

The Cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava

- Deity Worship and Possession in Jainism -



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Abstract

Based on ethnographic work in India this thesis deals with various aspects of worship and possession related to the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava, an extremely popular and famous protective deity among Jains in India.

In its present form the cult seems to have been created and propagated by Jain mendicants about 75 years ago. The idol of Nākoḍā Bhairava is situated in a Jain pilgrimage site in western Rajasthan to which both Jains and non-Jains come to worship. Although Nākoḍā Bhairava is the centre of much attention and the main reason for the site's popularity, the temple itself is not dedicated to him since he is "only" the protective deity of the site. This becomes the starting point for an analysis of the relationship between religious doctrine and actual practice, the ideal and the real.

One of the the most fascinating aspect of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava is the oracular possessions that Jains participate in. In these sessions Nākoḍā Bhairava is believed to enter into individuals before verbally interacting through them with spectators. Jain possession has hardly ever been studied before. Contrary, perhaps, to the general view of Jainism as a religion focused on asceticism and self-control with no apparent space for such religious expressions as possession, I argue that possession is not something new or foreign to Jainism. Further, possession is not one thing. There are various types of possession - depending for instance on who possesses and who is possessed - and they have different implications in the Jain scheme of things.

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Note on Language and Transliteration

Presenting material on Jainism one will inevitably have to make choices in terms of language and transliteration. I have chosen to favour Sanskrit terms before Prakrit, although certain names have been preserved in Prakrit when I have dealt with a specific Prakrit text. I have generally preferred Sanskrit over Hindi in names and terms (hence *Bhairava* and not *Bhairav/Bheru-jī/Bhairondev*). When dealing with field material however, where I refer to statements in interviews and local sources, I have kept many of the Hindi terms. All Sanskrit and Hindi is given with standard diacritics. I will not distinguish the "dotted" Hindi devanagari version of ढ (the so-called retroflex flap), often transcribed with "ṛ", hence I write "Nākoḍā" and not "Nākoṛā". Other known geographical names are given in English as they appear on English maps. Similarly, Hindi words that have been incorporated into the English vocabulary (such as guru and nirvana) are not given with diacritics. Specific Sanskrit and Hindi terms have been italicized, but not the names of places and people. When dealing with Jain ascetics I have shortened down their names by leaving out various honorifics that are used in Hindi. Hence I have removed *śrī* and the suffix *jī*, but *sūri* I have kept since it is used as a part of the proper name and not separated in Jain practice. A glossary of recurrent and important words is given in the back.

Pictures and Maps



1. A picture of Nakoḍā Bhairava taken from an invitation to a *bhakti* celebration organized by a Bombay congregation in 2009. Note the small picture of Nakoḍā Pārsvanātha on the Bhairava's chest.



2. A real size replica of Nakoḍā Bhairava found at Prakrit Bharati in Jaipur.



3. Possessed man on the ground in front of Pārsvanātha's temple. Surrounding people are singing and praising Nakoḍā Bhairava.



4. Kālā Bhairava 1.



5. Kālā Bhairava 2 situated in the *Dādāvāḍī* in Nākoḍā.



6. Taking the Bhairava's *prasād* in Nākoḍā.



7. One of the non-Jain *pujārīs* in Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha's temple.

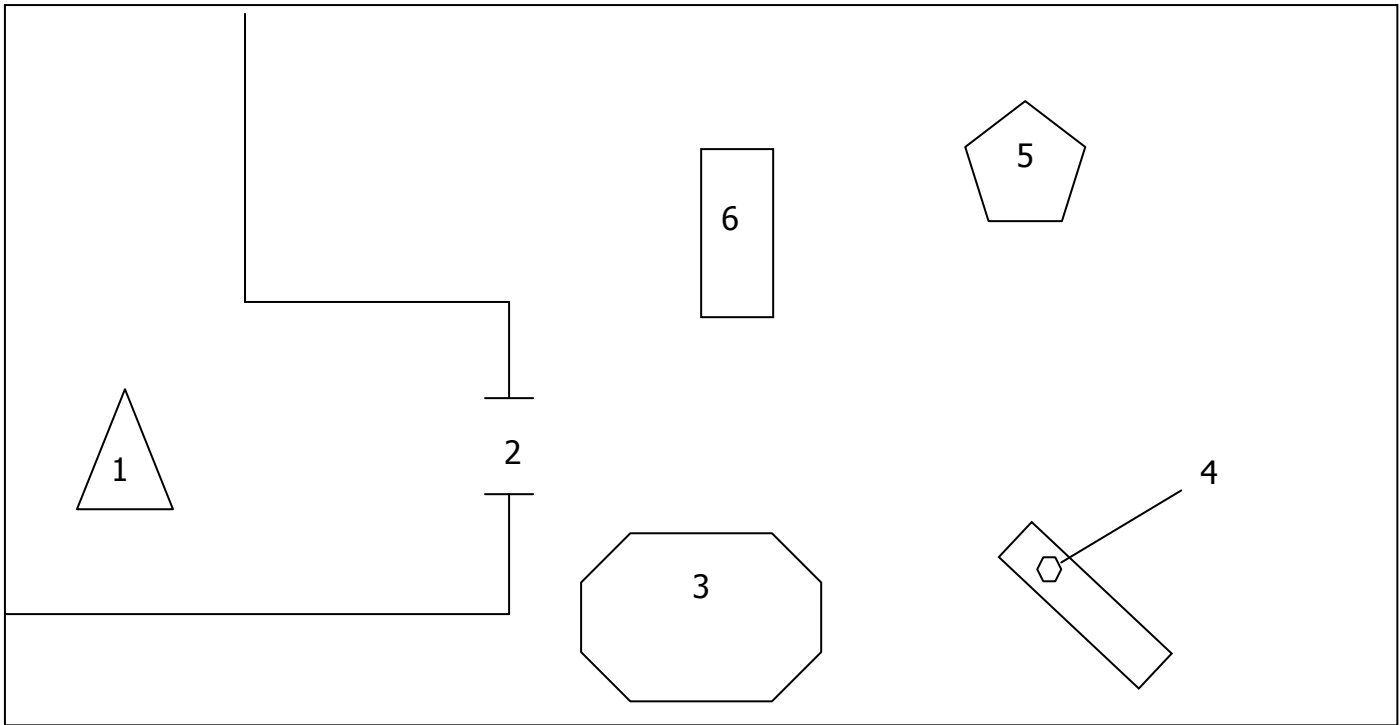
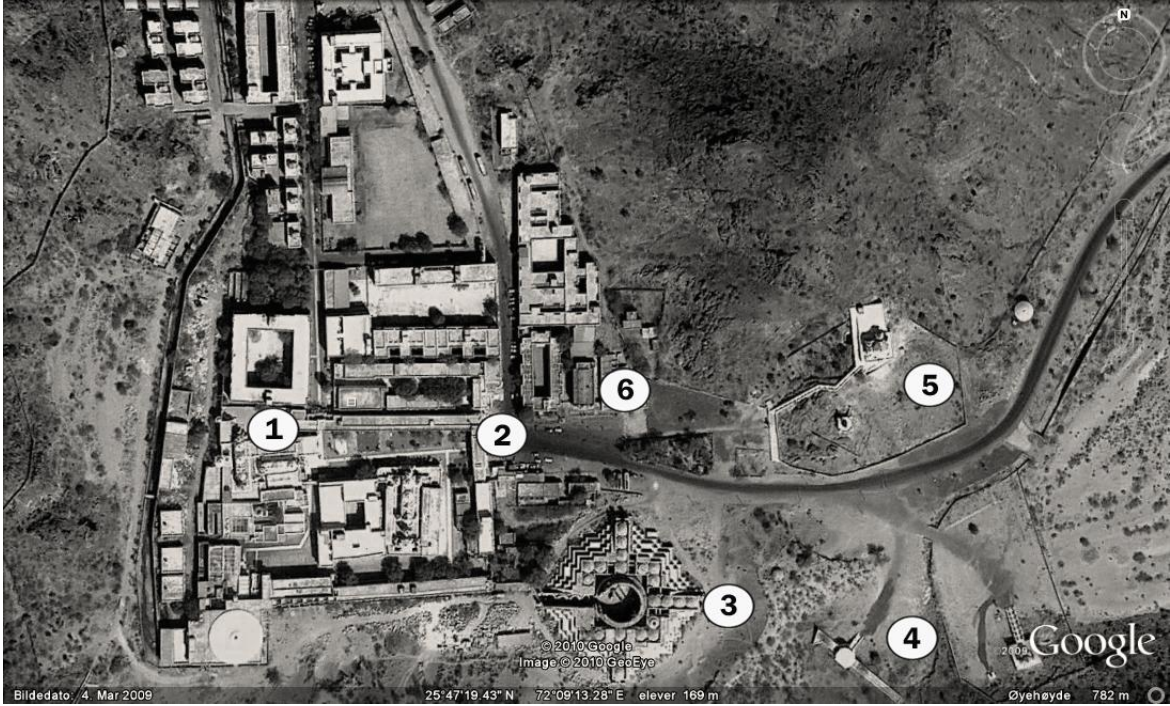


8. A local Bhil visiting Nākoḍā during the annual fair.

Map of India

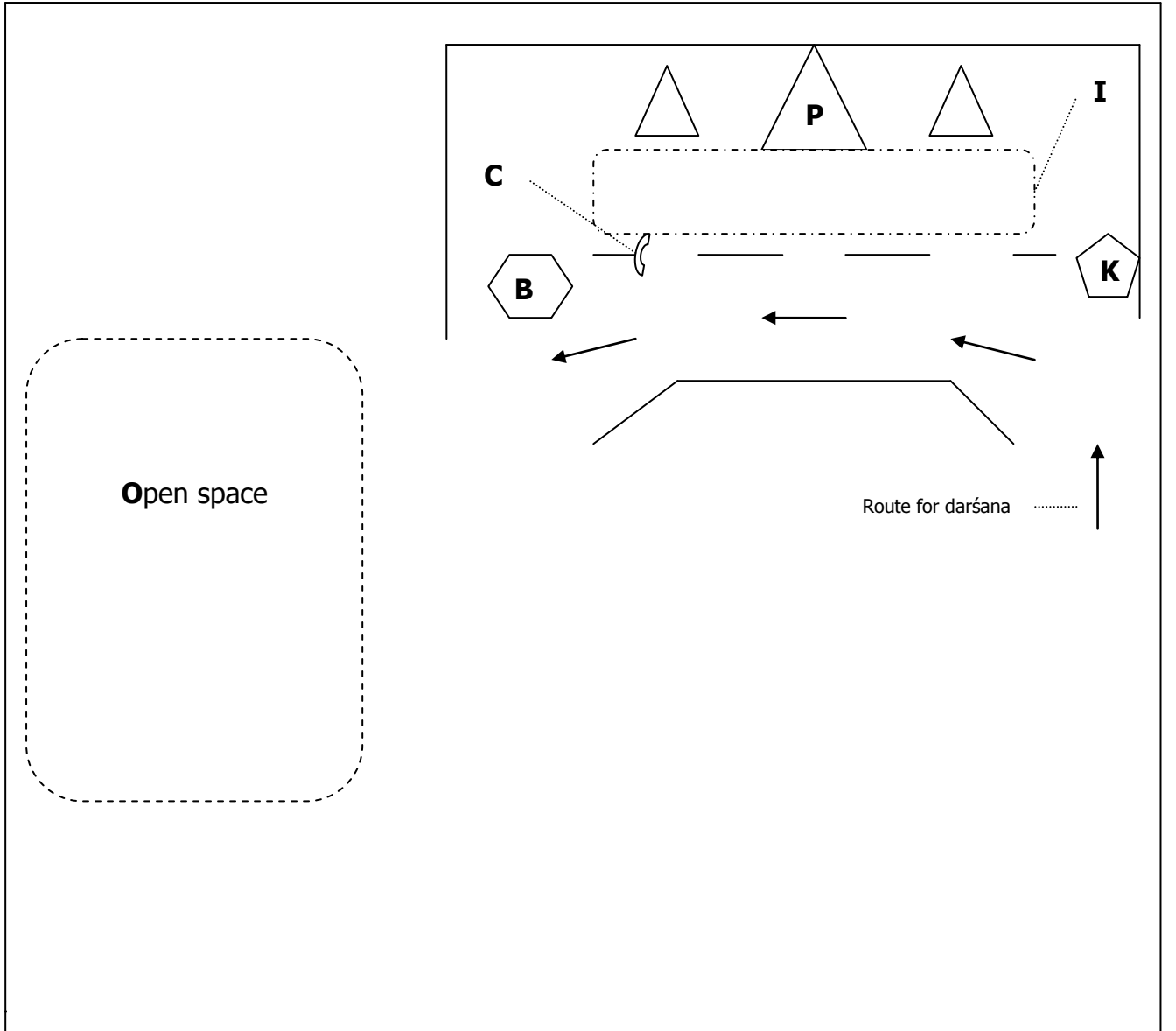


Map of Nākoḍā tīrtha



1. Temple of Pārśvanātha
2. Main entrance to temple compound
3. Samosaraṇa
4. Shrine of Kālā Bhairava 1
5. Dādāvāḍi (inside of which Kālā Bhairava 2 is situated)
6. Smṛti bhavan

Map of Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha's temple



- P** – Pārśvanātha; the two smaller triangles are less famous images of Pārśvanātha.
B – Nākoḍā Bhairava.
K – Kīrtiratnasūri.
I – Inner sanctum where only Jains in *pūjā* clothes are permitted. No possessions happen here.
O – Open space where possessed subjects are taken and oracular services are given.
C – Curtain drawn before Pārśvanātha during Bhairava's *āratī*.
 —→ - Route for Jains and non-Jains to take *darśana* of Pārśvanātha and Nākoḍā Bhairava, along which possessions occur.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This emphasis on the interaction between normative tradition and the social actors who have acquired – or at least have been exposed to – that tradition, is, of course, far from innovative (Spiro 1972:5).

The method of participant observation is before any other associated with Bronisław Malinowski. In his works on indigenous populations of Melanesia he carved out what was to become a central concern for future anthropology, namely the discrepancy between what people say they do and what they actually do. In a fundamental way, this is what this thesis is all about. In the context of a religion such as Jainism, what people say they do is often in accordance with certain normative texts that spell out what Jainism is. The cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava is not spelled out in such texts, hence one of my informants was taken aback when he learned that I was studying Jainism through the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava, exclaiming:

No no! Jainism is altogether different! ...I don't think that this Bheru-ji [Nākoḍā Bhairava] is linked with Jainism...you can't link Nākoḍā with Jainism.

The question then is what to do as an outside observer. We have identified one religion that we call "Jainism", yet some of the actions performed by the followers of this religion that we would classify as religious actions, are not necessarily considered as a part of Jainism by the Jains themselves. According to normative Jainism, deities such as Nākoḍā Bhairava are of no real importance, looking at the actual religious lives of Jains however, we see that he is very important indeed. What Gombrich and Obeyesekere write on Sinhala Buddhists and Buddhism holds true for Jains and their religion as well:

...if we work with the Western conception of religion as involving belief in and action directed towards supernatural beings, we must add that the religious life of Sinhala Buddhists has always (except for a few individuals) included such belief and action: worship of gods and propitiation of demons, belief in and attempted manipulation of supernatural powers - things for which the Buddhist scriptures give no specific authority and which the actors themselves have generally considered to form no part of Buddhism, though perfectly compatible with it (Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1990:3).

If you ask a Jain what Jainism is, she will probably tell you something related to soteriology or perhaps diet, but chances are that she will leave out parts of her behaviour that we would classify as religious, yet she would not necessarily call these parts Jainism. How then should we as scholars understand Jainism? Similarly, the totality of Jain religiosity is not revealed in Jain scriptures. The relationship between the ideal

and the real, normative and popular religion, "great" and "little" traditions has become central to the study of South Asian religions in the last decades, and my thesis is a result and continuation of that interest:

Thus to hold, on the one hand, that religion consists in a set of textual doctrines, in which few people in fact believe (and in which few, probably, ever did believe), is to hold a strange notion of "religion," in contrast to theology or philosophy... To hold, on the other hand, that normative religious doctrine is irrelevant for an understanding of the beliefs of religious actors is to evade one of the most important theoretical problems in the anthropological study of religion (and more especially of the higher religions), viz., the relationship between the real and ideal, the actual and doctrinal, the existential and normative, dimensions of belief systems (Spiro 1972:4-5).

The empirical study of ideology as a topic of investigation in religious studies owes much to the works of the German sociologist Max Weber. Because this thesis is trying to understand the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava and its relation to Jain doctrine, it is dealing with a typical weberian theme (Gellner 2001:11).

The cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava has not been studied before. The popularity of Nākoḍā Bhairava has been noticed in three of the most important ethnographies on Jainism (Babb 1996, Cort 2001, Laidlaw 1995), but this thesis appears to be the first to deal with this cult exclusively and in detail. In a review of various ethnographic studies on Jainism conducted in the last decades Cort noted that there is "still much to be done in terms of fieldwork studies of the Jains, for there are still many gaping holes in our knowledge" (1997:108). It is my hope that this thesis will help fill one of these holes.

More specifically the thesis tries to complement our understanding of Jainism by looking at various aspects of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava, and thereby our understanding of religion in general. Jainism is popularly portrayed as a religion obsessed with forms of asceticism (Cort 2002a:720). Jains themselves also have a tendency to focus on asceticism and self-control when presenting their own tradition. When seen through the perspective of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava however, the picture of Jainism changes.

Chapter 2 and 3 are meant to give the reader a short introduction to the field, firstly to the anthropology of Jainism, and secondly to Jainism in general. The cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava is not unknown to scholars of Jainism, and whatever has been written about it is presented in chapter 2, together with the more general questions that have been asked in ethnographic studies of Jainism. Chapter 3 on *Gods in Jainism* gives a very brief introduction to basic Jain doctrine and the role of gods therein. The pan-Indian god, or gods, known under rubric of *bhairava* is also presented.

In the 4th chapter I introduce the ethnographic setting and methodology of my study. In chapter 5, on the history of Nākoḍā *tīrtha*, I look at the way Jains themselves present their own history as a way of looking at Jainism itself. Hence, the chapter not only tells us something about Nākoḍā, but also the Jain religion in general. In various brochures and other written materials we learn that the incorporation of Nākoḍā Bhairava and his cult into the Jain universe is intimately linked with various Jain mendicants. This again has implications for how we understand the interaction between mendicants and laity, normative and popular religion. Further, it complements the stereotypical understanding of the ascetic as a recluse searching for salvation. The history of Nākoḍā *tīrtha* reveals that Jain mendicancy is much more.

