and suffering, all forms of life are essentially the same (Babb 2015: 121). However, the Jaina tradition, on which I focus in this article, also insists on a clear divide between human and nonhuman animals and places humans in a place superior to animals. This is based on the conviction that although animals can show moral awareness and perform ascetic practices, final enlightenment can only be attained from within a human body (Babb 2015: 49; 2020: 473). For this reason, I will hold on to a differentiation, separating humans from animals, in this article. Whilst there is a distinction to be made between the two, animals, as will be shown in the discussion below, should be protected and they play an important role in Jaina religious thought, literature, artistic and architectural practice.

In order to protect zoomorphic beings, the Jainas practise strict vegetarianism and follow the principle of nonviolence, *ahiṃsā*. They even construct animal feeding stations and hospitals close to temple precincts, to offer beasts protection and care. Furthermore, most of the twenty-four Jinas are connected with theriomorphic symbols, known as *lāñchana*s. In connection with the iconography of the two Jinas, Pārśvanātha and Supārśvanātha, depictions of snakes add a further dimension to the topic of zoological imagery in association with the enlightened saints. However, the gods and goddesses, the *yakṣa*s and *yakṣī*s of Jainism, also ride on theriomorphic mounts and some have hybrid forms, combining zoic with human body parts. Moreover, animal representations play a prominent

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role in other areas throughout the temple. I will explore the significance of lion thrones, *siṁhāsana*s, ornaments involving mythical sea creatures, the *makara*s, conduits in the form of *makara* and cow heads, and large elephant statues made of stone.

My discussion will illustrate the fact that, on the basis of their religious tenets, Jainas regard animals with great respect and invest many of them with a particular sacred significance. In consequence, they have been given an important place in Jaina philosophy, literature, and religious practice as well as in artistic representations and temple architecture.

2. Jaina philosophy and practice: *Ahiṃsā* and animal shelters

It is a general feature of many Indian religious movements, including, for instance, Buddhism and the classical yoga schools, that practitioners are supposed to avoid harming living beings (*jīva*), both human and animal.[2] However, no other faith group has taken this concept to such extremes as have the Jainas.[3]

2.1. Ahiṃsā in Jainism

The principle of nonviolence is in fact the core virtue of Jainism, to which all other vows and restraints (*vrata*) relate (Jaini 1990: 167; Chapple 2008: 516; Zydenbos 2020: 399). Instead of doing harm (*hiṃsā*) to oneself or to others, Jainas attempt to follow the tenet of *ahiṃsā*, noninjury, which is the first vow (*ahiṃsāvrata*), which initiates take on their ascetic path. This conviction is captured in the phrase '*ahiṃsā paramo dharmaḥ*,' meaning 'nonviolence is the highest religious duty' (Wiley 2006: 438; Tuminello III 2018: 93). The Jaina belief is that people harm their own spiritual well-being when they injure others. Besides this self-interest, the issue of compassion (*karuṇā*) also plays an important role (Babb 2020: 471). In practice, this has led to the adherence to a stringent vegetarianism on the part of the Jainas.[4] However, the Jaina concept involves not only physical injury but also the avoidance of violence in thought and speech.

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[2] The category of *jīva* also includes stones, mountains, water bodies, such as lakes, and trees, as they all have what is described as "life force" and should correspondingly not be harmed (Chapple 1993: 11). This makes Jainas important players in environmental ethics. On Buddhism and nonviolence, refer to Chapple (1993: 21-47). By *jīva*, we also understand the eternal soul of a human being, which can reach liberation (Tuminello III 2018: 92).

[3] On this issue, see Jaini (1990: 167, 169) and Tuminello III (2018: 91). Refer also to the discussion of *ahiṃsā* in Jainism by Chapple (1993: 10).

[4] Followers of other Indian religious groups also observe at least selective forms of vegetarianism.

2.2. Rules of practice and diet

As part of their nonviolence ethics, Jaina monks and nuns carry a peacock brush to sweep the path in front of them to avoid harming small creatures (Plate 1). According to both Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras, *ahiṃsā* must be applied to all living creatures, also to microscopic single-sense organisms, which in Jainism are referred to as *nigoda*s (Jaini 1990: 109, 168), which can be water- or airborne.[5] In order to protect these, Jaina ascetics filter water before they drink it and the mendicants of some subgroups cover their mouths with a shield (*muhpatti, muhapaṭṭikā*).[6]

Plate 1. Practising *ahiṃsā*, Jaina ascetics of both sexes carry a peacock brush to sweep the ground in front of them to avoid stepping on small insects.

