

Flügel, Peter (1999) *Review of Jainism - A Pictorial Guide to the Religion of Non-Violence by Kurt Titze* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998). *Here&Now4U* . pp. 1-3

**Dr. Peter Flügel on**

**Jainism**

**A Pictorial Guide to the Religion of Non-Violence**

**by Kurt Titze**

with contributions by

**Klaus Bruhn**  
**Jyoti Prasad Jain**  
**Noel Q. King**  
**Vilas A. Sangave**

**Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998. 267 pages, maps, pictures, appendices, indexes, RS 2500. ISBN: 81-208-1534-3.**

Kurt Titze, the author of this informative and beautifully produced volume on Jainism, is a free-lance writer, with a great admiration and sympathy for the Jain doctrine of radical non-violence, which inspired him to undertake personal visits to most of the Jain sacred sites in India over a period spanning more than three decades.

The book is written from the perspective of a pilgrim, i.e. not as a academic piece of research, but as an attractive guide to be used by tourists, scholars, and devotees. By way of an imaginary journey through the subcontinent it introduces the reader to the serene beauty of the religious sites of the Jains which, in contrast to the majority of the places of worship in Hinduism, are often built in isolated mountain or desert locations, away from the buzzing life of the Indian cities (thus contributing to the peaceful atmosphere and the mystique of world renunciation surrounding them).

A map at the beginning of each section offers initial orientation. The photographs taken on most sites by the author himself are accompanied by explanatory texts, which also provide useful travel information, anecdotes, personal impressions, and occasional notes on important ritual occasions.

The journey begins in the south, with a visit to the famous Jain sites of Mudbidri and Shravanabelagola in Karnataka, followed by the little known Jain sites in Tamil Nadu, and the well known caves of Ellora, to name but a few. The majority of the sometimes stunningly beautiful Jain pilgrimage sites that are described, such as Mangi Tungi in Maharashtra, which is presented next, are less known, and difficult to locate even for the Jain specialist. From Maharashtra the imaginary traveller heads north, to Delhi and Hastinapur, then turning south to Rajasthan joining a "Grand Tour" of the famous Jain temples of southern Rajasthan and northern Gujarat, then on to Gujarat and Kutch, and finally to Bihar - the region in which Jainism and Buddhism originated.

In this volume the student of Jainism will find interesting details on the understudied Digambara Jain bhattarakas, or monastic pontiffs, which fulfil predominantly administrative and educational functions, and form a intermediary category between Digambara laity and ascetics. Indeed, most of the presented monuments - generally temples - are Digambara controlled, although it is not

always made clear for the uninitiated reader, to which of the two main Jain denominations, Shvetambara or Digambara, the respective sites belong.

However, by including several articles or extracts from books by Klaus Bruhn, Jyoti Prasad Jain, Noel Q. King, Vilas A. Sangave and other leading experts in this field, the author interspersed the main text with more detailed background information on selected subjects, such as the philosophy and meaning of worship in Jainism. Of particular interest is the chapter on "Jaina art of Gwalior and Deogarh" by Prof. Klaus Bruhn, which was specially written for this book, as was the one by Prof. Noel King on "Jaina Dawn in the West".

The contribution of Klaus Bruhn, looking back on his own pioneering work in Deogarh some forty years ago, illuminates the chronology of Jaina art and the regional style of Jaina art in Gwalior and Deogarh in central India 700-1250 AD. It also points to the necessity of reconstructing local history from the "scattered epigraphical evidence", and calls "for an intensified evaluation of the available material and for the collection of new data" (p. 103). In his description of the Tirthankara images at these sites, Bruhn emphasises that "Jinas are normally shown stark naked. Jinas wearing a dhoti are only found in the Shvetambara art of Gujarat and southern Rajasthan" (p.106), and describes the "miracle motifs" associated with them, that is "emblems of royalty which surround the Jina in a singular manner" (p.107), which do not strictly belong to soteriological Jainism. Though emphasising that "Deogarh is still what it was" (p.116), he illustrates the damage caused by both art-robbers and attempts of preservation by juxtaposing recent pictures with a photograph reproduced from the Archaeological Survey of India (1918), which depicts the Jaina temples of Deogarh before their reconstruction for purposes of religious tourism (p.115).

Kurt Titze himself establishes a similar contrast in his section on the restored and 1991 reconsecrated Tirthankara image at Chulagiri (p.130f.).

The pictures in this book indicate that the recent efforts of the Jain community do not only concentrate on the restoration of old sites but also on the construction of entirely new buildings, which are the main markers of the contemporary Jain renaissance in India. At present, they are erected in large numbers and at great speed, often at historic Jain locations which were later abandoned, such as the Jambu-dvipa monument at Hastinapur (p.139), the Mahavira Mandir at Pavapuri (p.207), the new structures in Rajgir (p.205), Ajmers Nasiayan temple (p.143), or the new Samavasarana temple at the foot of Satrunjay hill (p.232).

Their architecture, generally depicting Jain cosmological themes, is very innovative. It strikes the reader who compares the pictures of old and new temples in this book, that the new communal self-assertiveness of the Jains manifests itself in these modern buildings, sometimes made of concrete, which boldly embody Jain imagery in their structural design; in stark contrast to medieval Jain temples, which, as Professor Bruhn explains, "had a 'neutral' exterior "contrary to Hindu temples, where figures on the outer walls leave no doubt as to the Hindu character of the building" ("this was the price to be paid for the easily granted permission to erect Jaina temples under Hindu rulers") (p.111).

The volume also contains indexes and useful appendices for the general reader on the distribution of the Jaina population in India, a bibliography, a glossary, addresses, and a list of Jain periodicals. On his journeys the author met many prominent Jain monks and nuns from the whole spectrum of Jain traditions. The short descriptions of the encounters with these mendicants, some of which were photographed (which as the author emphasises was not permitted by orthodox

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ascetics), are the most vivid narrations of the volume, only matched by the chapter on "charitable and social traditions in Jainism" (p.213-220), which celebrates the utopian spirit behind the modern Jain religious schools, the gurukuls and dharmasthalas, women's ashrams, and Jain eye hospitals, that were inaugurated by the sympathisers of the World Jain Mission.

It is only here that we do get a glimpse of contemporary Jain ways of life. The majority of the photographs in this pictorial guide to Jainism show Digambara Jain temples and their interior in isolated mountain sites, which were originally sanctified by the practice of sallekhana, or religious death through self-starvation. The attractive, mostly black and white pictures allow a comprehensive and unique glimpse into the richness of the Jain heritage, which in this form was not available before.