Chapter 6 and 7 deal with various issues related to the religiosity of lay Jains as it is expressed in Nākoḍā. As a pilgrimage site, Nākoḍā features a host of religious activities with various orientations and motivations more or less connected to Jain soteriology and teachings. The congregational worship of the main idol of Pārśvanātha and his guardian deity Nākoḍā Bhairava provides a lens through which Jain religiosity can be investigated. In their worship, the hierarchy of Jain values is established *and* challenged at the same time, hence it is a study of *The Tension Between a Jina and a Deity*.

Although situated in a Jain temple and pilgrimage site, Nākoḍā Bhairava has not always been so firmly established in a Jain setting. The incorporation of him into the Jain universe and transformation of him into a protector of Pārśvanātha is another topic of investigation. In part this is related to the division of Jain and non-Jain and hence relates to Jain religious identity, but also to our definition of Jainism as scholars. To what degree can Nākoḍā Bhairava be understood as Jain, as opposed to a simple "Hindu accretion"? Nākoḍā Bhairava, however, is not the only Bhairava in Nākoḍā. There is also a Kālā Bhairava, who evidently is much less incorporated into Jainism. His shrine is outside the temple complex, although still a part of the Jain pilgrimage site and its Jain administration. The various Bhairavas in Nākoḍā can tell us more about how a Jain deity can come into being and how it is transformed through such a process.

The chapter on Jain possession undoubtedly covers the most surprising discovery of my fieldwork. Jain possession has hardly ever been studied, the only exception being the works of Anne Vallely (2002, forthcoming 2010). According to most literature on Jainism possession is not a part of the Jain religious repertoire at all. The study of the possession cult in Nākoḍā is, I believe, a unique contribution to the anthropology of Jainism. Typically not related to any form of exorcism or relief from evil spirits, the

possessions in Nākoḍā are mainly of the oracular type. In these sessions Nākoḍā Bhairava is believed to enter into the possessed subject before communicating with others. These patterns of possession are not unique in South Asia, but seen in the perspective of Jain studies they are.

While many studies on possession have revolved around psychological and psycho-social theories, trying to uncover the factors *behind* such behaviours, the chapter on Jain possession investigates how possessions are viewed and understood within the Jain community. I also discuss how they should be understood by scholars of Jainism. Contrary, perhaps, to the general view of Jainism as a religion focused on asceticism and self-control with no apparent space for such religious expressions as possession, I argue that possession is not something new or foreign to Jainism. Further, possession is not one thing. There are various types of possession - depending for instance on who possesses and who is possessed - and they have different implications in the Jain scheme of things. In the end, they also have implications for our understanding of Jainism and what kind of religion it "really" is, and further, for our understanding of South Asian religiosity in general.

Chapter 2. Earlier Studies Related to the Cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava

In the following I will give a short presentation of the scholarly works concerning our topic: the cult surrounding Nākoḍā Bhairava (or Nākoḍā Bheron Dev, Nakoṛa Bhairu-jī, Śrī Nakoṛa). It is only in recent decades that the study of Jainism has come to include more sociological and anthropological perspectives, and the material covered here falls mainly in that category. To my knowledge, the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava has not been the subject of any longer investigation by any scholar. Hence the material to be presented here covers the topic in a more indirect fashion.

This presentation of earlier anthropological studies on Jainism serves two purposes. Firstly, I present what we already know about the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava. Doing fieldwork on Jains in Rajasthan - as all the presented scholars have - it would be impossible not to hear of or see anything related to Nākoḍā Bhairava as he is a famous god. Secondly, it will provide a background for my own investigation, presenting the key questions that have been asked in the study of Jainism as practiced on Indian soil. Some of them turned out to be central in my own thesis as well.

A recurring theme in the study of Jainism as a lived tradition is the ostensible contradiction between other-worldly and this-worldly orientations, the opposition between liberation through asceticism and well-being in the world. The Jains constitute a very wealthy community in India, and at the same time they worship the Jinas who reject just such wealth. This is relevant to the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava as it seems to contradict the hegemonic, soteriological *mokṣa-mārg* ideology, i.e. it can be located on the more this-worldly end of the spectrum. Put quite simply, Nākoḍā Bhairava seems to *give* what Jainism, or at least Jain soteriology, tells its followers to *give up*. A second important topic is concerned with cosmology and ritual. The status and “worship-worthiness” of deities such as Nākoḍā Bhairava is peculiar in the Jain context. On the one hand they are secondary to the Jinas according to the normative perspective. On the other hand they are very popular among lay Jains because, unlike the liberated Jinas, these deities can be approached and contacted through rituals. Unlike the Jina, they are “transactional beings”¹. Nākoḍā Bhairava’s cosmological status leads to important ritual consequences. A third topic is related to inter-religious activity at Jain pilgrimage sites such as Nākoḍā. At the annual fair in Nākoḍā, and also on other occasions, Jains engage in religious and ritual activity with non-Jain groups. This is perhaps the only time one can

¹ Term adopted from Babb (1996).

expect to see scheduled caste and tribe members taking *darṣana* of a Jain idol side by side with Jains.

In his *Absent Lord* (1996), based on fieldwork among Śvetāmbara *Mūrtipūjāks* in Jaipur and Ahmedabad, Lawrence A. Babb poses the following question: what does it mean to worship indifferent beings (Jinas) beyond reach? Focusing on the ritual culture among lay Śvetāmbara Jains, the other main issue is the position of ordinary lay Jains and their worldly aspirations in what seems to be a radical world-rejecting vision of the world. Or to put it the other way around: "What place can there be for such a radically world-rejecting vision of the world in the lives of ordinary men and women?" (1996:9) Worship and ritual, Babb believes, provides a lens through which these issues can be fruitfully investigated.

The value of asceticism is so strong in Jain traditions that it has pushed the object of proper worship into a transactional non-existence. The adjective "proper" points to a fact Babb stresses more than once: "Jains worship ascetics, and this is the most important single fact about Jain ritual culture" (ibid:23). Since ascetic values are central to the Jain tradition's highest values, ascetics and the Jinas are the only ones who are truly worship-worthy. This leads to an interesting ritual logic: the greater the ascetic's asceticism, the more worthy she is of worship. At the same time asceticism makes her less accessible to interaction with worshippers (ibid:10).

When individuals perform the eightfold worship (*aṣṭaparakārī pūjā*) of a Jina, more or less all Jains are clear on the fact that the Jina cannot in any way respond to the worship. By worshipping his virtues and qualities, the worshipper tries to emulate the ascetic, hence the ritual is reflexive (ibid:91-3). The offerings are not *given to* the Jina, they are rather *given up* as a symbol of renunciation. It should be clear that such offerings could not be redistributed in the form of *prasād* in this context. In fact the offerings are "pushed off the edge of the Jain world" (ibid:95); the Jains hire non-Jain *pujārīs* who finally remove the offerings and take them as payment. In the periodical congregational worship of the five auspicious moments of a Jina, the ritual role of the worshipper is different from the one in the eightfold worship. In this case the worshipper's role is equivalent to that of Indra and Indrāṇī (ibid:79-82). In Jain mythology they are the ones who perform the ritual bathing of the newborn Jina at the summit of Mt. Meru, which is re-enacted in the congregational ritual. These gods are the archetypical worshippers. Hence, they are not to be worshipped themselves, but function as models for humans who wish to worship the Jina. At the same time, the gods are somewhat opposite of the Jina. As a result of past good deeds they are now indulging in

unrestricted enjoyment in heavens. They seem to live in the exact delights and felicities that the ascetic and pious lay Jain renounces (ibid:78).

In the cult of the Dādāgurus, the tension between this- and other-worldly orientations is brought into a more stable relationship (ibid:103). The four Dādāgurus are famous Śvetāmbara ascetics who all lived in the time period between the 11th and 16th century. Their hagiographies focus on their exemplary lives, virtues and on their miraculous actions. Because they did not reach final liberation (which according to Jain cosmography has been impossible for more than 2000 years), they occur as transactional beings in rituals. They are powerful beings to whom one can appeal directly for assistance in worldly affairs. The rituals directed towards them are not reflexive; instead the worshipper hopes and expects that her worship will bring quite explicit worldly results (ibid:128). In contrast to deities such as Nākoḍā Bhairava, the worship of Dādāgurus is more legitimate because they are ascetics - the only ones who are truly worthy of worship in Jainism. The question of the legitimacy of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava within the Jain context becomes important when we look at Nākoḍā today.

In chapter 6 I argue that there is a tension between a Jina and a deity, a tension between hierarchy in theory (doctrine) and practice (actual worship) that is foreshadowed in Babb's study of the Dādāgurus. As in the worship of Nākoḍā Bhairava, the devotees must always honour the Jina first when they visit the temples of Dādāgurus. But being ascetics, the difference between a Dādāguru and a Jina is more of degree than of kind. In this sense the Dādāgurus seem to fuse the ascetic and the deity (ibid:130). The cult of Dādāgurus does not impose ascetic values on the worshipper, and the key verb here is not "emulation", but rather "connection" (ibid:172). This is true in the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava as well. But in the case of worship of Nākoḍā Bhairava the degree of connection is taken one step further when worshippers are possessed by him. This is the topic of chapter 7.

The cult of the Dādāgurus has important similarities to the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava. The main motivation behind worship in both cults seems to be strictly connected to worldly affairs, a fact that is openly confessed to by many Jains, although it at the same time is not considered to be a 100% legitimate goal in "true Jainism" (ibid:81, 126). Both Dādāgurus and Nākoḍā Bhairava belong to a Jain pantheon of non-liberated beings. This in turn makes them ritually transactional, and food-offerings (*prasād*) can be recovered in both cases. Lastly, the importance of miracles is stressed in both cults. Babb reports that although many Jains, when explicitly asked, would say that these Dādāgurus now must be deities, they were usually visualized and thought of as

ascetics (ibid:133-4). Not only are they legitimized in Jain terms through their promulgation and protection of Jainism - this is also true for deities such as Nākoḍā Bhairava - they are also connected to Mahāvīra and the Jinas by the fact that they were ascetics, and in the end therefore, are more worthy of worship than other non-liberated beings (ibid:134). Whilst doing fieldwork in Nākoḍā, I brought the question of worship-worthiness with me trying to understand how and to what degree worship of a deity was allowed within a temple dedicated to a Jina.

Babb also mentions the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava in his book (ibid:80-1, 95-6). We learn that sweet offerings can be bought in the temple compound in Nākoḍā, but that only a small portion of it is then brought into the temple building where Nākoḍā Bhairava and Pārśvanātha reside. This small portion cannot be eaten or taken outside the temple building, but presumably goes to the temple staff. The remaining part becomes the Bhairava's *prasād*, but this again must be consumed within the temple compound. Babb records how people believe that if one transgresses these rules, accidents can and will occur. As to why the intake of the offerings is geographically restricted, he offers two interpretations: It will maintain high attendance as it will "force" devotees who want the Bhairava's *prasād* to visit Nākoḍā. Or it may be that the "relationship between deity and worshipper, as opposed to Jina and worshipper, is being quarantined" (ibid:96). The worldly give-and-take is usually held outside the Jinas temples, but in this case it is "subordinated to higher values by keeping it within" (ibid).

Babb also notes that it is the image of Pārśvanātha that – at least in theory - is the principal object of worship in the temple in Nākoḍā, but that people would bid more money to get the privilege of performing the Bhairava's worship than that of Pārśvanātha². Brochures distributed by the temple underlined this spiritual hierarchy by giving the Bhairava only passing mention. Finally Babb observes that Nākoḍā Bhairava's image is commonly installed in temples and household shrines in Jaipur, and that businessmen consider him a business partner and even pledge a certain percentage of their profits to him.

John E. Cort's book, *Jains in the World* (2001), is a study of the Śvetāmbara *Mūrtipūjāk* Jain laity in Patan, a city in Gujarat. It is focused on the tension between the explicit ideology of *mokṣa-mārg* and the "realm of wellbeing" (2001:6-8). The latter is not ideologically defined by the tradition, but still exists within the Jain tradition. A range of words connected to health, content, peace, prosperity, profit and auspiciousness are

² Jains, as we will see, have the tradition of auctioning the rights to perform various rituals (see chapter 6.1).

placed under the analytical category *wellbeing*, a category based on implicitly expressed values that can be observed, not so much in scriptures, as in behaviour. *Mokṣa-mārg* refers to the Jain path of liberation, i.e. Jain soteriology. The two realms do not, however, correspond to lay or mendicant spheres, but can be found in both.

It seems from the perspective of *mokṣa-mārg* that one must choose between ascetic renunciation and the removal of karmic bondage, or the accumulation of good karma and prosperity in the world. Cort demonstrates that both Jain literature and behaviour of contemporary Jains point to the fact that both can be obtained, and that the two are, in fact, mutually dependent. After all, one must not forget that wealth is in fact necessary and laudable for the survival of the mendicants. It is mainly through asceticism in the form of fasting that Jains can progress on their way towards final liberation, but asceticism does not only bear soteriological fruits. In fact, different values of wellbeing is often mentioned and believed to come as a result of asceticism (ibid:138-41).

During *Paryuṣaṇ*, the most important Jain festival where Mahāvīra's birth is celebrated, the interplay between *mokṣa-mārg* and wellbeing comes to the fore. At the time of Mahāvīra's conception, his mother is said to have had 14 dreams, and the replicas of these dreams used in the ritual commemorating of the birth "are a catalogue of pan-Indian emblems of wellbeing" (ibid:154). An auction is held to get the honour of performing the ritual acts connected to each emblem. Cort notes how the fourth dream of the goddess Lakṣmī receives the highest bids. Lakṣmī, we know, is the goddess of wealth and prosperity. She again plays an important role during Dīvalī, where a special Lakṣmī-*pūjā* is held with the family account book (ibid:168-70). The Kalpa Sūtra, which is recited during *Paryuṣaṇ*, recounts how the birth of Mahāvīra resulted in increase of worldly wellbeing. Everything worldly it seems, including money, agriculture, imperial power and even the army, increased. As a result his parents named him Vardhamāna - The Increasing One. The multivocality of the many symbols and words used in Jain ritual and stories points to the unresolved tension between *mokṣa-mārg* and wellbeing (ibid:188-200).

In connection with Nākoḍā Bhairava, Cort mentions how the cult fits into a pattern of other cults propagated by ideologues to try to prevent lay Jains from worshipping non-Jain deities to meet their worldly needs, an argument I investigate in chapter 5 on the history of Nākoḍā *tīrtha*. A cult sharing many similarities to that of Nākoḍā Bhairava, is the cult of Ghaṇṭākarna Mahāvīra, which receives some attention from Cort (ibid:91, 164-7). In its present form it seems to have been invented by the

monk Buddhisāgarusūri (1874-1925) in response to Jains' worship of a Muslim *pir* (a deceased saint) in the town of Mahudi (Gujarat). After a longer fast at this saint's shrine, Buddhisāgarusūri had a vision of Ghaṇṭākarna and instituted his shrine and cult. Just as with Nākoḍā Bhairava, Ghaṇṭākarna is addressed for help in worldly matters, or as Cort would have it, for wellbeing. During Dīvalī a special fire sacrifice is held for him. Coconuts and a special sweet is given to him and reclaimed as *prasād* by the devotees. In the mantras recited to him one asks for all kinds of worldly benefits such as health, satisfaction and success. Just as in the case of Nākoḍā Bhairava, Ghaṇṭākarna's image is found in a small village and is a popular destination for pilgrimage.

Based on fieldwork among the Khartar Gacch³ Śvetāmbara *Mūrtipūjāk* Jains in Jaipur, James Laidlaw's *Riches and Renunciation* (1995) offers the most direct response to Max Weber's small chapter on Jainism in *The Religion of India* (1958). The combination of extreme asceticism and great economic success is a remarkable feature of the Jain community. Laidlaw notes how fasts, festivals and rituals are said to be beneficial in achieving religious as well as more mundane goals. During Dīvalī, Gautam Svāmī (Mahāvīra's closest pupil) is celebrated, and felicity and auspiciousness is explicitly expressed in Jain idioms. The celebration actually commemorates Gautam Svāmī's achievement of omniscience. In this case, well-being and asceticism are not understood as mutually exclusive, but rather as interconnected. Being rich or accumulating wealth is never critiqued as such in Jainism, and in fact some successful businessmen forsake their wealth to become monks. Such abandonment can only be valuable if one has something to abandon.

As a direct response to Weber's claim that there are striking similarities between Protestants and Jains in relation to ethics and economic behaviour, Laidlaw states that there is no reason to believe that the private individual fear of one's destiny could motivate to a particular economic behaviour in Jainism (1995:362). Even though many world-affirming ideals are formulated in Jain religious idioms, it does not make them consistent with asceticism (ibid:363). There is a kind of negotiation in the Jain tradition between this- and other-worldly orientation, but when "Jain businessmen respond to the ascetic injunctions of their religion, they will put down their pens and account-books" and hence there is no compelling reason to attribute their economic success to the asceticism of mendicants or lay people's emulation of it (ibid).

³ The Śvetāmbara *Mūrtipūjāk* mendicants are divided in various *gacchs* that follow separate lineages. The biggest group is the Tapā Gacch, but Khartar Gacch is the dominant group in Jaipur. Traditionally there were many such groups, but only 5 left today (see Babb 1996:17-91 and Cort 2001:42-3).

Laidlaw has more to tell us concerning Nākoḍā Bhairava (ibid:71-5). The main idol of Pārśvanātha in his temple in Nākoḍā is said to have been rescued from Muslims many years ago. As they reached Nākoḍā with this rescued idol, the cart on which it was placed could not be moved anymore. The idol of the Jina had chosen its place and local protector, namely Nākoḍā Bhairava.

Earlier, Laidlaw informs us, cosmological treatises mapping out the terrain and workings of deities such as Nākoḍā Bhairava were frequent. This is no longer the case. When asking lay Jains more in detail about the Bhairava, he received quite different answers. In short, even though such deities have a clear image in the minds of people, the realm to which they belong seems to be rather unclear. He found the same lack of clarity when asking Jains to explain how miracles by deities and Dādāgurus actually work vis-à-vis the doctrine of karma. Different explanations were given, while some denied the existence of miracles altogether. My study also reveals the multiplicity of meanings and interpretations that Jains attach to the various activities that go on in Nākoḍā. In fieldwork there is not one Jainism, but many Jains.

Laidlaw observed that almost every Śvetāmbara Jain office and shop in Jaipur has a photograph of Nākoḍā Bhairava, and that listing him as a part-owner of the family firm, many make a yearly payment to the temple funds in return for the help he bestows in business and otherwise. As in Babb's case, accidents as a result of taking the Bhairava's *prasād* outside the temple premises were reported.

In a 25 pages long article entitled *Temple Fairs and Miracles* (1991), Caroline Humphrey is interested in the annual fairs (*melā*) held at four pilgrimage destinations, Nākoḍā being one of them. These fairs have a religious importance, and the highlight of the occasion is the ritual procession of the Jina *mūrti*. A striking feature in all these fairs is that they attract not only Jains of different sects and schools, but also other non-Jain groups such as scheduled castes and tribes. These latter groups also take part in some of the same religious activities as the Jains. According to Humphrey, this is the only time that Jains interact on a religious level with other groups (1991:204).