[5] In terms of states of existence (*gati*), animals and plants make up the highest category of beings, the *tiryañca*. Below these are earth, water, fire and air bodies, whilst the *nigoda*s form the lowest group of beings (Chapple 1993: 11-12; Tatia 2002: 3, De Clercq 2013: 142). In terms of senses, however, animals (both human and nonhuman) have five senses and form the top level, whilst plants have only one sense, the sense of touch, and form the bottom tier of this hierarchy based on the number of senses (Tuminello III 2018: 92). On the same page Tuminello III points out that humans and nonhuman animals are capable of understanding the teachings of the Jinas although it is rare or even impossible for nonhuman animals to attain liberation. See also Babb (2020: 472). Due to this fact, humans are rated higher in this order than non-human animals (Vallely 2014: 38, 39).

[6] This is applied to stop the breath of the wearer from injuring minute life forms in the air (Babb 1994: 15), and prevent the person from swallowing tiny creatures in the atmosphere, spitting on sacred objects or harming others through negative words. Such mouth shields are worn on a daily basis by ascetic followers of the Śvetāmbara Sthānakvāsī sect. However, lay worshippers also cover their mouths when coming in close contact with sanctified icons, other objects of veneration and sacred scripture.

As *nigoda*s are present in especially large numbers in sweet and fermenting substances, Jainas generally discourage the consumption of alcohol and sweet ingredients, such as honey or ripe fruits (Jaini 1990: 168; Chapple 1993: 10). Jaina householders are also deterred from eating root vegetables, as pulling them out of the ground disturbs the earth and those beings living in it.[7] Furthermore, dietary restrictions indicate that Jainas should refrain from eating eggs as well as heavily seed-filled fruit and vegetables, such as figs, tomatoes, aubergines, courgettes and others, as these are seen as harbouring the potential for life (Chapple 1993: 10; Hegewald 2009: 27). In order to further protect *nigoda*s, Jainas are encouraged to eat in daylight (Chapple 1993: 10). Moreover, it is considered right conduct for Jaina laypeople to refrain from taking up professions in which injury to living beings can easily occur. This includes not only butchery or work with hides or dead bodies, but also occupations involving excessive heat, fire or water, which can all consume small living beings.[8] This has led to large sections of the Jaina community working as bankers and merchants, although there is also a significant number of Jaina jewellers and diamond cutters, whose work involves the generation of high temperatures.[9]

This emphasis on *ahiṃsā* in Jainism can be interpreted as a response to the Vedic and later Brahmanical practice of offering sacrificial animals in religious rituals (Jaini 1990: 169; Chapple 1993: 11; Babb 2020: 470, 473). The Jainas, however, developed this further into an outright ban on killing, even outside a religious or ritual context. The concept of nonharm developed into a specific Jaina ethic, relating to physical and mental injury caused to others, which should all be prevented (Chapple 2008: 516; Zydenbos 2020: 399-400). The emphasis on ethical behaviour and nonviolence practised by the large Jaina community in Gujarat, where Mahatma Gandhi grew up in a Vaiṣṇava Hindu context, led Gandhi to develop his approach of a peaceful civil disobedience and the nonviolent noncooperation resistance movement (Chapple 1993: 53-57).

[7] Another rationale provided by Tuminello III for abstaining from eating root vegetables is that these vegetables can sprout a vast number of new plants so that eating one of them is equated with killing multiple potential plants (2018: 94).

[8] Chapple emphasises that earth, water, fire and air need to be managed carefully as life particles are considered to be present in all of them (2008: 516).

[9] Jainism is not without internal contradictions. Probably the strongest inconsistency is that although *ahiṃsā* also means not harming oneself (Wiley 2006: 438), the rite of religiously observed self-starvation (*sallekhanā*) is one of the highest goals of the faith. Babb has also commented on this (1994: 15). Tuminello III turns the argument round and identifies *sallekhanā* as 'ritually fasting to death to achieve total avoidance of harm' (2018: 93)—harm, however, done to others. This is correct in so far as when individuals totally cease all actions and starve themselves to death, no harm will ever be done by them to any other being.

2.3. Visual representations of noninjury

In visual terms, the practice of nonharming is today represented by the symbol of the raised open palm of a hand, demonstrating the gesture of peace and fearlessness (*abhayamudrā*) (Donaldson and Bajželj 2021: 44). Often, an open lotus flower, seen from above, is superimposed onto the palm and the sign is complemented by a *svāstika* above, three dots and a further superimposed dot, which is enclosed from below by a semicircle. All these elements are surrounded by the outline of the hour-glass-shaped Jaina cosmos.[10] However, there are other ways of representing this theoretical concept in art. More complex figural representations show one of the Jinas, seated in deep meditation, who is being attacked by a tiger or lion but refrains from defending himself in a perfect gesture of noninjury. Furthermore, a representation of a cow on one side and a carnivorous creature, such as a lion or tiger on the other, peacefully drinking water from a joint trough and feeding each other's young is another poignant visual image symbolising the concept of *ahiṃsā* (Plate 2).

Plate 2. Representations of a cow and a lion drinking water from a joint trough and feeding each other's young are representative of the concept of *ahiṃsā*.

[10] This combined symbol was embraced by many Jainas in 1975 as an emblem of their religion (Donaldson and Bajželj 2021: 45). The hand symbolises *ahiṃsā*, the *svāstika* stands for the four states of existence within the cycle of rebirths (heavenly, human, hellish and subhuman), the three dots denote the "three jewels" of right view, knowledge and conduct, and the single dot in the crescent shape symbolises the *siddhaśīlā*, the place of the blissful souls.

2.4. Medical care and animal hospices

In addition to refraining from doing violence to other living beings, Jainas are also encouraged to treat them humanely and to actively nurture them by exercising active compassion (*jīvadayā*) (Babb 2020: 472). In this context, free medical care is available to humans at the Śrī Digambara Pārśvanātha Jaina Temple and Cikitsālay (hospital) in Jaipur, or at a free community health post in Delhi.[11] Allegedly, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Faxian (399-414 CE) noticed and commented on the provision of free medical care by the Jainas as early as the start of the fifth century CE (Titze 1998: 213). Animal hospitals (*pāñjarāpol, pāñjrāpol, piñjrāpol*) are also very common, especially those catering for sick birds. They are widespread, especially in larger cities, where pigeons in particular are regularly hurt in the traffic.[12] One example is the Jaina Bird Hospital in Old Delhi, which is attached to the Digambara Jaina Lāl Mandir.[13] It has an upper floor from which the animals are released into freedom after recovering from their ailments. Also common are shelters for sick cows and hospices for old and dying cattle. This is due to the fact that in India, when a cow is too old to give milk, she is normally set free and not fed or cared for any longer. These starving cows are regularly collected by Jainas and their care and food are paid for by donations.[14]

As this is seen as a religious act, many Jaina temple complexes have feeding stations for animals in their compounds. Especially widespread are small birdhouses, traditionally made of wood, which are frequently set up immediately adjacent to shrines, as can be seen at Bakhara Road in Rajasthan. They are often decorated and painted in bright colours (Plate 3). Alternatively, the aviaries can also be made of stone or concrete and take the form of quite complex architectural constructions, as, for example, at the Supārśvanātha Temple at Mandu, Madhya Pradesh. The importance of these structures becomes clear when temples are constructed in the diaspora which also have such bird feeding stations, as is

[11] For a photograph of the sign boards of the temple-cum-clinic establishments, refer to Titze (1998: 134 Plate 196, 140 Plate 205). Titze describes also a Digambara Jaina eye camp for tribal people paid for by Jaina donations at Sironji in Uttar Pradesh and an eye hospital run by a Sthānakvāsī nun at Rajgir in Bihar (1998: 214-217).

[12] In accordance with the Jaina ethic of nonviolence, carnivorous animals, such as birds of prey, are not cared for in such shelters (Vallely 2014: 48).

[13] For further information, access the webpage of The Pluralism Project at Harvard University (https://pluralism.org/a-hospital-for-birds, last accessed: 12.08.2024). Titze has written on the same bird hospital (1998: 134, 212, Plate 303) as has Babb (2015: 120-121; 2020: 473).

[14] Titze has written on this with reference to a particular shelter (1998: 227). Laidlaw and Tuminello have also written on the common Jaina practice of making charitable donations in support of animal shelters and medical facilities (Laidlaw 1995: 100; Tuminello III 2018: 94).

the case at the Jaina temple at Wilrijk near Antwerp in Belgium, where a wooden birdhouse is immediately adjacent to the temple.

Plate 3. The Jaina Temple at Bakhara Road, Rajasthan, has a painted wooden aviary, providing food to wild birds, erected close to its entrance.

3. Iconography: animal symbols and mounts for Jinas and divinities

Jainas are not only strict vegetarians who also advocate caring for animals. Jaina religious literature describes animals as being present when a Jina, after having reached full enlightenment, offers his first formalised teachings in the structure (*samavasaraṇa*) built for this purpose by the gods.[15] We also find many representations of various kinds of animals in Jaina art and architecture. Some of these will be discussed below.

3.1. Animal symbols of the Jinas

If we start with the area of Jaina iconography, it is the Jinas (victors) or Tīrthaṅkaras (fordmakers), the human but fully enlightened teachers of the Jaina religion, who form the main focus of adoration at home and in temple settings. In each world age, a set of twenty-four Jinas is born, preaches the path to enlightenment and finally passes into the bodyless state of *siddha*-hood. All twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras lead the same prototypical life and gain an identical understanding about the correct path to salvation. By the time of their liberation, they have burnt away all bad *karma*, which, as Jainas argue, clings to the

[15] That is, animals are present, alongside humans and gods (Babb 2020: 472).

body like a physical substance and gives it individuality. Therefore, enlightened Jinas all look identical (Hegewald 2009: 68).[16] In order still to be able to differentiate between them, identifying symbols, *lāñchana*s, were introduced during the Gupta period (ca. fourth – sixth CE), and gained in popularity from the fifth century in particular (Shah 1987: 83-85; Hegewald 2005: 71; Plate 4).[17] When focusing on attitudes towards animals in Jainism, it is striking how many of these symbols are theriomorphic in nature.[18] Whilst the Śvetāmbara and Digambara forms of Jainism do not always agree as to which animal is associated with a particular Tīrthaṅkara, there exists a surprising uniformity.