Common to all these sites is their rather peripheral geographic location in places with a low Jain population. Besides visiting Jains, other locals who believe in the powers of the Jina *mūrti*, are also drawn to the fair. To understand why non-Jains are attracted to these temples one must know the mythical history attached to the *mūrtis* themselves. The story of how the main idol of Pārśvanātha came to Nākoḍā presented by Humphrey is somewhat different from that of Laidlaw given above. According to Humphrey's version, it is believed that a local deity, that is Nākoḍā Bhairava, appeared in a lay Jain's

dream and pointed out the location of the Pārśvanātha *mūrti*. Having dug it up from the earth, it was placed on a cart, but the cart would only move in one direction. It was therefore taken in that direction and found its place. Humphrey notes that Nākoḍā has been a site for Jain activity since the third century AD onwards (ibid: 220). Originally, the main temple was not dedicated to Pārśvanātha, but to Mahāvīra. Only two things have remained the same over time: the site, and the local territorial deity Nākoḍā Bhairava. Although Nākoḍā Bhairava may have been a local deity for hundreds of years, his relationship to Jainism has certainly not been the same in all those years. How Nākoḍā Bhairava and other Bhairavas in Nākoḍā are incorporated into the Jain universe will be discussed in chapter 6 (especially 6.5).

As mentioned, non-Jain attendants believe in the Jina *mūrti*'s power and come to take *darśana*. They are allowed into the temple, but only to take *darśana*. The performance of *pūjā* is restricted to Jains only. Non-Jains come for relief of spirit possession and other worldly benefits. The strict division that Jains make between the Jina as a liberated being, and the Bhairava as a protector deity is not made by the non-Jain locals. The Jains seem to allow a multiplicity of meanings regarding the *mūrti* and the religious occasion, but the specific "Jain meanings" are not revealed to non-Jain outsiders. The many meanings non-Jains attach to the Jina have little or nothing to do with Jainism and Jain doctrine (ibid:218). In this sense the Jains open up their sacra to all, while simultaneously remaining distinct (ibid:225). They not only lend out money, but also their gods, and thereby establish hierarchy (ibid:224). Humphrey noted that while Jains were the only to participate in the auctioning of performing certain ritual acts, local non-Jain groups were often assigned to other special roles in the procession.

My findings while doing fieldwork in Nākoḍā did not coincide with Humphrey's in certain areas. The strict separation between Jain and non-Jain appeared more blurry to me in relation to worship and possession. Non-Jains would partake in auctions that were held for the performance of various rituals, and, more importantly in this thesis, Jains participated in the possession cult in Nākoḍā. But the prevalent pattern was not that people would come to get relief from spirit possession, instead people came to become possessed by Nākoḍā Bhairava himself or, more typically, to interact with people who were possessed by Nākoḍā Bhairava. This sort of possession, I will argue chapter 7, has different implications in the context of Jainism than the "sinful spirit possessions" Humphrey reports (ibid:210, 222). My fieldwork revealed that most possessions in Nākoḍā are not negative spirit possessions, but positive deity possessions.

Chapter 3. Gods in Jainism

It might come as a surprise to some that a study on Jainism has a “lower” deity as its main focus, and not a Jina or an ascetic, or activities directly related to these. In fact, Jainism is often referred to as atheistic and Jain religious activity directed towards deities is often negatively valued. Hence, we find in Padmanabh Jaini’s modern classic on Jainism that:

Even Jainas, however, have not been totally *immune* to the lure of “divine powers” (1979:194 [my italics]).

By referring to a lack of immunity this scholar seems to indicate that deities and their powers are diseases. He further writes that deities, of the kind we will investigate in this study:

May often be appealed to...by “weaker” segments of the Jaina community (ibid).

Another acknowledged researcher on Jainism, Vilas A. Sangave, puts it quite bluntly when he concludes that worship of deities:

...is certainly against the spirit of Jainism (1980:227).

Even the, at least in Jain studies, well-known Irish missionary Mrs Stevenson, who laments over the lack of a Jain god that intervenes in our salvation, is not happy with the Jain deities:

Could anything show more clearly the terrible way in which caste has fettered not only the lives and customs of the Jaina but even their imagination, than this fact that the very gods who serve are regarded as polluted and contaminated by that service? (1915:271)

Although these remarks on gods and deities are in tune with views found in specific segments of the Jain community, they are also typical of a certain understanding of Jainism which is informed more by normative scriptures and personal views than the actual reality of Jain religiosity. It is true that you can find Jains, lay and ascetics alike, who will regard deities as not being part of Jainism proper, and see them merely as a result of “Hindu influences” and the decay of our times, but it is certainly also true that many Jains invest much time, effort and money in worshipping deities of various kinds and develop strong emotions towards them. In my fieldwork I encountered both types. As we will see, this can also be said of monks and nuns who in the past and present

devoted much of their time to propagate and support cults of such beings. In these cases we find that deities are not seen as alien to any kind of “pure Jainism”, and that their existence is celebrated and saluted by Jains in different contexts and ways that to certain degrees are specific to the Jain community (Cort 1987; Orr 1999). Further, such deity cults do not exist in a vacuum, totally unrelated to Jain doctrine and soteriology. The quotes by Jaini and Sangave above therefore, reveal a wish to construct a *model for* how Jainism ought to be, rather than a *model of* Jainism as it is actually practiced (Cort 1990a:54ff). As I hope to demonstrate in this chapter, to dismiss gods and deities as alien to Jainism is at best imprecise. So let us first make clear what we here mean by the terms *deities* and *gods* in the context of Jainism, and how such beings are to be understood within Jain cosmology and doctrine.

The terms *Jainism* and *Jains* are derived from the Sanskrit *jina* which translates to “conqueror”. This epithet is given to the 24 individuals in each cosmic half-cycle in our part of the universe who, through conquering the bonds of karma and the passions of the world, have been freed from the cycle of birth and death by obtaining omniscience (*kevalajñāna*), after which they have promulgated the path that leads to this very goal until they left their final physical body and attained final liberation known as *mokṣa*. The Jina is to Jainism what the Buddha is to Buddhism. They are also referred to as Tīrthaṅkaras. This title can refer to a ford (*tīrtha*) in the sense that a Tīrthaṅkara creates a ford over the ocean of existence, that is, they teach us the way to liberation. It is also understood to refer to the fact that they establish the Jain community as a whole, and that they collectively are a crossing place (Babb 1996:5). In our cosmological period and region we have already had our 24 Jinas, the last one being Mahāvīra, and before him Pārśvanātha. It should be clear that these 24 Jinas are the main focus of Jain religious activity and attention. As Babb rightly underscores time and again in his book (1996), Jains worship ascetics, and the Jinas are the ascetics *per se* in Jainism. There is one “problem”, however - which becomes the starting point of Babb’s book – namely that the Jinas are completely beyond this world and the reach of any prayer, petition or ritual activity.

The Jinas are collectively considered as God (*bhagvan*), and hence many Jains deny that they are atheists. It is simply that they deny that such a God has any say in granting our liberation or creating the universe, like many of their Hindu theological and philosophical colleagues would argue. The great Jain scholar Hemacandra explains in his influential *Yogaśāstra*, composed in the 12th century:

God is [that] *arhat* and Supreme Lord who is omniscient, who has conquered defects such as attachment [and aversion], who is worshipped in the three worlds [by gods, demons, humans and so forth], and who explain things as they really are (Qvarnström 2002:31).

Hence a liberated man is the most worthy of worship in Jainism, but at the same time such a person will be completely beyond this world from the time of death onwards. From this it is clear that Jains cannot turn to the Jinas for help in their everyday lives. In Babb's apt expression, the Jina is an *Absent Lord* (1996). Instead they must turn to other non-liberated agents, such as gods, who therefore by definition have a lower status than the liberated Jinas. In fact, as we see in the quote above, they worship the Jinas. It is to these agents I will refer to when using the terms deities, gods and goddesses.

That deities have a relatively prominent role in Jainism as a lived tradition is a known fact to modern scholars on Jainism with more anthropological inclinations. The existence of gods and deities in general has never been denied by Jains, it is only their role in salvation of man and the creation of cosmos that has been staunchly repudiated. Hemacandra explains:

Such deities [as Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā], who are faulted by blemishes such as attachment to women, weapons and rosaries, [respectively], and who are given to controlling and favouring [people], cannot lead [anyone] to liberation. How could those [deities], who [themselves] have lost their composure by excitements such as dancing, gaiety and music, be able to lead their followers to the peaceful state [of liberation]? (ibid:32)

Hence we find that, although not relevant to soteriology, gods and goddesses have nonetheless held a significant position in the Jain religious landscape ever since its beginnings. The oldest image of the pan-Indian goddess Sarasvatī known to us today for instance, is in fact of Jain origin (Dundas 2002:214).

Deities of both gender and superhuman spirits of different kinds, malicious and benevolent, appear in Jain cosmology, philosophical treatments, iconography, in the stories and hagiographies of Jinas and other deceased ascetics, in treatises on pilgrimage, in more or less independent cults from medieval time until the present, in Jain tantra, as models in rituals re-enacted by devotees, in various stories of possession and conversion, in festivals such as Paryuṣaṇ and Dīvālī where Lakṣmī has a prominent role, in the form of Gaṇeśa, Sarasvatī and other pan-Indian deities, as clan- and family deities (recounted in clan histories and myths of origin), visited in connection with family matters such as marriage and tonsure ceremonies and, to be sure, in many other instances. I would be very surprised if there ever existed a time in which lay Jain

communities did not appeal to such deities and indulged in various religious activities involving these, except perhaps in very recent times. To assert that Jainism is atheistic has at least two problems: 1) many Jains do not accept this as the Jinas collectively are seen as God, 2) one might get the impression that Jains do not worship or appeal to any deities, however low their status might be considered to be by certain segments of the Jain community, or in the perspective of soteriology. Further, we will find that many Jain ascetics have been and are involved in propagating and forming deity cults of various kinds. There is no clear cut distinction which enables us to say that such expressions of more popular religion related to deities are only found among the laity, or that these are simply popular elements pressed unto a core of "pure Jainism" held by monks and nuns.

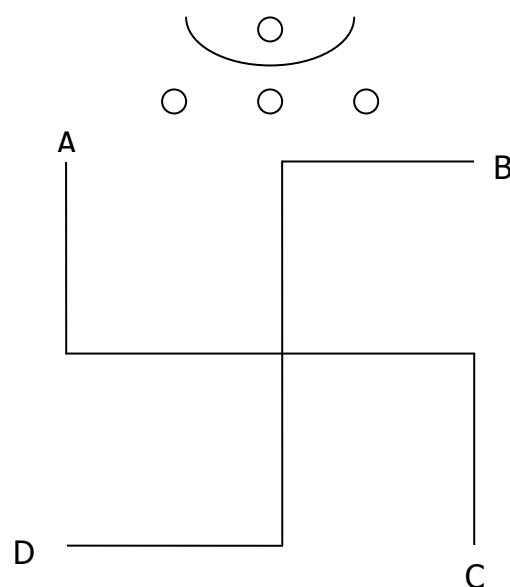
The various Jain deities and other celestial beings appear under different names in different categories, the more general terms being *deva/devī*, *yakṣa/yakṣī* and *vyantara*. Some specific gods may appear in certain numerical constellations such as the 16 *vidyādevī* (tantric goddesses of magical wisdom) or the 8 *lokapāla* (earth guardians). Categories closer to the deity we are dealing with here are the *adhiṣṭāyak deva*, *bhomiya*, *kṣetrapāl* or, as in our case, *bhairava*. These could perhaps all be translated into "local male protector deity" (Cort 2001:197). Various English translations are used according to the specific activities related to the deity in question. There are clan or family deities, tantric goddesses or, as in many cases when the deities are found next to a Jina or by the entrance to a Jina's temple, they are referred to as Jina attendants, ancillary deities, protectional guardians, territorial gods or as guardian or tutelary deities.

3.1 The Jain Cosmos

I will not try to present the various ways in which deities appear in various Jain contexts through history, but before we come to Nākoḍā Bhairava, we should know a little more about how some Jain deities come into being and the location of their existence in cosmos. As mentioned above, Jains have never denied the existence of deities. In classical Jain cosmology the universe is said to have a shape similar to a keyhole, which in a stylised version has become a standard symbol for Jainism over the last 35 years (Dundas 2002:91-2). It is said to be of enormous size and divided into three main areas. The upper and lower parts consist of various heavens and hells, whereas the tiny middle section is where we humans are to be found. Innumerable living souls inhabit these worlds, but our tiny place in this vast universe is of major importance, for it is only here, in the form of a human, that a living being can reach liberation, upon which the soul will go to a crescent-shaped abode at the very top of the universe, never to be reborn again.

The deities dwell in the various heavens of enjoyment (*bhogbhūmi*) and have reached these destinations according to the fruits of their former actions. Although highly pleasurable, lodging here is only temporal and not as desirable as a human existence according to some texts, for it is not possible to achieve liberation here. We therefore find that *puṇya* - the merit of good actions - have a rather peculiar position in Jainism. It is through the accumulation of *puṇya* that one can in fact become a deity, but it is only by shredding of karma that one can reach liberation. We shall not pursue this issue further here, suffice it to say that Jain gods and goddesses are often thought of as Jain laymen and laywomen who through their meritorious actions have been reborn as deities.

Another famous Jain symbol, from which we can learn more of the abode of deities, is the swastika (see figure under). It shows us the different realms in which we can be reborn: the human (A), the celestial (B), the hellish (C) and finally the realm of plants and animals (D). The three aligned dots refer to the three jewels through which one can reach liberation, symbolised by the crescent and dot on the top of the svastika. The three jewels are right faith, right understanding and right conduct. This clearly shows us that in the perspective of liberation and Jain soteriology, deities are not of importance. They are in fact of no importance, and can in certain degrees be said to be of lower status than humans in the sense that they cannot reach liberation in their current form and existence. Only humans can do this.



The tradition of linking a Jina with a *yakṣa* and *yakṣī*, divine male and female attendants, can be traced back to as early as the 1st century AD (Dundas 2002:213).

According to Dundas some of them have certainly been a part of Jainism ever since its beginnings (ibid). Padmanabh Jaini does not accept this when he writes that:

All doctrinal compromises have their price, Jaina lay-people, who previously had only worshipped the Jinas, were increasingly attracted to the worldly benefits available from *yakṣas* (1991:196).

He suggests that there actually was a time when lay Jains did not appeal to any deities, the evidence for which he never presents. The idea of a “golden past” of Jainism is strong in a Jain community that believes that our world is in a spiritual and general societal degeneration and decline. This *emic* perspective should not be adopted uncritically. Dundas argues that deities have been a part of Jainism ever since its beginnings and I see no reason to doubt this. Jainism started out as a soteriology among ascetics, but the householders who eventually decided to support them were never supposed to follow that soteriology. The Jain religion has never put strict bonds on its laity especially in terms of worldly matters under which much Jain lay religiosity would fall, such as praying to a protective deity in order to get a healthy son. In the words of Cort, “there is a built-in tolerance of a broader but still bounded range of lay behaviour” (2001:29), and this range certainly includes the possibility to pray to deities for worldly support. Jainism as a soteriology is not concerned with such matters *per se* as the following formulation from the 10th century ascetic Somadeva points out:

There are only two duties of the layman: The mundane (*laukika*) and the supermundane (*pāralaukika*). The former depends on the world and the costumes thereof (*lokāśraya*); The latter is what one learns from the words of the Jina (Jaini 1991:188).

Hence we should not think of Jainism as having some sort of “golden past” where pure soteriological teachings governed all of Jain religious life, but rather that Jain religiosity (especially that of the laity) has always been more than soteriology. And this “more” has often been related to that soteriology so that it should not necessarily be considered as simple “Hindu accretion”⁴, but as a part of a religion we can identify as Jainism. When we look into the mythological stories of certain Jain deities we see why this must be.

3.2 Stories of Jain Deities

As mentioned, the different Jinas are linked to specific ancillary deities who often have their own mythological stories that explain their appearances. Some of these have

⁴ See Orr (1999) for a discussion on what she calls the “borrowing hypothesis”.

become more popular than others and at certain points in time they seem to have become objects of cults on their own, more or less independent of the Jina (Dundas 2002:213). A good example of this is Dharaṇendra and Padmāvati, the male and female protectors of the 23rd Jina Pārśvanātha. The story of how they came to flank Pārśvanātha is famous and known to many Jains. While wandering around on earth, Pārśvanātha came across a brahman who was performing the five fire penance. Realising that two snakes were in the burning logs used by the brahman, Pārśvanātha tried to save them and in the process they were reborn as deities. Later, when the same brahman, this time in the form of demon, tried to disturb Pārśvanātha's meditation with rainstorms, Dharaṇendra and Padmāvati lifted Pārśvanātha up from the flooding rainwater and protected him from the rains by spreading their cobra hoods above him. The snake hoods found on the many iconographic representations of Pārśvanātha reflect this story. There is evidence for this link between Pārśvanātha and snakes going more than 2000 years back (ibid:33, n37). There is some evidence to suggest that more or less independent cults were developed around Dharaṇendra, and much evidence of such cults revolving around Padmāvati. Even today the popularity of this goddess is easily seen in her many appearances in numerous Jain temples. That Pārśvanātha himself is considered to be a more popular Jina than Mahāvīra is probably also related to these two deities (Jaini 1991:194-5).

The Jain pilgrimage text *Vividhatīrthakalpa* from the 14th century recounts how the deities Kapardin and Ambikā came into being (Granoff 1993:182-8). The first story concerns the headman Kavaḍḍi. During a rainy season two Jain monks came to Kavaḍḍi's village and he offered them to stay under the condition that they would not preach religion to him for, as he put it: "I prefer sin myself (ibid:185)." After the rain retreat was over the monks thanked Kavaḍḍi and offered to instruct him in religion to repay his kindness. Kavaḍḍi refused and asked rather to be given a magic spell. This was granted. As time passed and Kavaḍḍi kept practising the spell, he became increasingly interested in the Jain religion. Finally, after a fight with his wife, he retreated to a mountain and undertook the famous voluntary fast to death (*sallekhanā*) in the Jain religion and was reborn as the *yakṣa* Kapardin. The story of how Ambikā came into being involves a woman named Ambinī, who was forced to leave her husband because of her mother-in-law. The reason was that Ambinī had offered food to a Jain monk. Later, however, when her husband came to take her back after a series of miracles had befallen her, she became afraid and jumped into a well and was reborn as the *yakṣī* Ambikā.