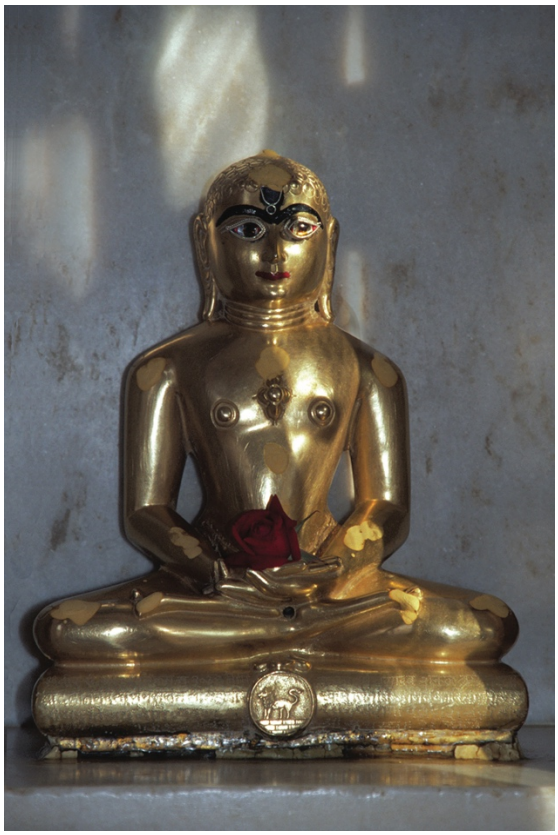

Plate 4. From the Gupta period, Jaina icons were provided with a small identifying symbol below the statues, such as the lion associated with Mahāvīra.

[16] On the issue of *karma* as a physical, sticky entity, which weighs the soul down and prevents it from reaching *siddha*-hood and floating up to the *siddhaloka*, the place of the liberated souls, refer to Chapple (1993: 13).

[17] For an overview of these *lāñchana* symbols, refer to various lists provided by Shah (1985: 84), Nagar (1999, Vol. II: 409) Hegewald (2009: 595) and De Clercq (2013: 146).

[18] Others take the form of different kinds of lotuses (*padma*; Padmaprabhu and Naminātha), a *svāstika* (Supārśvanātha), a crescent moon (*candra*; Candraprabhu), a *śrīvatsa* symbol amongst the Śvetāmbaras and a wishing tree (*kalpavṛkṣa*) amongst the Digambaras (Śītalanātha), a thunderbolt (*vajra*; Dharmanātha), a *nandyāvarta* symbol (Aranatha, in Śvetāmbara Jainism), a water pot or vase (*kalaśa*; Mallinātha) and a conch (*śaṅkha*; Neminātha).

In this context, it is fascinating to observe that we encounter some creatures which are quite uncommon. They are not widely invested with a particular holiness nor regularly depicted in a sacred Jaina context more generally. Amongst these are, for instance, a monkey (*kapi*; associated with Abhinandanātha),[19] a crocodile (Puṣpadanta), a curlew or heron (*krauñca*; Sumatinātha),[20] a rhinoceros (*gaṇḍaka*; Śreyāṃsanātha), a buffalo (*mahiṣā*; Vāsupūjyasvāmī),[21] a falcon, kite (*śyena*) or hawk amongst the Śvetāmbaras and a bear in Digambara Jainism (Anantanātha) as well as a male goat (Kunthunātha).[22]

Other animals are well known from iconographic forms in a Hindu religious context, such as a single or a pair of fish (*matsya*; in Digambara Jainism Aranātha), a tortoise (*kūrma*; Munisuvrata), a boar (*sūkara*; Vimalnātha) and a horse (*aśva*; Sambhavanātha). Although I do not wish to allude to some direct connection, it is worth noticing that all these beasts are also closely associated with the Hindu god Viṣṇu as part of his ten incarnations (*avatāra*s). More generally, horses are considered auspicious and have been linked with good fortune (Nagar 1999 Vol. I: 95). A deer and a stag (*mṛga*) or antelope (Śāntinātha), are also known from Śaiva imagery in the south as well as from Buddhist iconography.

Other creatures employed as *lāñchana* symbols are very typical of a South Asian religious environment more generally. Amongst these are a bull (*vṛṣa*), who is associated with the first Jina Ṛṣabha, also known as Ādinātha. After his conception, Ṛṣabha's mother, Marudevī, had fourteen (in Śvetāmbara Jainism) or sixteen (in Digambara Jainism) dreams. In the first dream, a bull appeared to her. When the baby was born, he allegedly had the mark of a bull on his chest or thigh, leading to Marudevī naming her son Ṛṣabha as well as to his later association with the identifying symbol of the bull (Nagar 1999, Vol. I: 73; De Clercq 2013: 147). A similar story has been preserved in association with Ajitanātha, the second Jina, whose mother repeatedly saw elephants (*gaja*) in dreams before giving birth. For this reason, the elephant became the sign associated with this Jina (Nagar 1999, Vol. I: 91). Although the animal to appear first in the dream of the mothers can vary, all texts mention an elephant, a lion and a bull as the first set to emerge (De Clercq 2013: 144-145). These three animals are all very popular in Indic culture and closely associated with royalty, power and the *kṣatriya* caste in particular.

[19] Nagar points out that according to some texts, the *lāñchana* of Abhinandanātha is a lion (1999, Vol. I: 97), but this is very unusual.

[20] Alternatively, Sumatinātha is associated with a goose, which is a much more common animal in Indian mythology and art. The goose is usually associated with intelligence (Nagar 1999, Vol. I: 98).

[21] According to Nagar, buffaloes are associated with wealth (1999, Vol. I: 110).

[22] It is interesting that, as Kadgaonkar points out, drawings of rhinoceroses and herons, as well as of other animals, adorn the walls of pre-historic cave shelters in India. He also reminds us of depictions of monkeys and other beasts from the Indus Valley Culture (2008-2009: 163).

The full set of dreams plays an important role during the celebrations of the five auspicious events in the life of a Jina, the *pañcakalyāṇa*, and they have regularly been depicted in Jaina art and architecture (Hegewald 2009: 115-116). The mythical *makara*, too, figures as a *lāñchana* symbol of Puṣpadanta (alternatively known as Suvidhinātha) (Nagar 1999, vol I: 71, 106-107). We will return to the *makara* in more detail below.

Two additional sacred animals which we encounter frequently in the context of the *lāñchana* symbols are the serpent or cobra (*naga*, *phaṇi*; Pārśvanātha) and the lion (*siṁha*; Mahāvīra). Pārśvanātha is associated with the identifying symbol of the snake because his mother, while pregnant with her son, saw in a dream a black cobra passing by her side (Shah 1970: 303). The connection between Mahāvīra and the lion is explained in a story that gives further weight to the ideas of *ahiṃsā* and vegetarianism. In his last animal life prior to his human birth, Mahāvīra is said to have lived as a lion. Hearing a sermon on *ahiṃsā*, he was allegedly so impressed that he became a vegetarian lion, resulting in his speedy death and rebirth as a human, a form of existence which enabled him to gain deliverance (Chapple 1993: 12; Babb 2020: 472).[23] In fact there are many Jaina narratives which idealise the heroic and compassionate behaviour of animals (De Clercq 2013: 148-150; Vallely 2014: 46-47). In the context of attitudes towards nature more generally, it should also be pointed out that each Jina is associated with a particular enlightenment tree.[24]

In connection with the iconography of the two Jinas, Pārśvanātha and Supārśvanātha, depictions of snakes protecting the Jinas with their flared hoods from behind add a further dimension to the topic of theomorphic imagery in association with the enlightened saints. In addition to Pārśvanātha's snake *lāñchana*, both Jinas can be shown with a canopy-like hood of a multi-headed cobra behind their heads. Sometimes, the long, coiled body of the snake is also visible at the front or the back of the sculptures (Plate 5). According to various iconographic texts, Pārśvanātha is usually shown sheltered by seven snake heads, whilst the canopy behind Supārśvanātha takes the form of a one-, three-, five- or nine-

[23] De Clercq refers to a number of similar Jaina narratives that elaborate on the influence which the teachings of the Jinas can have on animals (2013: 150-153). Babb, too, stresses the fact that animals are capable of understanding the Jaina teachings, even if they are able to follow them only to a very limited extent, which, however, can lead to a rebirth in a human body (2020: 472). Even more interesting, in a world view where humans are clearly placed hierarchically above nonhuman animals, De Clercq also refers to literature illustrating the moral influence which animals and their behaviour can have on the Tīrthaṅkaras (2013: 153-154).

[24] For a list of the enlightenment trees (*caitya* trees) of the twenty-four Jinas, refer to Shah (1955: 76). Sambhavanātha, for instance, is associated with the Śāla tree, whilst Vimalanātha is connected with the Jambū tree. On *caitya vṛkṣa*s, see also Hegewald (2009: 71, 76, 178, 180-181).