Another interesting Jain goddess of a somewhat different nature is Saciyā Mātā. She is the lineage goddess (*kuldevī*) of Osval Jains and there are different stories of how she became a Jain deity. The following summary is based on Babb's work on Rajput identity and stories of conversion among Osval Jains (1996:138-160). Osval Jains (but also other Jains) consider themselves descendents of the Rājput, a proud class of warriors, who were converted to Jainism. There are various versions of how this happened, and they all involve the monk Ratnaprabhsūri. Ratnaprabhsūri was, the story goes, a monk living in the immediate time after Mahāvīra's final liberation. One day he arrived at a kingdom in which the ferocious Hindu goddess Cāmuṇḍā Devī was worshipped. During certain festivals the inhabitants of the kingdom would sacrifice goats and buffalos to her. According to one legend, Ratnaprabhsūri managed to put an end to the meat offerings by influencing the rulers of the kingdom. This enraged Camūṇḍā. As a result she inflicted a painful injury to Ratnaprabhsūri's eye, but seeing that he bore the pain without problems, Camūṇḍā became fearful and asked for forgiveness. Thus Camūṇḍā became a vegetarian goddess under the name of Saciyā Mātā. This process of taming harmful deities has been dubbed *jainising* (ibid:155). The story of Saciyā Mātā presents to us another way in which Jain deities can come into being. In my analysis of Bhairavas in Nākoḍā in chapter 6.5, I utilise the concept of *jainising* as a way of understanding the different appearances of the various Bhairavas in Nākoḍā.

3.3 Bhairava

So far we have seen that deities have been a part of Jainism from the very beginning and some examples of how specific types of deities become Jain deities. The god we have on our hands in this thesis is called Nākoḍā Bhairava and appear as an ancillary deity to Pārśvanātha, more or less in the place where we would expect Dharaṇendra to be. His name has two components. Nākoḍā simply refers to the geographical area in which he is said to preside, while Bhairava is a generic term used all over South Asia to denote some form of deity. One will find various Bhairavas in different shapes and forms linked to various gods, or in more independent circumstances, although their connection with Śiva seems to be particularly longstanding and widespread. One could therefore suspect that Nākoḍā Bhairava was once a Śaiva deity or at least a deity worshipped mainly by non-Jains. The word Bhairava itself is derived from the Sanskrit verb root *bhī* which has the meaning of "terrible" and "frightening". When Śiva incarnates in his destructive and terrible form he is known as Bhairava (Fuller 2004:35).

Anthropological studies have shown that as a major god, it is often thought that Śiva cannot be appealed to in more simple and mundane matters. When we look at smaller community units and villages throughout India we see that Śiva in the form of Bhairava is the ritual focus (ibid:38-40). He can be seen as the god of a particular village or a family, or he can function as a powerful protector of a temple. In Benares he is popularly known as the "police chief" in his role as a protector of the city and punisher of transgressors (ibid:39). As a guardian deity he is regarded as inferior to the greater deity, typically Śiva, but he may receive much ritual attention because of his ability to intervene in the trials and tribulations of everyday life (Weber 1964:20). We can easily see how such a relationship resembles the relationship between a Jina and his protective deities, and this is clearly demonstrated in Nākoḍā.

Being more a generic name than one particular deity it is difficult to give a general presentation of Bhairava⁵. He can appear in more particularised forms in various religious and cultural contexts. He can appear as Kālī's right hand and coupled with various wild meat eating goddesses, as an attendant to an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, as a destructive dancing Śiva or as a leader of ghosts and inflictor of punishment, in the form of the twin couple Kālā and Goḍa Bhairava or as the eight, or sometimes sixty-four Bhairavas, as the protector of Benares, or as an extremely powerful god on his own. Last but not least, he may appear as Pārśvanātha's devotee in Nākoḍā. As in the case of "lower" incarnations of Hindu deities his popularity among Jains stems from his power to intervene in everyday life. This "division of labour", so to speak, between higher and lower deities are often reflected in the words used to denote them. In Nākoḍā, Bhairava is typically referred to as a *dev* (deity) or *mahārāj* (great king) while the epithet *bhagvan* is used for Pārśvanātha only.

There is a clear demarcation between a Jina and a deity in Jainism. Every Jain knows that Nākoḍā Bhairava is "just" a deity while Pārśvanātha is a Jina. And further, it is widely accepted that while Pārśvanātha by his example show us the way to liberation, Nākoḍā Bhairava is the only of the two who can help us in worldly matters. Hence the division of labour is clearly demarcated between soteriology and granting of mundane wishes, between Jina and deity. Although separated in this way, they also interrelate in religious thought and everyday philosophy, ritual, mythology and mythical history. This interrelatedness, I believe, can tell us more about Jainism as a lived tradition, and it is

⁵ See Atal 1962 for discussion of various Bhairavas in one single village and its vicinage in Rajasthan, and the difficulties related to understanding his cult.

this relationship, between a popular deity and a Jina associated with soteriology, that I wish to explore when we now move on to the history and ethnography of Nākoḍā *tīrtha*.

Chapter 4. On Method and the Location of Fieldwork

The following pages of this thesis are based on fieldwork study of Jains in India, mainly located in Rajasthan. I made two separate fieldtrips to India that were very different. On my first trip I went directly to Rajasthan and Nākoḍā to gather information. On my second trip I went with the *The International Summer School for Jain Studies* on a six week program, interacting with Jains and sitting through lectures on various topics related to Jainism arranged by the Jain community. During the program I had the chance to interact with both Śvetāmbara and Digambara Jains in New Delhi, Jaipur and Varanasi, discussing topics related to the cult Nākoḍā Bhairava. This gave me a broader appreciation of Jainism and Jain religious life that complemented the first fieldwork that was more focused on Nākoḍā alone. But it was during the first fieldtrip to Nākoḍā that I gathered most of the ethnographical material that I will present in this thesis.

From early December 2009 until February 2010 I spent most of my time in Jodhpur meeting with Jain and non-Jain informants gathering all relevant material on Nākoḍā *tīrtha* and its Bhairava, and Jain religiosity in general. Because of my relative lack of Hindi or any other mother tongue that a Jain may have (particularly Rajasthani in my case), I mainly spoke with English-speaking informants, often mixing in specific Hindi religious terms. During this period I made three visits to Nākoḍā itself. These visits consisted of many informal conversations with Jains and long hours of participant observations in and around the pilgrimage site. Travelling to Nākoḍā in early December was chosen deliberately in order to observe the annual fair and festival on the date of the celebration of Pārśvanātha's birthday⁶. Although the pilgrimage site itself is in the hands of *Mūrtipūjāk Śvetāmbara* Jains, I also encountered several Digambara, Sthānakvāsī and Terāpanthi Jains⁷. Indeed, Nākoḍā *tīrtha* features quite a number of non-Jain visitors. They are also attracted by the fame of the *tīrtha* and its Bhairava in particular. Hence, although most of my informants were Śvetāmbara *Mūrtipūjāks*, I would hesitate to call this a study of image-worshipping Śvetāmbara Jainism *per se*, but rather as a study of Jain religiosity in general.

The reason for choosing Jodhpur as a base was twofold. Firstly, it is a city which features quite a number of Jains. Secondly, it was chosen for its proximity to Nākoḍā

⁶ This is held according to the lunar calendar on the dark tenth day of the month Poṣ. In 2009 this fell on the 11th December.

⁷ The Sthānakvāsī and Trāpanthi are the two aniconic sects belonging to the Śvetāmbara side of Jainism.

itself. According to the 2001 census of India⁸ the total Jain population in India amounts to 4.225.053 (about 0,24% of India's total population), of which 650.493 reside in Rajasthan. Only the state of Maharashtra has a higher population of Jains with its 1.301.843. Jodhpur can be found in a district bearing the same name in western Rajasthan with a total Jain population of 36.694, while Nākoḍā is located in Barmer district which hosts 35.744 Jains (see map of India). The distance from Jodhpur to Nākoḍā is about 120km and it can easily be covered by car or the daily bus and train services. While staying in Jodhpur I never met one person, Jain or non-Jain, who had not heard of Nākoḍā. Most people knew of someone who had been there or they had visited the place themselves. The nearest town to Nākoḍā is Jasol some 5km away, while the nearest train station is found in the city of Balotra, about 13km removed from the pilgrimage site. Nākoḍā lies in a rather barren land area surrounded by hilltops coloured by scattered green vegetation. Many visitors I spoke to emphasised the beauty and quietude of Nākoḍā *tīrtha*, and its location and scenery is certainly a part of the site's attraction.

Although generally referred to as "Nākoḍā *Tīrtha*", the location of the pilgrimage site is in the village Mevanagar. It owes its more popular name to the fact that the main idol (*mūl nāyaka*) in the temple of Pārśvanātha was found in the village of Nākoḍā which is located a few kilometers away from Nākoḍā *tīrtha*. This idol of Pārśvanātha is known as Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha. Here I will use "Nākoḍā" when referring to the site of pilgrimage and "Nākoḍā village" when referring to the village that lies a few kilometres away from Nākoḍā *tīrtha*. Although earlier a village, today, Mevanagar is more or less made up of Nākoḍā *tīrtha*. The few buildings found outside and around the temple complex are all somehow connected to the Jain activities and the often non-Jains working or providing some services here. Nākoḍā *tīrtha* and other pilgrimage centres are often referred to as "temple complexes", meaning that you have a restricted area in which you find various religious buildings and service halls, generally arranged around one main temple (Humphrey 1991:201, n1). In the temple complex in Nākoḍā the main temple is dedicated to Pārśvanātha, but there are also two temples connected to this one, dedicated to Ādinātha and Śāntinātha respectively. As mentioned, the black *mūrti* of Pārśvanātha, known as Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha, is the Jina idol considered to be the

⁸ The following information was found at <http://www.censusindia.net/> (read 25th February 2010). There is widespread belief among Jains that the census provides a very inaccurate counting, based on various claims. There are some attempts in the Jain community to prepare their co-religionists for the upcoming census in 2011, hoping that the true size of the Jain community will be revealed (see e.g. <http://jainway.blogspot.com/2009/05/jains-should-be-ready-for-2011-census.html>).

temple's and site's main image (*mūl nāyak*). It receives much attention in the literature on the pilgrimage site, and there are several legends connected to this idol that we will explore in the next chapter. In the inner sanctum of the temple we find three idols of Pārśvanātha, the black Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha being placed in the middle. Right outside this space, on the left side, we find the *mūrti* of Nākoḍā Bhairava, facing towards a *mūrti* of Kīrtiratnasūri, a mendicant connected to the legends of the black Pārśvanātha *mūrti* and the Bhairava (see map of Nākoḍā temple). You also find a horde of other idols of various Jinas, deceased mendicants and gods, out of which Padmāvātī in particular receives extended attention from visitors. By the temple entrance there is a Hanumān idol. The Hanumān idol stands where the idol of Nākoḍā Bhairava stood before it was moved into the temple.

In addition to this there are various service halls providing food and shelter for laity and mendicants alike, and conference rooms and the different offices of the trust overseeing the site. Nākoḍā Trust is the elected board of Jains that oversees the *tīrtha*, its administration and economy. These offices and halls are all within the temple complex. Right outside the main entrance to the temple complex there are two rows of shops mainly selling souvenirs, toys, jewelleryes and some edible and drinkable items. About a dozen of these shops constitute the small bazaar of Nākoḍā. A few more Jain constructions outside the temple complex are well worth mentioning (see map of Nākoḍā *tīrtha*). A rather newly erected memorial hall (*smṛti bhavan*) is built in honour of Mahāvīra. This hall displays a series of pictures describing his entire life with some explaining sentences under each, in a cartoon-like fashion, and a statue of Mahāvīra being saluted by two elephants. Perhaps the most impressive edifice, of enormous proportions, is the under-construction *samosaraṇa*⁹, which when completed, is sure to make the site even more popular. I was told that it is about 90 meters long and wide, and almost 55 metres tall. It is located some 50 metres away from the temple complex's main entrance. The plan is to construct the different levels of a *samosaraṇa* within this building through which one can move upwards to the top, experiencing Jain teachings through various mediums such as 3 dimensional figures and screenings. The budget, I was told, has already crossed 300.000.000 rupees and will perhaps become the double when finished. Even as it stands now, with only the skeleton construction completed, it is

⁹ A *samosaraṇa* is the mythical gathering of animals, humans and gods who come to hear the Jina's first sermon, all gathered on different levels of a cone-like, three-tiered structure not unlike many wedding cakes, on top of which the Jina sits. See Folkert (1993, ch. 9) on the possible underestimation of the importance of *samosaraṇa* in Jain studies.

a testimony to the enormous budget of the Nākoḍā Trust as a result of the popularity of Nākoḍā Bhairava specifically and the *tīrtha* in general.

Some 100 metres further away from this again, we find the shrine of Kālā Bhairava, who is by some identified as Nākoḍā Bhairava's brother. It is placed on a dam and is also under the Nākoḍā Trust. It only features the idol of Kālā Bhairava. Because this is not the only representation of Kālā Bhairava in Nākoḍā, I will refer to it as Kālā Bhairava 1. The second idol of Kālā Bhairava is found in the *Dādāvāḍī*. This is Kālā Bhairava 2 (see picture 4 and 5). The *Dādāvāḍī* is also outside the temple complex and is dedicated to the four Kharatar Gacch monks known as the Dādāgurus. There are more buildings in the proximate vicinity connected to Nākoḍā *tīrtha* to be sure, such as the cow shelter and the Jñānsālā where young novices are educated to become future mendicants, but these are of less importance here.

The actual material gathered from my fieldwork is of various kinds. As mentioned I spent much of my time talking to Jains, often using audio recording equipment in more formal interviews. Whenever possible I used both photo and film camera, especially during the above-mentioned festival during which much activity went on outside the main temple; the trust overseeing Nākoḍā has a photo and filming ban inside the temple itself. The many auctions¹⁰, *pūjās*, *āratīs*, singing and dancing sessions, rituals and possessions I witnessed there were recorded in my field notes. I also have many hours of audio recordings from these activities which together with the field observations give a quite vivid sense, I believe, of the pilgrimage site and its atmosphere.

Another important source of information I will use here is the material found in various books and brochures connected to Nākoḍā. Although a marginal group in terms of population size, the Jains in India are known to have an influence reaching far beyond their numbers. They are generally well educated and often very successful in their trades. We should not be surprised therefore, that several publications are linked to such a popular place as Nākoḍā. This material includes more serious scholarship on the history of Nākoḍā, coffee-table publications with colourful pictures and other literature found in guide books, pamphlets with hymns, and leaflets and posters of various kinds.

An ethnographic study of Jainism cannot afford to overlook the historical dimension and, like classical ethnographic studies, focus strictly on what one observes. The Jain community has been influenced and shaped by a textual tradition that dates back to well before the Common Era, possibly as early as the 5th century BC (Winternitz

¹⁰ As we will learn, Jains hold auctions to decide who will get the honour of performing the various rituals. In Nākoḍā these are held every day (see Chapter 6.1).

1933:434). The Jains also have very conscious idea of their own history (Cort 2001:13-4). Hence the anthropology of Jainism must always be synchronic *and* diachronic. Keeping the historical and textual dimensions in mind, we should also acknowledge the value of ethnographic studies of contemporary Jainism. Like the study of other South Asian religions, the study of Jainism has seen a growth in anthropological studies that have reshaped how we understand this tradition. Together they have presented some important challenges to more classical textual and ideological studies and representations, e.g. with regards to the relationship between scripture and practice, the so-called "great" and "little" traditions, and even to the definition of religions such as Buddhism and Jainism (Cort 1990a, Gellner 1990). I am of the view that these different approaches must be combined rather than opposed, and hence my view on the more classical portrait of Jainism as basically a soteriology with rather static doctrines is in complete harmony with the following statement by John Cort:

My objections to this portrait are not that it is untrue, but rather that it is misleading and inadequate to a full understanding of Jain religiosity (1990a:47).

If we wish to understand Jainism in its totality, I am equally convinced that the anthropologist has as much to learn from the indologist as vice versa. There can be no doubt regarding the importance of scriptures in the history of Jainism and Jain practice. At the same time it is only through field material that we can begin to understand the workings of doctrine and philosophy "on the ground", how they shape society in specific cultural and historical settings, and how they evolve themselves. Understanding the complex history of Jainism as a philosophical and lived tradition is a project demanding methodological pluralism. This being said, it should be clear that as a study based on fieldwork, the following chapters of this thesis places more emphasis on ethnography than textual studies.

Chapter 5. The History of Nākoḍā *Tīrtha*

The history of Nākoḍā *tīrtha* is surely to be found in a variety of sources. What I will present here is not an attempt to give the “true history” of the place, for such an historical inquiry is outside the scope of this project. Instead we are interested in the way that this history is remembered and presented in the written sources which are distributed and sold at the *tīrtha* and other places today. That is not to say that the facts given in these sources by necessity are false. On the contrary, I see little reason to doubt the broad and general lines of history given in these sources although the details may vary somewhat from text to text. My presentation of Nākoḍā’s history will be based on three non-academic booklets and one hardcover book, all in Hindi, written for and by Jains and all seemingly produced within the last half-a-century¹¹. These texts are distributed in Nākoḍā and within the Jain community and present the history of the area, the temples and idols and the legends related to them. They provide an interesting window into the understanding Jains have of their own religion.

More than just telling us the bare historical facts of Nākoḍā and consequently the rise of Nākoḍā Bhairava’s fame, these sources present sides of Jainism that are often lost in the typical portrait of it as a religion focused on strict asceticism as means to achieve final liberation. Moreover the roles played by various Jain mendicants in the creation and promulgation of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava shed light on the role of Jain monks and nuns, and more generally on the relationship between laity and mendicants, popular and normative religion. Indeed, our understanding of Jainism changes when it is seen through the lens of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava and its peculiar history.

Before looking at the history of Nākoḍā *tīrtha* according to contemporary accounts in Hindi, I should sort out some names to avoid confusion. There is, as mentioned, a difference between Nākoḍā *tīrtha* and the village Nākoḍā. Today Nākoḍā *tīrtha* pretty much engulfs the entire village of Mevanagar. Mevanagar was earlier known as Virampur. Nākoḍā is also the name of another village situated a few kilometres away from Mevanagar. It was here, in the village of Nākoḍā, that the black idol of Pārśvanātha was rediscovered and then established as the main image in the Pārśvanātha temple in Mevanagar by the monk Kīrtiratnasūri in 1455¹². This idol was known as Nākoḍā

¹¹ The hardcover book *Nākoḍā Tīrth Śrī Pārśvanath* by Mahopādhyāya Vinaya Sāgar, which is definitely the most serious in terms of academic evaluation and probably the most reliable of these publications, is dated to 1988. The other publications are not dated.