hooded snake, with five heads being the most frequent form.[25] The narrative surrounding this specific iconographic feature in connection with Pārśvanātha further illustrates the rejection of sacrifices which Jainas propagate. According to the legend, Pārśvanātha, then still in an earlier human life as a *brāhmaṇ* called Marubhūti, saved two snakes, Dhāraṇendra and Padmāvatī, from being offered by his brother Kamaṭha in a sacrificial fire. In his subsequent life, Pārśvanātha in turn was saved by these snakes, who sheltered him under their flared hoods when Kamaṭha, reincarnated as Meghamālin, Kaṭha (Śvetāmbara) or Saṃvara (Digambara), attacked the meditating Pārśvanātha (Shah 1970: 303-304). For this reason, Pārśvanātha's attendants and protector divinities, his *yakṣa* and *yakṣī*, are the snake-beings Dhāraṇendra and Padmāvatī. The earliest preserved representations of Pārśvanātha with a protective hood of snakeheads can be seen in the Jaina cave at Aihole and on the rock boulders at Tirrakkol in Tamil Nadu. After this, the theme is repeated at a number of other early cave sites, such as Badami, Karnataka (Plate 6), and Kalugumalai, Tamil Nadu.[26] The connection between snakes and Supārśvanātha is explained by his mother having conceived him on a bed of snakes (Nagar 1999, Vol. I: 101). Whilst Pārśvanātha has the snake hood and also carries the symbol of a snake below his statues, the *lāñchana* symbol of Supārśvanātha is the *svāstika*.

[25] For Supārśvanātha, depictions with one or nine serpent hoods are very rare (Nagar 1999, Vol. I: 101-102). For Pārśvanātha, refer to Nagar (1999, Vol. I: 136).

[26] Shah has outlined the evolution of this theme in early Jaina art (1970: 306).

Plate 5. Statues of Pārśvanātha have a snake symbol, are usually sheltered by a hooded snake and at times, as here at Anjaneri, Maharashtra, display its coiled body.

Plate 6. Large-scale carved representation of Pārśvanātha with a protective hood of snakeheads behind his head, from cave number four at Badami, Karnataka.

3.2. Animal connections of Jaina gods and goddesses

In terms of iconography, many of the gods and goddesses of Jainism, the *yakṣa*s and *yakṣī*s, also have animal symbols, or ride on zoomorphic mounts (*vāhana*s), while some even have hybrid forms themselves, combining theriomorphic with human body parts. As all of the twenty-four Jinas are each associated with a *yakṣa* and with a *yakṣī* and as there is much diversity between the different traditions with regards to their names, their *lāñchana*s, their *vāhana*s and their own forms of representation, I will discuss only a small number of representative examples.[27]

There are many guardian divinities associated with zoological mounts. The *yakṣa* of Sumatinātha known as Tuṁburu, for instance, is associated with an eagle (*garuḍa*) and his *yakṣī*, Mahākālī (amongst the Digambaras: Puruṣadattā), with a goose (*haṁsa*; at least amongst Digambaras) (Nagar 1999, Vol. I: 99; Hegewald 2009: 598). The mount of Kumāra, the *yakṣa* of the twelfth Jina Śreyāṃsanātha, is a goose or peacock whilst his *yakṣī* Caṇḍa rides a horse amongst Śvetāmbaras and a *makara* or snake in Digambara iconography (Nagar 1999, Vol. I: 110). The *yakṣī* of Neminātha, who is called Aṁbikā amongst the Śvetāmbaras and Kuṣamāṇḍinī by the Digambaras, rides on a lion (Plate 7).

Plate 7. Kuṣamāṇḍinī Devī, the *yakṣī* of Neminātha, is iconographically shown riding on a lion, as in this sculpture from Shravanabelgola, Karnataka.

[27] For a comprehensive list of all the *yakṣa*s and *yakṣī*s with their associated symbols, refer to Hegewald (2009: 598).

Other divinities are part theriomorphic themselves. The *yakṣa* of the first Jina Ṛṣabha is known as Vṛṣabha Yakṣa or Gomukha Yakṣa (Nagar 1999, Vol. I: 74). Gomukha means 'cattle' or 'cow-faced' and there are depictions of this attendant with a bull's head. A further animal connection is shown in his riding an elephant (Plate 8) or a bull and there are variants in which he has been provided with an elephant's head as well (Nagar 1999, Vol. I: 196-197). Pārśvanātha's associated *yakṣa*, Dhāraṇendra, also has an elephant head, but rides on a tortoise (Nagar 1999, Vol. I: 236). His *yakṣī*, Padmāvatī, is shown sometimes in the composite form of half rooster and half snake, and at other times in human form, with a rooster as her mount (Nagar 1999, Vol. I: 301).

Plate 8. This statue from Narlai, Rajasthan, shows Vṛṣabha or Gomukha Yakṣa, with a bull's head and an elephant as his *vāhana*.

There are other Jaina divinities which display strong animal connections. For instance, Sarasvatī—one of the Śrutadevīs or Vidyādevīs, the goddesses of knowledge and learning—rides a goose or swan. Similarly, several Jaina *kṣetrapāla*s, the guardians of the temple compound, have animal connections. Especially prominent in south Indian Digambara Jainism is the *yakṣa* and *kṣetrapāla* Brahmadeva, who rides a horse. As such, he can be represented seated on a horse; on the famous Brahmadeva *stambha*s, where an openair statue of him sits at the top of the tall pillars, a high relief representation of his horse usually adorns one of the sides of the pillar towards the bottom. Alternatively, Brahmadeva can also be seen riding an elephant. Likewise, the *kṣetrapāla* Bhairava is associated with a dog.