¹² The dates given in the sources follow the Indian lunar calendar which is about 56.7 years ahead of the Gregorian solar calendar. The actual year given for the instalment of the black Pārśvanāth in Mevanagar is 1512 Vikram Samvat, and in this presentation of Nākoḍā’s history I have chosen to roughly recalculate the year into

Pārśvanātha, and when it was installed at the pilgrimage site in Mevanagar, the entire site got the name Nākoḍā *tīrtha*. A second important mendicant to appear in the history of Nākoḍā *tīrtha* is Sundarśrī. She was essentially the driving force behind the re-establishment of the *tīrtha* and the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava resulting in the massive popularity it has today. She first began her renovation work in Nākoḍā in 1903. In the following I will give a short presentation of Nākoḍā's history prior to Sundarśrī, and then a longer one of her life since it is intimately connected with the current state of affairs in Nākoḍā.

5.1 From Early History to the 17th Century

In the 2nd century after Mahāvīra's nirvana the cities of Virampur and Nākoḍā were established by two Jain brothers (Sālecā n.d.:3). From this time onwards various Jain activities went on in this area, including temple constructions and visits from famous monks, such as the great philosopher Haribhadra (Sagar n.d.:18). In the troublesome centuries between the 10th and 15th century Vikram Samvat¹³ (VS) many Jain idols and other treasures were hidden underground for protection due to continuous attacks from Muslim kings. No less than 120 such idols, including the main image of today's Nākoḍā *tīrtha*, the black Pārśvanātha, were kept underground in order to protect them from plundering around the 12th and 13th century VS (Sālecā n.d.:5). It would take years until any of them were rediscovered.

In 1455, a Jain layman by the name Jindatt had a dream in which Nākoḍā Bhairava told him of the black idol of Pārśvanātha and where it was hidden. With the help of his friends he then managed to find the idol due to a flood in the river Lūnī¹⁴. Jains have a long tradition of taking the content of their dreams seriously. A good portion of the important text Kalpa Sūtra is devoted to the 14 dreams that Mahāvīra's mother had upon the conception of the Jina to be. In fact, every mother of a Jina or a world emperor (*cakravartin*) will have these 14 dreams at the time of inception. Dreams also play an important role in the history of Nākoḍā Bhairava and his cult. As mentioned, Jindatt was told by the Bhairava in a dream where he could find the hidden black idol of Pārśvanātha, but upon trying to lift it, he and his friends were surprised to find that they could not even move it. Trying every method, employing various rituals they could not succeed. Finally they summoned the abovementioned mendicant Kīrtiratnasūri who was

our calendar by extracting 57 years, except when the sources refer to centuries. In those cases I follow the original texts and add the abbreviation VS.

¹³ See note 12 on previous page.

¹⁴ The sources are not in agreement as to whether the image was found in a pond (Jain n.d. b:32) or under ground (Sālecā:5).

the only one able to lift it. Kīrtiratnasūri, a monk in the Khartar Gacch lineage¹⁵, was born in 1392, became a monk in 1406 and died in 1468 (Sālecā n.d.:6). Upon his death the doors of the temple in Nākoḍā are said to have closed suddenly and at the same time the candles inside were lit by themselves (Jain n.d. a:43).

The sources mention that people used to say that Nākoḍā Bhairava was in the command of Kīrtiratnasūri¹⁶ and hints that it was due to this relationship that the monk was able to lift the idol with his vigorous devotion (*bhakti ba*) and spiritual power (*siddhi*). Lifting this rather large and heavy statue on his head, he carried it to its current location. For him the weight of the image felt as light as a flower. While carrying it people could see the Bhairava in the human form of a boy (*bālrūp*) dancing and walking with them as they spontaneously formed a procession (Sālecā n.d.:6). The procession automatically stopped in Virampur where it was decided to keep the idol¹⁷. An idol of the Bhairava was established by the entrance of the temple and he was now its recognised protector (Jain n.d. a:41, 43).

There are several aspects we should notice here. In the Jain universe, the most powerful and worship-worthy beings are the ascetics and not the deities. The deities are always second in rank, and hence the Bhairava was in Kīrtiratnasūri's command. Still, the power of the deity is stronger than that of normal humans, so the Jain mendicant is the only who can successfully move the idol. Interestingly enough, however, his power is not explicitly linked with asceticism (*tapas*) alone, but also to devotion (*bhakti*). Asceticism and devotion are often thought of as opposite religious practices, but in the case of Kīrtiratnasūri they are combined. We will return to this again in chapter 7 on possession.

After Kīrtiratnasūri had installed the black Pārśvanātha as the main idol of the temple in Mevanagar, an idol of the Bhairava was also installed by the temple entrance. This marks the first official link between Nākoḍā Bhairava and Jainism and is the beginning of a gradual incorporation of Nākoḍā Bhairava into the Jain universe. At this point the image of Nākoḍā Bhairava was an aniconic idol (*piṇḍākar*). It was only later that he was given a proper three-dimensional bust and was moved from the entrance into the heart of the temple, right outside the inner sanctum holding the idol of Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha. This later shape was fashioned by the Jain community; how Nākoḍā Bhairava got his original aniconic form is not described. It seems reasonable to assume

¹⁵ The Khartar Gacch is one of the five Śvetāmbara ascetic lineages. It is famous for its connection with the cult of the Dādāgurus. See n. 3.

¹⁶ "Gurudev ko śrī bhairavdev vaśya the."

¹⁷ It is sometimes believed that the *mūrti* chooses his protector by stopping at a particular place (Humphrey 1991:221 n.15; Laidlaw 1996: 72).

that Nākoḍā Bhairava at some point was a local Hindu deity, similar to the many other Bhairavas found in Rasjathani villages (Atal 1964; Gold 1988).

The sources also mention a different story of how the *mūrti* came to Nākoḍā. According to this version there was an argument over who should keep the idol after it had been rediscovered (Sālecā n.d.:7). Because it was found in Nākoḍā village, the inhabitants there naturally claimed that they had the right to keep it. To settle the disagreement it was decided that they should place the image on a bull cart without giving any directions to the bull to see where it would go. So it was done, and the bull stopped in Virampur, today's Mevanagar, i.e. Nākoḍā *tīrtha*. According to a version recorded by Humphrey the cart was not pulled by a bull, but by humans, and it could only be moved when pushed in the direction of Nākoḍā (1991: 207 n. 7a). In the version recorded by Laidlaw, the idol was rescued from Muslim attackers from a temple in Gujarat, and when reaching Nākoḍā the cart on which the idol was sitting could not be moved further (1996:72).

It was also around this time that one lay Jain by the name Mālāsāh had a dream of Nākoḍā Bhairava where he was told to build a temple to Śāntināth, a temple that is found in Nākoḍā today (Jain n.d. a:41). In another incident Nākoḍā Bhairava is said to have repelled a Muslim attack by sending his black bees (*bhamvar*) to attack the troops¹⁸ (ibid). This is an interesting episode since it comments of the relationship between Muslims and Jains, an understudied subject (Cort 1998:7), but also because it involves violence on behalf of the Jain community. An analogous cult to that of Nākoḍā Bhairava is that of Ghaṇṭākarṇa Mahāvīra, who is also known to be dangerous to those who are hostile to Jains and Jainism. This tantric deity can also be invoked to kill enemies and foes according to certain texts (Cort 2000:418). Although Jainism is often associated with strict obedience to the ideal of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), the application of it is first and foremost related to diet and not to relations among kingdoms or religious communities (ibid). We will return to the violent aspect of the Bhairava in the next chapter.

The next important event in the history of Nākoḍā *tīrtha* was the abandoning of Nākoḍā and Mevanagar by the Jain community. According to the sources, the Jains were not treated well by the local rulers, especially not by the king's son in the 17th century VS. This culminated in one episode when the mentioned prince came by a Jain man bathing in a pond, having a particularly long lock of hair (*coṭī*). The prince had this cut of

¹⁸ A similar story was retold to me by one of the main temple servants (*pujārī*) in Nākoḍā.

in order to make it into a fly-whisk (*jhāvri*) with which he could chase away flies sitting on his horse. This creative offence was too much for the Jains in the area. Soon after they all migrated and hence there were no Jains left to oversee the *tīrtha* and it apparently fell into oblivion (Jain n.d. b:52).

This last fact makes it clear that the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava, as we find it now, in its Jain setting, has in fact been re-established within the last 100 years. The driving force behind the re-establishment of the cult responsible for the popularity of the *tīrtha* itself was the nun Sundarśrī. Let us therefore turn to her story.

5.2 Sundarśrī

I will present a summary of Sundarśrī's life focusing on the parts relevant to our discussion, relying on Būracand Jain's brochure¹⁹ unless otherwise stated. Sundarśrī was born into a Jain family situated in Sevadi, about 150 km south of Jodhpur, in 1859. At the time of her birth the room in which she was born lit up and all present became happy upon this event. Even neighbours came around to congratulate, which, the text comments, is unusual in India when girls are born. Her good and pious Jain parents named her Samnīben, and growing up as a child everyone she met seemed to get a loving affection for her. From an early age she developed an interest in her fathers accountancy work and she was praised for her practical knowledge. She also developed a keen interest in *dharmik* work and spent much time with religious activities which she found more interesting than the housework fit for a girl like herself. In 1872, at the age of 13, she was married to a man found befitting to her and she moved to live with her husband and his family. This family also had a lot of religious interests so she felt quite happy there, but after four years her husband suddenly expired.

The unexpected death of her husband caused Samnīben to move back to her parents who supported her ever growing interest in religious life. It seems that various family members caused her to get more and more involved in religion until she finally decided to become a nun. Her family, however, was not ready for this and tried to persuade her out of it, but Samnīben was resolute in her decision, even taking up fasts to demonstrate her firm resolution. They finally gave in and a *yati*²⁰ was visited to find an auspicious day for her *dīkṣā* (ascetic initiation). A nun living close by was summoned to ordain Samnīben and she gave her the name Sundarśrī. Three months later a Tapā

¹⁹ *Nākoḍā Tīrthoddhārikā: Pravartini Sādhvī Śrī Sundarśrī* (n.d.).

²⁰ The profession known as *yati* is the almost defunct Śvetāmbara tradition of religious experts living an ascetic life less strict than proper mendicants, owning land and mainly dealing with rituals and more worldly matters such as astrology.

Gacch²¹ monk from Udaipur named Śrī Hit Vijay – the guru of Himācalsūri who will play an important role later in this story - conducted her “big” *dīkṣā*. She was now a proper member of the ascetic lineage known as Tapā Gacch.

The text goes on to narrate the many travels and pilgrimages Sundarśrī did together with the other nuns under their *guruvaṇī* (female guru). We learn of the great many fasts and other ascetic practices she completed, all in all comprising a remarkable curriculum vitae of *tapas*. This naturally impressed a lot of people and she inspired Jains and non-Jains alike to follow the religious path (*mokṣamārg*) through her conduct and spiritual instructions (*dharmopdeś*).

In 1904, during *cāturmāsa*, the four month long rain season retreat in which Jain mendicants stay in one place, in a place called Bhādrājūn, Sundarśrī experienced an interesting twist of fate. While singing a hymn dedicated to Pārśvanātha (*bhagvan kā stavan*) in which 108 of his *tīrthas* are mentioned, a Jain layman was standing near by happily listening to the lyrics. The layman noticed that Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha was mentioned among the 108 *tīrthas*, but the text does not explain what his relationship to Nākoḍā was. Anyhow, this layman finally went into the temple, honoured Sundarśrī befittingly and requested her to give him knowledge on Jain dharma. Satisfied with the answers he got he went on to ask her about the hymn of the 108 *tīrthas*, specifically whether or not she had visited these *tīrthas* and Nākoḍā *tīrtha* in particular. She answered that she had visited many *tīrthas*, but not Nākoḍā. The layman then gave the address of Nākoḍā to Sundarśrī and took his leave. This ignited Sundarśrī’s curiosity and she had a strong desire (*abhilāṣā*) to have *darśana* of this mysterious Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha.

Going to bed that night Sundarśrī was still thinking about this, and that same night Nākoḍā Bhairava appeared in her dream. He told her to go on a pilgrimage to Nākoḍā that same year and that she would obtain great benefit (*lābh*) from this. From another source we learn that Sundarśrī had already had a dream three years prior to this where Nākoḍā Bhairava inspired her to renovate the place (Jain n.d. a:42). This is the beginning of the relationship that was to develop between the nun Sundarśrī and the deity Nākoḍā Bhairava. Later Sundarśrī is said to have practiced some sort of worship connected to Nākoḍā Bhairava, although it is not totally clear what sort of activity is meant (*bheru parv kī olī*). What is clear, however, is that she developed an intimate

²¹ The Tapā Gacch is the biggest of the five basic Śvetāmbara *Mūrtipūjak* mendicant subdivisions existing today (see n.3).

relationship with this deity and that her ascetic career was tied up with him and his approaching fame.

Sundarśrī soon told the people around her of her strong wish to do the pilgrimage to Nākoḍā and she publicly denounced *ghī* and some sweet items until the day she would get *darśana* of Nākoḍā *tīrtha*. She also started conducting various fasts to this end, until the Jain community (*saṅgha*) in the area decided to arrange the pilgrimage. Finally Sundarśrī went on the pilgrimage in the company of eleven laymen and fifteen laywomen. Facing various troubles on their way, they arrived safely after 24 days of walking by foot.

Upon arrival Sundarśrī was inspired for life (*bhav vibhor*) to finally have Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha's *darśana*, but she was also saddened to see the sorry state of affairs in Nākoḍā after it had been left to wither for more than 200 years. Plants and animals were living inside the temples. Sundarśrī and her entourage started cleaning up the area and removing bushes. She decided to spend the rest of her life working for the restoration of the temple and the site. One man was immediately engaged in the daily caretaking of the temple.

5.3 The Restoration of Nākoḍā Tīrtha

The text goes on to explain in length how Sundarśrī travelled around, as a Jain mendicant must do, inspiring people to give monetary and other types of donations to the *tīrtha* and urging them to go on pilgrimages to Nākoḍā. Her seemingly endless collection of support is dwelled upon in the sources, often giving specific sums or mentioning valuable items such as jewellery and cattle that she inspired people to give (Jain n.d. b: 32-36, 49). Her *guruvāṇi* and guru also became enthusiastic about her work. Talking about the *tīrtha* in various villages and temples, she gradually gathered more and more support. But then Nākoḍā faced new difficulties when a plague arrived, infecting many people there. In response to this Sundarśrī did ascetic penance (*tapasyā kar*) for 8 days, after which she realised that she could gather herbs from the surrounding mountains which would cure the sick. This proved effective and after completing more fasts she managed to drive the plague away.

Jain mendicants are known to be powerful precisely because of their asceticism which in the end can be used to solve all sorts of problems such as a plague. We typically also associate Jain mendicants with asceticism with the result that Jains and Jainism are sometimes presented as more or less obsessed with ideals and practices of asceticism (Cort 2002a:720). Strictly speaking a Jain mendicant should spend much of

her time in ascetic practice striving to reach the ultimate goal of liberation, but the story of Sundarśrī reveals that the life of Jain mendicants is about much more. The sources mention that Sundarśrī was famous for her asceticism, but besides curing the sick with the help of her ascetic power, Sundarśrī also spent a lot of time raising monetary support for Nākoḍā, and the sources emphasise this aspect. Everywhere she travelled, she would ask for whatever support people could give, and in this she was not just some aloof ascetic showing the right religious path, she also functioned as a fundraiser.

In the article "The Jain Sādhu as Community Builder", Folkert (1993) discusses the importance of understanding the complex relationship between ascetics and the laity. Sundarśrī was a devoted nun praised for her asceticism, but she could also raise huge sums to rebuild a forgotten pilgrimage site and re-establish a deity cult related to this site. In a similar fashion Jain mendicants are also known to raise up bids if things go slow in the various auctions that Jains hold to facilitate rituals and celebrations (Kelting 2009:296). This should have implications for our understanding of the role of mendicants, something we shall discuss further in the end of this chapter.

We rarely hear of Jain ascetics establishing specific deity cults, but the earlier mentioned tantric deity, Ghaṇṭākaraṇa Mahāvīra, has striking similarities with Nākoḍā Bhairava. Both are famous miracle-working deities in the Śvetāmbara community. They are both male, moustachioed, protective deities, and they are both invoked to solve worldly problems. Moreover, the public cult of Ghaṇṭākaraṇa Mahāvīra was established around the same time as Sundarśrī was working on Nākoḍā. It was in the late 19th century that the monk Buddhisāgarasūri was initiated into the tantric worship of Ghaṇṭākaraṇa Mahāvīra (Cort:417-419). Later the monk seemed to have opened up the cult for general worship to keep Jains from worshipping non-Jain deities, and it has been proposed that the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava served similar functions (Cort 2001:91). There is nothing in the story of Sundarśrī to suggest that this was the case, but it is still an interesting idea.

The Jain preoccupation with separating Jainism and Jain religious practice from non-Jain through removal of worship of non-Jain deities could perhaps be linked to the impact of the British with their understanding of religion that spread through census keeping and otherwise, and its profound influence on Indian understanding of their own religious traditions (Brekke 2002). The concept "religion" is after all a western one and a good Indian equivalent is difficult to find. The Sikh community went through a process in the decades before the development of the two cults of Nākoḍā Bhairava and Ghaṇṭākaraṇa Mahāvīra, were many popular religious elements where labelled as not fit

for the Sikh community (Oberoi 1992:380). These practices were then successfully abandoned, and so-called religious boundaries were clarified and strengthened, partly as a result of British influence (Oberoi 1992, 1994). One could suspect that similar ideas lay behind the development of the cults of Nākoḍā Bhairava and Ghaṇṭākarna Mahāvīra.

Kīrtiratnasūri, Sundarśrī and Buddhisāgarsūri saw the need for some sort of religious support for lay Jains in their everyday lives, and further they were willing to acknowledge it, and to provide this support through deity cults that were not simply borrowed from neighbouring religious traditions, but that were made uniquely Jain in certain aspects. Not just concerned about their own ascetic practice and salvation, Sundarśrī and Buddhisāgarsūri illustrate the many roles and functions that Jain ascetics can fill. Further, they remind us that there is no simple lay-ascetic relationship wherein the ascetics are solely involved in the purely non-worldly, and where all worldly aspects of religion and religiosity therefore must come from lay demands and invention, as has sometimes been implied in Jain studies (Cort 1997:105). Such deity cults are sometimes critiqued by Jains because they are worldly and hence far removed from the “true Jainism” that Jains associate with pious ascetics, but as we have seen, these cults were in fact inspired and promulgated precisely by such mendicants. As with temple dwelling ascetics, the development of such deity cults tends to be understood by the Jain community as part of a general decay, and hence they are not considered part of “pure Jainism”. Discussing temple dwelling ascetics Folkert has argued that such deviations from “pure Jainism” have kept the tradition alive and vibrant (1993:172). Similar arguments could be made for Jain deity cults as well.

Back to the story of Sundarśrī, we learn of more donations encouraged by Sundarśrī before her guru went to visit Nākoḍā. He was deeply inspired (*ātmā vibhor*) by seeing both Pārśvanātha and Nākoḍā Bhairava, and while he was there he was told that Sundarśrī would spend hours in meditation in front of the latter’s image, which in those days was in an aniconic form (*piṇḍākar*). The next time he met Sundarśrī he gave her his blessing (*āśīrvād*) which further inspired her.

Slowly Nākoḍā *tīrtha* was becoming famous and more and more people got involved with Nākoḍā. A well-off, famous man from Jodhpur named Javāharmaljī, well versed in Jain dharma and astrology, came to visit the place in 1908. Javāharmaljī was very impressed with the development of Nākoḍā and with the help of the others in Nākoḍā he decided that they should have a yearly fair (*melā*) on the day of Pārśvanātha’s birth, so that the *tīrtha* could continue to grow. According to one source Javāharmaljī was instructed by Nākoḍā Bhairava to initiate the fair in a dream (Jain n.d.

a:41). Many people were invited and the first fair was held that very same year, a tradition that continues until today. Today, in fact, the fair attracts numerous visitors, both Jain and non-Jain, making it the yearly highlight in Nākoḍā.

In the meantime Sundarśrī continued to gather support, telling people that those who always remember Pārśvanātha and his protective deity Nākoḍā Bhairava, in both good and bad times, will not face any problems in their lives. The following years must have seen a growing popularity for Nākoḍā, and in 1918 the facilities around the temple, such as the resting houses for pilgrims (*dharmśāla*), were improved. The official trust (*samiti*) overseeing the *tīrtha* was established in 1924. Today, the Nākoḍā Trust still oversees and controls the economy and organisation of Nākoḍā *tīrtha* and its members are elected with representatives from different places in Rajasthan.

In 1933, Sundarśrī decided to spend her *cāturmāsa* in Nākoḍā in order to carry out the image installing ceremony (*añjansālaka pratiṣṭha mahotsav*). The preparation for the ceremony began and many mendicants like her guru, Hit Vijay, and his pupil, Himācalsūri, came. But there was one problem. As mentioned above, the Jain community had left the area around the *tīrtha* because they were harrassed by the local rulers. The Jains had also sworn an oath never to drink water from Nākoḍā ever again. Since it was felt that the descendents of these Jains should be present at the ceremony, Sundarśrī and the others tried to convince them to break their forefathers' oath, but to no avail. As before, Sundarśrī turned to fasting and ascetic practices to solve the problem, and when the descendents of the local rulers also asked these Jains to come back to Nākoḍā for the ceremony, they finally agreed.

Before the ceremony Sundarśrī had sat for hours doing *dhyāna* (meditation), *ārādhnā* (worship), and *bhakti* (devotion) in front of Nākoḍā Bhairava's image. Then both she and Himmacālsūri had a dream in which they were told that the Bhairava's image should be placed within the temple itself. Hence, they used the auspicious occasion of the celebration and moved the image inside the temple right outside the inner sanctum (*gambhāra; garbhāgāra*) of Pārśvanātha. An image of Hanumān was put in the place where the Bhairava had been. Then Himācalsūri and Sundarśrī had dreams in which they saw the true form (*mūrti svarūp*) of the Bhairava, upon which they began to remake the idol of Nākoḍā into its present form²². This is an important event we will return to. The new image of Nākoḍā Bhairava was established in 1934. One of the sources explains that Sundarśrī also had a dream in which she learned that Nākoḍā

²² I was told in Nākoḍā that the new form of Nākoḍā Bhairava was made on and around its old form, while another source tells us that the original form is still kept somewhere in the temple (Sālecā n.d.:10).

Bhairava wanted to have a continuously *darśana* of Kīrtiratnasūri, hence an image of him was erected directly opposite of the Bhairava (Sālecā n.d.:7). This constellation remains today.

5.4 The Story of Kesarīmaljī and the Death of Sundarśrī

The story now moves to a man named Kesarīmaljī, a pious Jain who supported Sundarśrī in whatever she said. Kesarīmaljī was not very rich, but when Sundarśrī decided to organise a second pilgrimage to Nākoḍā because she got a sign (*śarīket*) from Nākoḍā Bhairava, he said he would support her. Kesarīmaljī then went to Mumbai, and with Sundarśrī's blessing he suddenly had great fortune in his business and earned a lot of money in a short time. The text explains that Sundarśrī had the unlimited blessing (*asīm kṛpā*) of Nākoḍā Bhairava, and that whatever problem she faced was always solved.

One early morning a snake slithered onto Sundarśrī's mattress while she was meditating. She was so deep in her meditational state that she did not notice it or hear the others warning her. The snake did not harm her, but when she later heard of the incident she realised that her life would end in 6 months time.

Meanwhile the preparation for the pilgrimage went on and finally no less than 100 mendicants and 1500 lay Jains set off with Sundarśrī ahead. As they came to the city Jasol, Sundarśrī, Kesarīmaljī and two others saw a miraculous vision (*romāṇīcakārī dṛśya*) of a male and a female snake. Sundarśrī declared that this was a very auspicious time to enter Nākoḍā and all rejoiced. When they learned that the wells in Nākoḍā were empty, Kesarīmaljī and his wife decided to leave their worldly relationship for some time and sat in front of Pārśvanātha and Nākoḍā Bhairava to do *bhakti*, and alas, soon the water was brought back by a miracle (*camatkār*).

Sundarśrī had her *darśana* of Pārśvanātha and Nākoḍā Bhairava. She got very emotional in front of Nākoḍā Bhairava and cried as she realized that she would not come back again. Upon returning from her pilgrimage to Nākoḍā, Sundarśrī told Kesarīmaljī to go back to Mumbai for business, and after spending some time there the following happened. One day, as Kesarīmaljī was reciting the *namaskār mantra*²³ he suddenly heard the sound of ankle bells and felt someone tapping his back. He turned around, could not see anyone and asked who was there. A voice replied that it was Nākoḍā Bhairava and that he had come to tell him that Sundarśrī was close to death, and if he wished to see her again he had to leave quickly. He immediately followed the advice and went to see Sundarśrī one last time.

²³ The *namaskār mantra* is very famous among all Jains and pays homage to the ascetic heroes of Jainism.

When Kesarīmaljī finally came to the visibly ill Sundarśrī, he became very emotional and remembered all she had done for him. He told her that she had made him rich and that he would never forget her grace (*kṛpā*) and kindness (*upkār*). He recounted how he had struggled to get a son and how Sundarśrī had told him to think of Nākoḍā Bhairava, after which they had got a son. When the boy got a seemingly incurable illness during a pilgrimage to Kesaria they again went to Nākoḍā where Kesarīmaljī had a dream in which he got the idea to offer the weight of the boy in oil to Nākoḍā Bhairava²⁴. As dreamt he did and his son was cured. Having told her all this, Sundarśrī expired. This was in 1937. A large number of people came to her funeral and they gave very high bids to perform different parts in the funeral ritual²⁵. After the funeral Kesarīmaljī remembered that Sundarśrī had told him always to donate a part of his business profit for Nākoḍā *tīrtha*. He did this and his family after him have continued the donations ever since. Thus ends the story of Sundarśrī.

5.5 The Multifaceted Role of Jain Mendicants

The sources presenting the history of Nākoḍā *tīrtha* give us a clear answer to why the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava has become so popular, namely because of miracles (*camatkār*). In the story of Kesarīmaljī, the blessings of Sundarśrī and Nākoḍā Bhairava are explicitly linked with economic fortune and other fortunes like getting a son. Nākoḍā Bhairava first appears on the Jain scene in dreams indicating where to find hidden Jina idols, and other miraculous tales are related to the discovery of the main idol of Pārśvanātha in Nākoḍā and its installation in the main temple in Mevanagar. The brochures on Nākoḍā's history explicitly state that Nākoḍā Bhairava is famous because he fulfils the desires of his devotees. The popular list of his eight miracles, found in brochures and pamphlets, is a testament to the fact that the Bhairava is popular because he can help his devotees to achieve their worldly goals.

An interesting word that reappears in these sources is *bhakti*. This is noteworthy in a religion typically associated with asceticism, i.e. a form of religious activity often contrasted with emotional devotion. This opposition has been challenged in recent studies which demonstrate that *bhakti* has been a part of Jain religiosity and philosophy for over 2000 years (Cort 2002a, 2002b). The way the local sources describe the history of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava similarly display how Jains are comfortable

²⁴ I never heard of such offerings while in Nākoḍā, but Kesaria *tīrtha* owes its name to the story of a man who promised to give a baby's weight in saffron (*kesar*) if he got a son. He got his wish and the saffron was offered.

²⁵ As on various other religious occasions the Jains have auctions for the different functions in funeral rituals and the sums paid in connection with the deaths of famous mendicants are known to get very high indeed (Cort 2001:116).

with talking about asceticism (*tapas*) and devotion (*bhakti*) in the same sentence. Kīrtiratnasūri, the monk who carried the rediscovered idol of Pārśvanātha to its temple, was the only one who could do it because of his spiritual power (*siddhi*), which is generally believed to derive from ascetic practice²⁶ (*tapas*), but also because of his *vigorous devotion* (*bhakti ba*). When, hundreds of years later, Sundarśrī began her renovation work on Nākoḍā *tīrtha*, she was found spending hours in front of the idol of the Bhairava meditating, but also performing *bhakti*. Further, when she visited Nākoḍā for the last time she broke into tears. This display of emotions is something we would not expect from a Jain ascetic, especially not in a text positively dedicated to that ascetic. The story of Sundarśrī and her relationship to Nākoḍā Bhairava suggests that the religious life of a Jain ascetic has room for much more than the practicing of asceticism and self-control. Further, the inclusion of *bhakti* is necessary in trying to understand the totality of the Jain religion, and Jain religiosity. The importance of *bhakti* in Jainism will be discussed in the chapter 7 on Jain possession.

Discussing the inclusion of deity cults in Jainism, Padmanabh Jaini presents a portrait of Jain mendicants as fundamentally in opposition to non-Jain deities:

These new gods, being non-Jaina by nature, would inevitably have been looked upon by the Jaina teachers as unwelcome accretions to the original faith (1991:193).

The development of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava, however, was intimately connected with Jain ascetics. Kīrtiratnasūri found the black idol of Pārśvanātha and was said to be in control of Nākoḍā Bhairava. An idol of the latter was installed by the temple entrance during his time. Later Sundarśrī spent hours in front of this idol, and during her time, it was installed *inside* the temple next to Pārśvanātha. Moreover the entire idol of Nākoḍā Bhairava was refashioned on the command of Jain ascetics during this period. Similarly the cult of Ghaṇṭākaraṇa Mahāvīra, a protective deity similar to Nākoḍā Bhairava, was also promulgated and supported by a Jain ascetic. In short, Jain ascetics have been central in the formation of deity cults that in certain respects seem to contradict the soteriological message of Jainism, e.g. than one should not be attached to worldly desires. One could say that these cults are concerned with fulfilling ones worldly desires, but they were nevertheless created by mendicants who, in the traditional account of Jainism, have been portrayed as solely concerned with the removal of worldly desires.

²⁶ See Babb for the relationship between asceticism and magical abilities in the Jain worship of Dādāgurus (1994:34).

Cort argues that the cult of Ghaṇṭākaraṇa Mahāvīra was created in order to keep Jains from worshipping non-Jain deities (2001:91). Discussing the historical appearance of guardian deities in Jainism, Jaini similarly argues that:

It appears quite certain that the Jaina teachers of the early medieval period undertook the task of purging these non-Jaina admixtures from the lives of Jaina laymen. It is possible that they would have devised a new set of guardian deities to replace the local, non-Jaina ones, thus giving laymen the kind of protection that they had come to expect from the local gods (1991:193-4).

The sources on Nākoḍā's history do not directly reveal such motives on the side of Sundarśrī. We do learn, however, that the idol of Nākoḍā Bhairava was refashioned and given his "true form" on the basis of Jain ascetics' dreams. Why the need to reshape the idol? One motivation could certainly be the wish to establish a clearer distinction vis-à-vis other non-Jain cults of the Bhairava and more generally between Jain and non-Jain. By offering the Jain laity the help of Nākoḍā Bhairava the chances that they would visit non-Jain shrines would be reduced.

The notion of a "great" and "little" tradition made by Robert Redfield (1956) has been employed when looking at South Asian religion. Though originally employed to understand civilizations, it also became a part of the anthropology of Theravada Buddhism when scholars became interested in understanding the relationship between normative, canonical ideals and local, popular practices (Gellner 1990, Obeyesekere 1963, Todd 1997). Transferred into the Jain context its employment would be to see the society of mendicants and their scriptures as the "great" tradition, and popular practices such as the cults of protective deities as belonging to the "little" tradition. But our investigation of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava and Ghaṇṭākaraṇa Mahāvīra reveals that they have in fact been promulgated and supported by mendicants, i.e. bearers of the "great" tradition. With this in mind, Tambhia's comment on these matters when looking at Theravada Buddhism in Thailand is worth quoting:

Development of Buddhism over time...was informed by both continuities and transformation, the latter being not merely the gross handiwork of the masses but wrought by all parties, elite monks and ordinary monks, kings and court circles, urban merchants and traders, and peasant farmers and artisans, all responsive to their existential conditions and aspirations (cited in Todd 1997:337).

Similarly, we have seen how the development of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava has been intimately connected with the ascetic community, not only with the laity. This should challenge our typical understanding of the relationship between laity and mendicants.

One could argue that the interaction between ascetics and deities is anticipated by the “great” tradition itself. In a way, this is what Gombrich and Obeyesekere argued when discussing the interaction between deities and nuns in the context of Sinhala Theravada Buddhism (1988:293). They refer to a classical text describing how a meditating monk is attacked by demons, and hence “...one would expect empirically the existence of nuns who combine the orientations - the cult of the Buddha with the cult of gods...” (ibid). Similarly, in Jainism we saw how Pārśvanātha tried to rescue two burned snakes, who were then reborn as deities that would protect and look after him. Thus the interaction between ascetic and deity is anticipated in Jain texts, and the combination of the cult of the Jina and the cult of gods is to be expected on the empirical level.

Jainism has long been defined by the asceticism of its mendicants and their rigorous austerities have become “the benchmark of ‘true’ Jainism” (Folkert 1993:169). The story of Nākoḍā tells us that the Jain mendicant has many other facets. Discussing the development of temple-dwelling ascetics, Folkert remarks that although such developments are typically interpreted as “decay” in the Jain community, he suspects that such developments have helped to keep the entire Jain community of laymen and mendicants together (1993:172). Similarly, Jaini has argued that the inclusion of Hindu deities made lay Jains stay within their tradition and not convert to other traditions (2001:306). One answer to the puzzling question of why Buddhism and Jainism had such different fates in India, of why Jainism was the only one to survive, might lie here. In her active role in the re-establishment of Jain activities in Nākoḍā, Sundarśrī continuously gathered material and monetary support for the *tīrtha*, acting more as a communal fundraiser than as an ascetic recluse. After her death, Kesarīmaljī began donating a percentage of his yearly income to Nākoḍā *tīrtha*, and this is in fact a widespread phenomenon today. As we have seen, many Jain merchants consider Nākoḍā Bhairava their business partner and pledge percentages of their yearly profit to the *tīrtha*. According to the sources, Sundarśrī was the one to instigate this tradition.

The multifaceted roles that Jain mendicants can play go beyond activities belonging to any “great” tradition. Their willingness to go beyond their ascetic practices to promulgate deity cults with distinct Jain flavours may very well have helped keeping Jainism alive in competition with various other religious traditions that in many ways offered more support to their followers in terms of worldly support and help. The history of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava supports Folkert’s conclusion that the “*sādhu*-lay relationship in Jainism is more complex, more rough and tumble, than we popularly portray it” (1993:174). Unreflective use of models deploying divisions such as “great”

and “little” traditions risk misunderstanding the dynamic relationships between ascetics and lay people, between the normative and the popular, in which Jain religiosity takes form.

Chapter 6. The Tension Between a Jina and a Deity

In the following I will give a presentation of the main religious activities that go on in Nākoḍā, focusing mainly on the temple of Pārśvanātha, before highlighting some particular activities that I wish to explore further. Weekends are occasions for more visitors and Sunday seems to be especially popular as it is considered to be an auspicious day to worship Nākoḍā Bhairava. Many people told me that it is the day of Bhairava²⁷. The annual religious highlight in Nākoḍā is the religious fair (*melā*) to which I also refer.

Places of pilgrimage in South Asia are generally known as *tīrthas*, the literal meaning of which is “ford”. Hence, Hindu *tīrthas* are often associated with rivers and one of the most famous of these, Varanasi, lies on the banks of the river Ganges. It is understood as a ford in the sense that if one is lucky enough to die here, one will be able to cross the stream of *saṃsāra*. The Jains have long denied that there is anything holy about rivers, and although they also denote their pilgrimage sites as *tīrthas*, they understand them differently. According to Sangave, Jains generally divide their *tīrthas* into two broad categories, *nirvāṇakṣētras* or *siddhakṣētras*, where Jinās or other great ascetics have achieved final liberation, and *atiśayakṣētras*, that are sacred for some other reason (1980:254). These other reasons include beautiful or rare idols and temples, or miracles. Nākoḍā’s fame is first and foremost connected with the miracles of its protective deity, Nākoḍā Bhairava. A book on Jain famous pilgrimage state that Nākoḍā “...has a thousand miraculous anecdotes. Wishes made in the name of this place attain fulfilment” (Sagar n.d.:18). And further; “Nakoda pilgrimage is a centre of worship for the masses due to its miraculous peril-preventing power. On remembering Nakoda, the Lord makes the path of life hurdle-free and paved” (ibid:24). Still, Nākoḍā has more to offer. As a Jain author of an article on Nākoḍā sums it up; some pilgrimage sites have history, some have artistic value, some have miracles: Nākoḍā has it all (Sālecā n.d.:7).

With its relative proximity to Jodhpur and also Balotra, Nākoḍā can easily be reached by train, bus and car. Both trains and buses arrive daily, but many visitors travel in big groups by bus on tours organised by travel agencies who specialise in pilgrimage, often sponsored by one particular person or family. If one intends to stay longer than a day, there is an office organising the resting houses (*dharmśālā*) where one can get a room. The rooms vary somewhat in facilities, but are quite spacious with a double bed and a bathroom. Most rooms are also equipped with a stack of mattresses and bed

²⁷ The same is true for the most famous Hindu Bhairava in Jodhpur known as Rikatya Bhairava.

sheets enabling entire families to share one room. The price is about 100 rupees per night. Although there is a kiosk-like canteen inside the temple complex and some food stalls right outside it, most visitors seem to prefer the food served at the eating hall (*bhojansālā*) inside the temple complex, which is run by the trust. Here, three meals are served daily in a large dining hall for about ten to fifteen rupees per person. The diet is strictly Jain and posters by the entrance to the hall vividly depict the rather ghastly consequences one will harbour if one does not follow Jain dietary restrictions, both in this life and the next. Speakers are placed around the complex area so that everyone can hear the different announcements and know what is going on. The daily auctions, to which we will return, and the ritual hymns are performed with a microphone and broadcasted through the speakers. Staying here over night it is hard to miss what is going on. Fences for queuing are set up and quite a number of security guards are found throughout the site.