4. Animal depictions in temple architecture

Some of these more typical sacred animals not only appear in close association with figural icons but also recur in other areas of the architecture of the Jaina temple, indicating a further sacred significance, separate from the Jinas.

4.1. Lion thrones, *makaratoraṇas* and zoomorphic waterspouts

Lion thrones (*siṁhāsana*s), which are usually heavy stone-built altars on which statues are placed for veneration in a temple setting, are found across all of South Asia. In a Jaina context, a *siṁhāsana* can also be a lighter metal stand. Whilst the laity generally has no direct access to the main sacred icon (*mūlanāyaka*)—normally a fixed (*sthāvara*) stone sculpture in the main shrine (*garbhagṛha*) or several representations housed in multiple sanctums—lay worshippers are often permitted to conduct rituals on smaller metal icons (*vidhināyaka*s). These are placed on low tables or on metal stands for veneration (Hegewald 2005: 491-499; 2007: 132-146).

A practice that is very widespread in a Jaina temple context is the employment of the mythical and usually hybrid sea animal known as the *makara*. In most cases, it combines elements of a crocodile, a fish and an elephant. In later representations, its tail can also be reminiscent of that of a bird (Ranasinghe 1991/1992: 136). All the animals which can make up a composite *makara* are closely connected with water and illustrate its aspects of auspiciousness, purity and fertility. The latter quality is further emphasised by the emergence of vegetation, sometimes lotus flowers, from the *makara*'s mouth (Ranasinghe 1991/1992: 135, 137). Two facing *makara* figures frequently recur in the design of arches (*makaratoraṇa*s) decorating the outside and inside of temple structures (Plate 9). In this context, the pair of creatures usually bridge openings, such as niches, windows or doorways. According to

Ranasinghe, the *makaratoraṇa* marks the gate to the sacred area of the temple and the gateway to heaven (Ranasinghe 1991/1992: 133-134).

Plate 9. In a temple at Shravanabelgola, Karnataka, two sea creatures with vegetation emerging from their mouths face each other to form an arch (*makaratoraṇa*).

Mythical composite animals, such as *makara*s and also *yāḷi*s, which combine a lion body with an elephant head, also adorn the balustrades flanking the entrance to temple structures. Especially beautiful examples can be seen throughout South India and in structures dating from the Hoysaḷa period (11th till 14th century CE) in Karnataka in particular.

The mythical *makara* can also adorn water spouts in a Jaina temple context. Such conduits can either be part of water structures found adjacent to temples, or they can lead excess water off temple roofs or channel water out of shrines. Such channels are usually positioned on the north side of the main sanctum and lead off the liquids, largely a mixture of water and milk, which have been poured over the main sacred object of veneration inside the *garbhagṛha*. Alternatively, the conduit can also take the shape of a cow's head (*gomukh praṇālī*s, *praṇāla*s). In Hindu temples, the choice of a cow's head as funnel relates to the glacier mouth, the Gangotri glacier, out of which the Ganges emerges at its source in the Garhwal Himal in Uttarakhand. In a Hindu context, the presence of the cow-mouth funnel equates the sacred elixir (*tīrtha*) issuing out of the sanctum of the temples with Ganges water. For this reason, a sculptural depiction of the sage Bhagīratha, who is credited with bringing down the Ganges from heaven, is often found holding up the water channels from below (Hegewald 2002: 16-19). As the Ganges has no particular sacred significance in Jainism, the employment of cow-head spouts might

indicate a participation in a more general shared cultural South Asian milieu. It appears to relate to the auspiciousness connected with cows and other bovine creatures more generally, also in Jainism.

4.2. Elephant statues in Jaina temples

Another animal which can be found adorning the lintels of Jaina temples is the elephant (*gaja*). Just as in the case of the *makaratoraṇa*s, we find two elephants in these depictions, flanking and pouring water over a central representation of the goddess Lakṣmī seated on a lotus. Such depictions of Lakṣmī, who holds an important place in Jaina ritual, are known as Gajalakṣmī. Depictions of Gajalakṣmī or of elephants more generally are also widespread in a Hindu sacred context,[28] although the Jainas appear to have even more representations of this particular animal in their temple complexes. In a Jaina context, the prominent positioning of elephant sculptures in connection with entrance gateways and porches that provide access to sacred complexes and temple edifices is very widespread. They are found in Jaina temple architecture all over the subcontinent and also in the diaspora. Prominent examples are the large elephant statues flanking the entrance doors to many of the walled compounds on Mount Śatruñjaya in Gujarat (Plate 10). However, they are also found at the actual entrance to temple buildings. Many of these have elephant statues flanking the access stairs, as at the Maṅgāyi Basadi at Shravanabelgola (1325 CE). It is noteworthy that this feature was considered so typically Jaina that many temples constructed in the diaspora also have flanking elephant statues at their entrances, as can be seen in the Śaṅkheśvar Pārśvanātha Jaina temple at Wilrijk close to Antwerp in Belgium. A set of especially large and beautifully carved elephant statues, which appear to emerge from the walls of the porch flanking the entrance to the temple, can be seen in the former Jaina temple at Pattadakal in Karnataka, dating from the 8th or 9th century CE.