All in all one gets the impression that this is a rather well organised enterprise. Although the lodging facilities are very good, some entrepreneurs are in the process of building rather luxurious and ambitious resorts in an area called Himmada, some few kilometres away from Nākoḍā. During the fair in 2009, which coincided with a “wedding season”, i.e. dates considered auspicious for weddings, a Jain marriage was held at one of these resorts. Also present at other Jain pilgrimage sites²⁸, these developments point in a rather obvious way to the possibility of combining the recreational and the religious, and further the interrelatedness between the spheres of the sacred and the profane, spheres that are often conceptualised as separate in academic studies.

6.1 Worship in Nākoḍā: Bargains and Auctions

The religious activities in Nākoḍā can be divided into those done in groups, often led by the temple servants (*pujārīs*), and activities related to these, and the ones conducted by individuals at their own pace and time. Here it is necessary to explain the role and status of the *pujārī* in the Jain context. While “temple priest” is the more usual translation for *pujārī*, it would not be suitable in the Jain context. For reasons we will not explore here, Śvetāmbara Jains generally only employ non-Jains as *pujārīs*²⁹ (see picture 7). Contrary to Hindus and their *pujārīs*, who are considered sacred in as much as they function as intermediaries between the worshippers and the worshipped, and are the only ones

²⁸ See Balbir 1987.

²⁹ On reason is certainly of a ritual nature since the *pujārīs* handle the offerings (*devdravya*) given to a Jina which is considered a ritual fault by Jains (See Babb 1996:93-4). Visiting a Digambara *tīrtha* (Jambudvīp) in Hastinapur I learned that they use Jain *pujārīs* to perform the rituals, but non-Jain servants remove the offerings after the ritual is completed.

allowed to enter the most sacred space, as well as to handle the most sacred objects, *Mūrtipūjāk* Jains perform their worship themselves without any go-betweens. The *pujārī* in a Jain temple is basically a temple servant who functions as a ritual assistant in preparing offerings, removing offerings (some of which they can keep themselves), decorating the images, cleaning the temple and other menial tasks. In Nākoḍā, the *pujārīs* also conduct the auctions and lead the hymn singing during rituals.

Among the forms of worship conducted without any *pujārī* we find various versions of *ariga pūjā*, such as the eightfold *pūjā (aṣṭaparakārī pūjā)*, in which the laity worship by anointing different substances on the Jina images³⁰. This is performed in the inner sanctum where only Jains are allowed, dressed in unstitched clothes³¹ for the occasion and wearing a cloth covering their mouth (*muhpattī*). *Darśana*, in which worship is conducted through the ritual gazing at the images of Jinas and gods, is “performed” by all visitors, Jain and non-Jain³². This is also an important part of the *pujārī*-led *pūjās* and *ārātis*.

In the case of Nākoḍā Bhairava, prayers are often performed while gazing at him and some people told me that they would ask for very specific things, such as material goods or recovery from sickness. Many also engage in bargains in which they promise to give or give up something in the favour of Nākoḍā Bhairava. In this manner one man explained how he had promised Nākoḍā Bhairava that he would quit smoking if his sick child would recover. The request was granted he told me, and so he quit smoking. In the chapter on Nākoḍā *tīrthā*'s history, we also found the theme of bargaining with the Bhairava to regain the health of one's child in the story of Kesarīmaljī who offered the weight of his baby in oil.

Some devotees also donate money or promised sums of money if they get their wishes fulfilled. It is a well known fact, and I was often told, that many Jain businessmen consider Nākoḍā Bhairava to be their business partner and donate percentages of their yearly income to him, a feature also found in Hindu deity cults (Babb 1996:80, n16; Laidlaw 1996:72). This, we learned in the previous chapter, was recommended to Kesarīmaljī by Sundarśrī. In a book on Jain pilgrimage it is stated that: “Hundreds-thousands of travellers come here [to Nākoḍā] daily from every corner of India and maintain partnership in the name of Bhairav even in their business. This is indicative of a unique faith towards Bhairavdev” [sic] (Sagar n.d.:24).

³⁰ See Cort 2001:71ff. for detailed description.

³¹ The origin and logic behind this tradition is not clear (Cort 2001:221n 22).

³² The understanding of this gazing, and the meanings attached to it might be very different from Jains to non-Jains (Humphrey 1991).

Other common types of worship performed without the involvement of *pujārīs* are forms of worship using material substances (*dravya pūjā*), particularly uncooked rice, as well as internal meditative worship (*bhāv pūjā*) in which recitation and the use of prayer beads (*mālā*) are often employed. Commonly seen are also the various individual varieties of the *caitya-vandan*³³, a worship rite directed towards the Jina image, in our case Pārśvanātha, with recitation, various postures and the organising of uncooked rice in swastika formations on a table.

The more congregational activities led by the Hindu *pujārīs* working in the temple include the morning and evening *pūjās* and *āratīs* with their respective auctions (*bolī*), the winner of which gets the honour of conducting the ritual. There are also evening gatherings of those who wish to take part in the singing of hymns (*bhajan*) often accompanied by musicians and a lead singer. In these sessions some individuals well versed in the many hymns may take the lead. Various booklets with hymns are also found in the temple. But let us now turn to the peculiarity of the auctions that are so typical of Jain congregational worship.

Jain auctions³⁴ are held in order to raise money to cover the expenses of the ritual itself, and to determine who has the privilege to perform the different ritual acts. The origin of this practice is obscure, but today such actions are held at various occasions (Laidlaw 1995:334-5). From Kelting we learn that "Śvetāmbara *Mūrtipūjāk* Jain festivals and major rites are usually marked by the spectacle of the Jain auction" (2009:284). This certainly holds true for Nākoḍā which has daily auctions, both morning and evening. The most prestigious and remembered ones are held during the annual fair on the date of Pārśvanātha's birthday. The auctions are referred to as *bolī*, simply meaning "to bid". A total of nine auctioned rituals are held in the morning and three in the evening. In each ritual a specific substance is offered in front of the images by the winner of that particular auction. For Pārśvanātha these substances include a liquid mixture for bathing the image (*prakśāl pūjā*), saffron (*kesar pūjā*), incense (*dhūp pūjā*), perfume (*itr pūjā*), flowers (*puṣpā pūjā*) and finally the lamp offering (*āratī*). These are the first rituals to be completed in the morning before the worship of Nākoḍā Bhairava commences. Each of these rituals are auctioned to whomever bids the most. After the bidders have competed for Pārśvanātha's rituals the auctioneer (a specific *pujārī*) goes on to Nākoḍā Bhairava's rituals. Here the worship is restricted to *kesar pūjā*, *itr pūjā* and *āratī*. These constitute the congregational and auctioned morning worship of Nākoḍā

³³ See Cort 2001:65ff. for detailed description.

³⁴ See e.g. Laidlaw (1995:334-5) and Kelting (2009) for more on Jain auctions.

Pārśvanātha and Nākoḍā Bhairava. While the morning auctions are held around 9am, the evening auctions are held around 7pm. In the evening session two auctions are first held for Pārśvanātha (*āratī* and *mangal dīp*), before the auction of Bhairava's *āratī*. *Mangal dīp* is also a lamp offering.

The auctions are held inside the temple and are led by the same *pujārī* every day. He is located in the back of the temple, from where he has an overview of the temple precinct, and as the temple is somewhat elevated from the ground, he can also keep track of potential bidders in the larger area in front of the temple and its entrance. At the appropriate time the *pujārī* takes the microphone and announces that the bidding may begin. After declaring which ritual service is at stake he proposes an opening sum. The sums are not given in Indian rupees but in *mān*. *Mān* refers to an ancient measurement of *ghī* (clarified butter), hence a Jain layman informed Kelting that Jains do not pay to perform rituals, but simply offer the butter needed for the ritual (2009:290, n.20). In Nākoḍā one *mān* equals five rupees. The *pujārī* conducting the auctions in Nākoḍā told me that the starting sum would vary according to how many potential bidders there were. On regular days it might start at 101 *Mān* (i.e. 505 rupees).

Only men participated in the auctions I witnessed in Nākoḍā, and the gender division of "religious labour" in Jainism, where women typically fast and men donate money, has been studied elsewhere³⁵. The auctions would initially involve different participants nodding or giving some other sign to the auctioneer, indicating their willingness to pay the announced sum, or they would simply shout out a sum themselves. The auctioneer continuously kept announcing the price as it rose. The bidders were quite often fathers sitting or standing, surrounded by their families attentively following the procedure. Another typical bidding formation was a group of men, keenly discussing as the bidding went on. I was told that such groups frequently formed so-called circles (*maṇḍal*) in advance, sometimes representing specific companies that had decided on a maximum sum beforehand.

Though the amusement and entertainment value was present in Nākoḍā, it did not reach the peaks described elsewhere when close-knit congregations hold auctions in their own temples (Kelting:2009). This is not surprising considering that the participants in Nākoḍā auctions come from all over India and do not know each other. However, the auctioneer told me that he would recognise many of the participants. He also mentioned that non-Jains would participate and, moreover, they would sometimes even win. When

³⁵ See Kelting 2009; Laidlaw 1995; Reynell 1985.

I asked how he knew that they were non-Jains he replied that he often knew these individuals and that their names – the winner and price of each auction is recorded in a book – revealed their religious affiliations. The possibility of non-Jains bidding and winning such auctions has been denied in other accounts. We learn from Laidlaw that it “...would be unthinkable for any religious outsider who was present [...] to win one of these auctions, whose practical purpose, after all, is to raise funds for Jain religious events” (1995:340). This has, however, been observed elsewhere. Kelting reports of a Sikh that was interested in winning the rites associated with the lion dream in the celebration of Mahāvīra’s conception and birth (2009:296).

I would argue that the participation of non-Jains in these auctions is a characteristic expression of the unrigid religious boundaries so typical of South Asian religions³⁶, albeit perhaps not a common occurrence. These fuzzy borders are perhaps more prevalent in pilgrimage sites than otherwise, as devotees are far removed from the temples and religious places they normally visit. Nākoḍā features quite a lot of non-Jain visitors and some of them are just as eager as Jains to participate in the congregational worship of Nākoḍā Bhairava. The religious activity that more than any other marks out Jains from non-Jains in Nākoḍā is the eightfold *pūjā* (*aṣṭaparakārī pūjā*) in which the laity worship by anointing different substances to the Jina images³⁷. Only Jains dressed in unstitched *pūjā* clothes perform this and are allowed into the inner sanctum where they touch the Jina idols directly.

Although perhaps not as intimate and emotionally loaded as auctions in smaller, local temples, the sums paid to perform various rituals certainly rise to remarkable heights in Nākoḍā, and are much talked of and sometimes remembered. The biggest sums are paid during the *mela*, on the birthday of Pārśvanātha. I was told that the celebrations I observed in 2009 had fewer visitors than usual because of weddings and school still going on, and that this also affected the auctions. The prices given for some of the rituals however, were not insignificant. A sample of the prices paid for *āratī* and *mangal dīp* on the birthday of Pārśvanātha reveals that the *āratīs* are the most popular rites. The sums, in Indian rupees, given for each of these two rituals during the fair in 2009 were as follows:

³⁶ In an article on Jain worship in medieval Tamilnadu, Orr makes a similar point arguing that the distinction between Jain and Hindu were not so rigid and clear (1999)

³⁷ See Humphrey (1991) for a discussion on how Jains maintain borders vis-à-vis non-Jains at pilgrimage sites.

	Āratī (morning)	Mangal dīp (morning)	Āratī (evening)	Mangal dīp (evening)
Pārśvanātha	155.005	9.045	176.535	70.020
Bhairava	365.005	-	255.015	-

To put these sums in perspective, we can cite one Indian newspaper which in May 2009 announced that the average monthly income in India had just crossed 3.000 rupees³⁸. That means that the highest bid (365.005 rupees) given for the approximately 4-minute ritual of *āratī* for Nākoḍā Bhairava in 2009 equalled about 10 years of labour with the average Indian salary. I was told by several people that bids had been higher before, the record being around 500.000 rupees. But besides the sheer size of these bids, there is something else we should notice here: Nākoḍā Bhairava receives considerably higher amounts than Pārśvanātha. The auctions demonstrate that Jains are willing to pay more to get the honour of doing the Bhairava's *āratī* than Pārśvanātha's. The reason for this is clear: people hope to gain something in their worldly lives through the rituals and this can only be provided by the Bhairava. But the implication of this difference in price seems to be that the Bhairava is considered more important than the Jina, which is problematic in a religion that clearly states that the Jina and his ascetic path are the only objects worthy of worship. We will return to this issue soon.

6.2 Performing the Rituals

Let us look briefly at the rituals themselves. After concluding the bidding the winners of the respective auctions are led past the people surrounding the inner sanctum, holding the plate on which the relevant substances are placed. In the case of *āratī* and *mangal dīp* a specific hymn is sung by all the worshippers, following the lead of the *pujārī* who decides the rhythm by beating a bell while singing into the microphone. The lyrics of these hymns are printed on placards hung on the temple walls and pillars. In these rituals the lucky winners of the auction are given a tinsel crown which they wear during the ritual. Lamps are placed on a plate which the worshippers circulate clockwise in front of the image while singing the hymns and gazing at the image in question. Having *darśana* of the image at this particular moment is thought to be auspicious, so it can get very crowded during these rituals. People often clap their hands while singing and many will place money on the plate carrying the lamps or simply send bills forward that are

³⁸ <http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/Average-Indians-income-crosses-Rs-3000/468084/> (read 26.03.2010).

passed from hand to hand until they reach the plate. This indicates that donations are also thought to be more powerful during these rituals.

As we have seen, Nākoḍā Bhairava's worship comes after that of Pārśvanātha, underlining their hierarchy. A sign at the entrance of the temple reminds people to always pay their respect to Pārśvanātha first. The manner in which one enters the inner temple to have *darśana* of the Jina and deity is also arranged so that one must pass Pārśvanātha before the Bhairava (see map of Nākoḍā Pārśvanāth's temple).

When the worship of Nākoḍā Bhairava commenced I noticed something peculiar. The *pujārī* who gave the performers their tinsel crown also drew a curtain in front of the closest sitting Pārśvanātha image. This, a *pujārī* explained, was done so that Pārśvanātha would not be offended by the worship of the Bhairava. We will return to this detail.

Observing the rituals and listening to the hymns, I got the impression that the intensity grew when Nākoḍā Bhairava was addressed. Although the logic of the rituals' order stems from the hierarchical understanding of a Jina and a deity, one could, if one did not know Jain theology, get the impression that one was saving the best for last, as it were. People flocked more eagerly to the Bhairava when his turn came and the length of the hymns also supported this observation. While the singing of Pārśvanātha's *ārati* and *mangal dīp* hymns takes about 2 minutes and 30 seconds all together, Nākoḍā Bhairava's *ārati* alone takes about 4 minutes. There is also a tempo-shift only found in Nākoḍā Bhairava's hymn. During the last 30 seconds of the hymn, the *pujārī* increases the tempo by beating quicker at the bell, reaching the peak of worship in terms of intensity. After the hymn is over, people queue up and press their way toward the image of Nākoḍā Bhairava. Most people I saw made sure to pay their respect to the Jina first, but this was often done rather hastily before indulging in lengthy prayers in front of the Bhairava. Many people would put their heads on his feet or bow all the way down to the floor. The *pujārīs* and guards had their hands full with pushing people through to make sure there was no jam in front of the popular Bhairava.

I also witnessed, especially on Sunday evenings, that people would spontaneously start singing devotional hymns after the last *ārati*. This was typically led by one person or a small group, others sporadically joining in. The emotions expressed on their faces and in their movements, also while singing the ritual hymns in general, were very far removed from the austere and composed faces of the Jinas indeed. A clear cut separation of "devotional Hinduism" contra "ascetic Jainism" made little sense when observing the Jain worship of Nākoḍā Bhairava (Orr 1999:252). It was mainly during

these highly emotional sessions that I witnessed, what is perhaps the religious behaviour furthest removed from our standard image of Jain religiosity, possessions. Before exploring possession let us look at the ways in which the relationship between Pārśvanātha and Nākoḍā Bhairava was expressed in the congregational worship in Nākoḍā.

6.3 Pārśvanātha and Nākoḍā Bhairava: The Tension Between a Jina and a Deity

Let us first make it clear: there is no doubt in the minds of Jains that the Jina ranks higher than the deity in their religion. The hierarchy between the two was clearly and consciously expressed by all the Jains I met. The general term *dev* was reserved for Nākoḍā Bhairava, while the grander *bhagvan* would only be used for Pārśvanātha. We also find this hierarchical relationship in the written materials, from the signs by the temple entrance to the brochures and literature on Nākoḍā³⁹. In the view of the dominant values of Jainism, it is only the Jina that is truly worthy of worship (Babb 1996:81). This is consonant with the short sketch of Jain cosmology and soteriology that we drew up earlier. The deities have no role in creating the world or granting liberation. They are simply powerful beings living in a realm to which anyone can potentially be reborn.

Further, there is no doubt among Jains concerning the fact that the Jina is completely beyond this world. One cannot ask him for favours and he could never grant any. When people get possessed, as we will see, it is said that “god comes inside man”, but this “god” never refers to Pārśvanātha, for he is not active in this world. A deity is not liberated hence he can influence our lives, but as a consequence he is not the holiest and most worthy of worship. A Jina is liberated and is therefore the most holy and worthy of worship, but he will by definition not influence the world of ordinary people. The same holds true for a Buddha in Theravada Buddhism, but looking at Theravada Buddhists in Sri Lanka, Richard Gombrich observed that the Buddha’s idol was considered as living by some and his power to influence the world was still active (1995:164ff). Finding other discrepancies between normative Buddhism and actual religious behaviour Gombrich introduces a distinction between cognitive and affective beliefs. Cognitively these Buddhist know that the Buddha is completely beyond this world and its affairs, but affectively they behave as if he is still involved (Gellner 1990:28). In Nākoḍā however, there was no confusion between affective and cognitive beliefs in any

³⁹ Babb makes a point of this, specifically referring to Nākoḍā Bhairava (1996:80-1).

Gombrichian sense: every Jain knew that the Jina cannot give any help and would, as a rule, not ask him for any. This is not so clear at other pilgrimage sites that feature popular and miraculous Jina idols, such as the one in Padampura where Jains approach the Jina in order to exorcise demons. We will return to this in the chapter on possession.