[28] Elephants are not exclusively important to the Jainas. For instance, the Hindu god of rain, Indra, also rides on an elephant, which in its own body shape is reminiscent of a cloud. Beautiful sculptural representations of the god seated on his elephant can be seen in the Hoysaḷa temples of the Deccan. The elephant is also associated with the Hindu divinity of fire, Agni (Schmaus 2019: 115). The best-known example is probably the god Gaṇeśa, Śiva's son, who has the head of an elephant. Many south Indian Hindu temples still own live temple elephants.

Plate 10. Large carved elephant statues adorn the walls flanking the entrance gateway to one of the walled compounds on Mount Śatruñjaya, Gujarat.

Statues of elephants probably reflect the fact that visitors had to dismount from them at the gates of temples. In addition, elephants act as guardians and their presence might also allude to the royal nature of the Jinas enshrined within. References to the special nature of elephants go back to the *Ṛg Veda*, investing the animal with the virtues of strength, assertiveness, luck, wealth and success, wisdom and also ferocity (Schmaus 2019: 115, 124). At least from the time of the Mauryan period, they had been employed in battles and served as symbols of the power and prosperity of a ruler (Kulke und Rothermund 2006: 16). As guardians, according to Schmaus, elephants were believed to be able to switch between the inner ordered sacred sphere of the temple and the chaos of the mundane world outside. They were thus seen as mediators, who could help devotees make this change to a sacred ordered world as well.[29]

5. Concluding thoughts

The Jainas have developed a religious system which places the concept of nonviolence at the highest level of its principles of morality and ethical behaviour. *Ahiṃsā* is seen as the solution for all suffering and the main tool on the path to spiritual release, as it prevents negative *karma* from being

[29] In the same context, see also comments on the presence of icons of Gaṇeśa close to the entrances of Śaiva temples (Schmaus 2019: 122).

accumulated, binding the soul to the cycle of *saṃsāra*. Not only was the Jaina moral logic of *ahiṃsā* adopted by Mahatma Gandhi in his peaceful fight for independence, but it is propagated today as ideal ethical behaviour by animal rights activists and forms the basis for movements for the protection of animals and the environment worldwide.[30] Within animal or environmental ethics, Jainas living in the diaspora generally intervene more actively when harm is done to animals.[31] As such, Jaina ideals play an important role in animal activism in the West. The Jaina belief in minute life particles, present in everything, has been proven by modern molecular biology to be correct.

Nevertheless, Jainas draw a clear and definite line between human and nonhuman animals. They characterise the ideal behaviour of religious humans as exhibiting restraint and detachment, which represent the Jaina ideal, and place them in a separate category, superior to all. By contrast, Jainas portray animals as lacking self-awareness, mindfulness and control. They are regarded as inferior in so far as they participate in the struggle of survival without reflecting on the violence they inflict on others (Vallely 2014: 49). In the Jaina religious view, absolute cessation of *karma* can only be achieved by human beings (Jaini 2009: 82). Nevertheless, there are stories of exceptional, heroic animals, who managed to overcome their animalistic nature to such an extent that they succeeded in being reborn as humans.

Due to their respect and admiration for the special traits of certain animals, the Jainas have associated most of their fully enlightened saintly teachers with zoomorphic symbols. In addition, Jaina gods and goddesses ride on theriomorphic mounts and some even have partial animal features. Not just in the area of iconography, but also in Jaina temple complexes, real and mythical beasts are omnipresent. They are believed to protect the sacred environment and their presence integrates mythological and heavenly imagery into the architecture of temple complexes. Although Jainas draw a qualitative line of distinction between human and nonhuman animals, they regard animals with great respect and invest many of them with particular sacred meanings, giving them a prominent place in their philosophy as well as in sculptural representations and temple architecture.

[30] For further details on Jaina animal protectionism and environmentalism, refer to Tuminello III (2018: 91) and Chapple (2002: xxxiii-xxxvii).

[31] This has been outlined by Tuminello III, who draws a contrast between Jainas living in India, whom he sees as more 'liberation-centric,' focused on achieving their own release through the cessation of action and active intervention, and Jainas living in the diaspora, whom he describes as more 'socio-centric,' meaning willing to intervene in a non-violent way out of a concern for the misery of the animals, while accepting that any action will incidentally accumulate *karma* on their side (Tuminello III 2018: 94-96). On this issue, refer also to Babb (2020: 473).

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