In line with the fact that the Jina cannot be prayed to, but in spite of the clear hierarchy between Pārśvanātha and Nākoḍā Bhairava, many Jains readily state that they and others come to Nākoḍā because they are attracted to Nākoḍā Bhairava. They are looking for help in their worldly lives which, as we know, can be supplied by the deities but not the Jinas. Some of the Jains I spoke to even found this somewhat comical and laughed when explaining that even though the main temple is dedicated Pārśvanātha, it is in fact the Bhairava that draws people to Nākoḍā. The reason for this, they explained, is simply that he is a boon-granting, wish-fulfilling deity. Sickness, lack of children or spouse, jobs or exams, business or family related problems; all such hardships and inconveniences could potentially be solved in Nākoḍā. In various brochures and literature related to Nākoḍā there is a popular list of the Bhairava's 8 miracles (*camatkār*). They include getting many sons, freedom from poverty and sickness, the fulfilment of every desire, freedom from evil spirits of various sorts, power and wealth, success and increased happiness in general.

That the capacity to influence the everyday lives of humans receive extended attention in rituals at the expense of the figures of more cosmic magnitudes should not surprise us. Max Weber explains:

The decisive consideration was and remains: who is deemed to exert the stronger influence on the individual in his everyday life, the theoretically supreme god or the lower spirits and demons? If the spirits, then the religion of the everyday life is decisively determined by them, regardless of the official god-concept of the ostensibly rationalized religion (1964:20).

In some ways therefore, it is almost more surprising that a religion based around the worship of indifferent beings (Jinas) has succeeded in the manner that it has, and less surprising to find deity cults in seemingly opposition to the dominant values of a religion like Jainism, which in its soteriology pays little or no heed to man as a social animal. In the case of Nākoḍā Bhairava, it is clear that the dominant values of Jainism are more influential in some areas than others. People's consciously expressed opinions, the physical arrangement of the temple, the order of rituals, the statements found in canonical and contemporary sources on Jinas and deities in general or on Nākoḍā specifically, all point to the fact that it is really the Jina that ought to be of real

importance. Here there seems to be no doubt in terms of hierarchy, but the tensions reveal themselves in other domains over which the hands of ideology might not so easily grasp. One such domain is that of auctions.

Though not necessarily always the case, the *pujārī* conducting the auctions confirmed that Nākoḍā Bhairava usually gets the highest bids. I never experienced anything else during my weeks of fieldwork in Nākoḍā. This is not the only auction in which a deity does well. In the case of the rituals involving the 14 dreams that Mahāvīra's mother had, which are auctioned away in the celebration of Mahāvīra's birth during Paryuṣaṇ, Cort has observed that the highest prices are usually given for the dream of goddess Lakṣmī (2001:155). Her popularity was explained fairly straightforwardly to Cort: "She [Lakṣmī] is the goddess of wealth and prosperity" (ibid). In the celebration Cort observed, he noted how the representative of the dominant values of the tradition, a *sādhu*, was simply rejected when trying to establish the proper hierarchy of values:

When he [the *sādhu*] attempted to assert his superiority over the laity, and to assert the superiority of the *mokṣa-mārg* ideology over the realm of wellbeing, he was politely but firmly reminded of his circumscribed role and requested to get on with the recitation (Cort 2001:158).

This episode clearly demonstrates the sort of tensions in Jainism which in Cort's study lie between the ideology of soteriology (*mokṣa-mārg*) and the realm of wellbeing, and which in our case can be seen in the relationship between Pārśvanātha and Nākoḍā Bhairava.

The rituals themselves also reveal that Pārśvanātha receives more extensive worship than Nākoḍā Bhairava. He, the Jina, comes first and is the object of more *pūjās* than the Bhairava. But the proximity of the two has led to a peculiar ritual detail. When the turn comes to the Bhairava, the *pujārī* draws a curtain in front of the Jina to avoid any potential offence. This is certainly not in line with normal Jain understanding of a Jina and his image for it must imply that Pārśvanātha himself is somehow present in the image. Not only that, but it must also imply that he still has the capacity of being annoyed and offended, a capacity that does not fit well with the normative definition of a Jina.

My impression from asking lay Jains about this was that many had simply not taken notice of it, and after hearing my observation, some explained it by saying that this was just a misunderstanding the Hindu *pujārīs* had brought with them from their own tradition. One informant did state that the Jina should not see it because it is a

question of authority. On my question on how a Jina could be offended he was quick to explain: "Pārśvanātha will not care, nor see it, and if he could see it right from *mokṣ* he can see through the curtain also. So these are all things to give people a message...Just to make aware who is important." Not fitting well with Jain doctrine, the possibility of offending Pārśvanātha does fit well with my argument that there is a tension here between deity and Jina. Another expression of this is the aforementioned sign in front of the temple, reminding people to always worship Pārśvanātha first. At some point, by some people, it must have been felt necessary to remind people of the hierarchy of things.

Whilst in Nākoḍā I was invited to join a *bhakti* celebration with a Mumbai based Jain congregation that was to be held in a few weeks. On the front cover of the invitation there was a picture of Nākoḍā Bhairava, but also of Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha. The size of the Bhairava was far greater than the size of Pārśvanātha, who in fact is placed as a small figure on the chest of Nākoḍā Bhairava, barely noticeable (see picture 1). As I was sitting on the temple floor discussing Jainism with members of this congregation, it just so happened that the invitation was lying next to my feet. This, I was firmly notified, was not showing proper respect to the image on the invitation.

Jains know that in their religion it is the Jinas that are of real importance, yet much religious activity in Nākoḍā seems to challenge this. The tension lies not in soteriology, but in worship-worthiness. Nākoḍā Bhairava does not help his devotees advance on the path of salvation, but may support and help in their worldly lives. Although these two realms, worldly support and soteriology, are kept separate, some statements point to their possible combination. Some Jains would argue that the Bhairava will not help you if you ask him directly. Instead he will help only those who worship the Jina correctly without any hopes of reward (Babb 1996:81). One informant argued that Nākoḍā Bhairava leads his devotees on the path of Mahāvīra through attracting Jains to go on pilgrimage and take part in donation, fasting and other religious valuable activities. Through the bargains discussed earlier we also saw how Jains resolve to practice some form of asceticism such as abstaining from certain items, hoping that the Bhairava will reward them. In this way worldly reward and soteriology, the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava and the cult of the Jinas, are combined.

6.4 The Many Faces of Nākoḍā Bhairava

Whilst in Nākoḍā I was repeatedly told that Nākoḍā Bhairava was a protector and guarding deity (*rakṣakdev*) in the service of Pārśvanātha and the *tīrtha*. Like the famous

Bhairava of Benares, Nākoḍā Bhairava is the “police chief” of Nākoḍā (Eck 1983:189). In the local history of the *tīrtha* we saw that he alone was able to defend the temple from Muslim attackers by sending out black bugs. Nākoḍā Bhairava does not only bestow his worshippers with favours, he can also punish or attack sinners. This is a side of the Bhairava that should interest us.

In his present anthropomorphic form, which is equal to a bust, Nākoḍā Bhairava has a red, moustachioed face and four arms (see picture 1 and 2). He has no particular expression on his face, perhaps smiling, but his eyes certainly makes him look quite alive. In his lower right and left hands he carries a bowl (*kapāla*) and a drum (*ḍamaru*), and in his upper hands a sword (*khaḍga*) and a trident (*triśūlā*). These two last attributes, together with his facial colour and moustache, are very much in tune with his role as a protector. Bhairavas, we have seen, are typically associated with Śaiva traditions and the *triśūlā* is of course the favourite weapon of Śiva. Nākoḍā Bhairava’s weapons are interesting in as much as they point to the more violent nature of his Hindu equivalents. The word Bhairava itself, we noted, is related to the terrible. Whatever the religious origins of Nākoḍā Bhairava, it is clear that the violent nature of any Jain deity must be toned down to a minimum. Considering the importance of *ahimsā* in Jainism, no Jain deity could ever demand blood offerings because Jains would never meet such a demand. This was clear in the conversion, or *jainising*, of the fierce, meat-eating Hindu goddess Camūṇḍā into the Jain, vegetarian goddess Saciyā Mātā. The question of diet is also interesting in the case of Nākoḍā Bhairava, but not because of vegetarianism.

The various traditions of taking the leftover food items offered to a deity or guru, known as *prasād*, is a central feature of religious practice in South Asia. I shall not dwell long on the logics of why there cannot be *prasād* in the case of Jain worship of Jinās, for it has been discussed elsewhere⁴⁰, but from our discussion of the status of Jinās it should be clear: while the object of taking *prasād* in Hindu contexts is usually understood to be concerned with becoming more like the deity or guru in question, i.e. taking up some of their quality through eating their leftovers, the offerings given to a Jina cannot be transformed by the Jina as he is completely beyond this world (Babb 1996:94-5).

An exception, Babb explains, to the general rule that Jain ritual culture does not employ the concept of *prasād*, is Nākoḍā Bhairava and another male, moustachioed, protective deity sharing many similarities with our Bhairava that we have already met,

⁴⁰ See Babb 1996.

namely Ghaṇṭākaraṇ Mahāvīr⁴¹ (ibid:95-6)⁴². This works in the following way in Nākoḍā. When pilgrims arrive many have brought with them sweets to offer to Nākoḍā Bhairava, or they may purchase it in the bazaar right outside the temple complex. When inside the temple complex, only a portion of the sweets will be brought into the temple proper. This is offered to the Bhairava and will not be eaten or taken out of the temple, but the remaining sweets that are not taken into the temple become the *prasād* (see picture 6). This *prasād* must be consumed within the temple complex premises, and if taken outside, it is widely believed that some misfortune might happen⁴³. As a book on Jain pilgrimages states: "Taking the 'Prasād' elsewhere from the parameter of the pilgrimage is not considered proper" [sic] (Sagar n.d.:18). I heard stories of car accidents and sickness as a result of not obeying this rule. In a rather humoristic tone, one person told me that whenever the local bus would fail, the driver would stand up and demand that the passenger who had taken *prasād* from Nākoḍā should go back and ask for forgiveness.

Answering my questions on exactly why and how these mishaps would occur, many were reluctant to attribute it to Nākoḍā Bhairava directly, but as one informant openly explained; if one takes *prasād* outside, one must "face the anger of Bheru-jī". Hence, Nākoḍā Bhairava is not only a miracle producing deity, but also a potential punisher of ritual transgressions. Although typical of Hindu Bhairavas, these traits are problematic in the Jain context because of the demands of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*). Commanding black bugs to violent battle, carrying sword and trident⁴⁴, and causing accidents as a response to the disobeying of ritual rules are all features we would not expect from a Jain deity. It is tempting to understand them as traits that have been minimised through conversion processes, but not removed completely. His somewhat ambivalent nature is clearly seen in his identification as the brother of Kālā Bhairava.

6.5 On the Edge of Jainism: Kālā Bhairava and the Jainising of Nākoḍā Bhairavas

It was only after spending quite a few days in Nākoḍā that I learned of Kālā Bhairava and his shrine. In fact, many visitors do not even know of his shrine, which is not surprising since it is placed outside of the temple complex on a somewhat hidden spot

⁴¹ See Cort (2000) for more on the cult of Ghaṇṭākaraṇ Mahāvīr.

⁴² I witnessed Jain *prasād* in a quite different context at a Dīgambara pilgrimage site (Jambudvīp) in Hastinapur where visitors came to see as the receding ascetics ate their food. After the most popular nun, known as Mātājī, had finished her portion, her leftovers were given to the eager and awaiting visitors.

⁴³ This was also recorded by others (Babb 1996:95-6; Laidlaw 1995:73-4).

⁴⁴ There is however nothing unusual with Jain *yakṣās and yakṣīs* carrying weapons (Sharma 1989).

(see map of Nākoḍā *tīrtha*). At first I did not think that it belonged to the *tīrtha* and that Jains would have little to do with him because of his sheer appearance. It was only when I spotted some lay Jains dressed in *pūjā* clothes going up to the shrine, later read about him in the brochures and started asking around that I realised that he is also under the Nākoḍā Trust and hence a part of the Jain *tīrtha*.

His name, Kālā Bhairava, refers to him having black (*kālā*) colour (see picture 4). His face is certainly not as peaceful as his alleged brother's, situated next to Pārśvanātha inside the temple complex. His attributes are somewhat surprising. In his upper right and left hands he holds a trident (*triśūlā*) and a drum (*ḍamaru*), in his lower right he holds a bent sword (*khaḍga*), and in his lower left a head skull (*kapāla*). Behind his left foot, right under the skull we see his vehicle⁴⁵, the dog. Together with the fact that he is placed about 150 metres away from the temple complex, one gets the impression that we are here dealing with something that is only marginally Jain. There are no obvious references to anything Jain in this shrine, the only possible exception being some pictures of Nākoḍā Bhairava.

Similarly, Valley noted that when visiting a shrine of a mother goddess in a Gujarati village to which Jains would regularly go, she found nothing explicitly Jain there (forthcoming 2010). But while the idols of such goddesses appear benevolent, the appearance of Kālā Bhairava is rather frightening. On one of my visits to Nākoḍā I travelled with a family, and as we were leaving I suggested that we visit the shrine of Kālā Bhairava. The mother of the family did not find this to be a great suggestion and even advised me not to go there since it was already dark and night was approaching. There was clearly a sense that this was not always a safe place. The head skull in his left hand and his facial expression and general appearance seem to give more associations to the dark and violent than to the reverent and non-violent. Still, I observed several Jains, sometimes dressed in *pūjā* clothes, visiting the shrine. At the same time, the importance of non-violence in Jain self-understanding can hardly be overstated. The aphorism "Non-Violence is the Greatest Religion" (*ahiṃsā paramo dharma*) is well used and widely known among Jains. What then to make of Kālā Bhairava and his shrine?

According to Śāiva mythology the Bhairava does in fact not "carry" a head skull, rather the skull got stuck on the nail of his left thumb. At some point there appears to have been an argument between Brahmā and Śīva concerning who had created the universe, and in the quarrel the more nasty of Brahmā's five heads was cut off by

⁴⁵ Jain *yakṣās* and *yakṣīs* also have animals connected to them on which they ride. These are recognised as their vehicles.

Bhairava on Śiva's command (Gopinatha 1968:174-5). While the earlier meaning of the word *kapāla* was human skull, it later came to denote bowl (ibid:13). Both Nākoḍā Bhairava and Kālā Bhairava carry a *kapāla*, but Nākoḍā Bhairava's *kapāla* is not a skull stuck on his thumb nail, but a bowl that he actively holds in his right, and not left hand. The present iconography of Nākoḍā Bhairava, as we know, was fashioned on the basis of the dreams by Jain ascetics. The idol of Kālā Bhairava was presumably not fashioned by Jains, although his present shrine was. The two Bhairavas therefore, Nakoḍa Bhairava and Kālā Bhairava, are in different degrees incorporated and accepted into the Jain sphere. Both are under the Nākoḍā Trust, but while Nākoḍā Bhairava is placed inside Pārśvanātha's temple and carries a bowl, Kālā Bhairava is far removed from the temple and has a skull attached to his left hand. Various Hindu mythological texts also describe him as carrying a garland of skulls around his neck and the Kālā Bhairava in Nākoḍā appears to have one as well.

The shrine of Kālā Bhairava is placed on a dam. A trident stands straight up from the roof of the shrine, and right opposite his image we find a fireplace in which a flame is lit up during worship by the local *pujārī* who overlooks the shrine. In the worship of Kālā Bhairava that I witnessed, the flame was carried on a metal tray with a long shaft from the fireplace and placed in front of the image of Kālā Bhairava. Coconuts were then cracked and placed on top of the flame as an offering to the deity. Such sizable flames as employed here, and the placing of offerings in them, are not usual in Jain rituals due to the demands of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*). There are more signs, literally, suggesting that we here are dealing with a deity cult that is on the edge of Jainism: the sign in front of the shrine urges the worshippers not to use alcohol in their offerings.

Though quite removed from Nākoḍā *tīrtha* proper, Kālā Bhairava was by some Jains said to be the brother of Nākoḍā Bhairava, who in this constellation becomes Gaura (white) Bhairava. Their mother, I was told, is Ambikā Devī. She is the *yakṣī* of the 22nd Jina Neminātha. One of the *pujārīs* stated that their mother is Mātā-jī, referring to a local, non-Jain deity. This coupling of black and white Bhairavas are common in Hindu traditions, as we saw earlier. But there are two Kālā Bhairavas in Nākoḍā. Besides the one in the Kālā Bhairava shrine we have discussed so far, there is also a Kālā Bhairava in the *Dādāvāḍī*. For the sake of simplicity I will call the Kālā Bhairava with his own shrine that we have discussed so far "Kālā Bhairava 1", while the new Kālā Bhairava that I am introducing now will be "Kālā Bhairava 2". If we compare these two representations of Kālā Bhairava, we will see that they are quite different (see picture 4 and 5).

The iconography of the two Kālā Bhairavas reveals several differences. While Kālā Bhairava 1 is devoid of Jain ascetics in its shrine or any obvious marks of Jainism at all, Kālā Bhairava 2 is situated in a *Dādāvāḍī*, that is, a place to worship Jain ascetics. As one might expect, Kālā Bhairava 2 does not carry a head skull. In fact, here, his two lower hands have their palms united in veneration, both skull and sword removed. Although still carrying the trident and the drum in his upper hands, his face has a benevolent facial expression. Like the benevolent deities in mythological and mytho-historical stories of Jain ascetics who have converted and subdued them, he appears to have become a devout follower of the Jina, or in this case, the Dādāgurus.

When we investigate the local sources on the history of the *tīrtha* it is interesting to note the active way in which these Bhairavas were propagated and included in the *tīrtha* by the Jain community (Jain n.d. b:54-55). In the case of Nākoḍā Bhairava, we learned that his original shape was different from his present. Before 1933 his form was that of an aniconic stone (*piṇḍākar*). It may be that this shape of Nākoḍā Bhairava did not originate from the Jain community, but his present shape does. His new form was in fact inspired by dreams that both Sūndarśrī and Himācalsūri had. Hence he was reshaped by the Jain community on the instructions of Jain mendicants. Having created his new shape around his old form Nākoḍā Bhairava was now fit to be moved from the temple entrance into the temple proper, being placed next to Pārśvanātha. With this he was incorporated into the Jain pantheon and universe, in which he is the devotee and worshipper of Pārśvanātha. We note that this process was initiated and completed by mendicants and not by the laity.

Similarly, the Kālā Bhairava 1 shrine, although not his image, was in fact made by the Jain community (Jain n.d. a:58). The image of Kālā Bhairava 2 found inside the *Dādāvāḍī* has also been made by the Jain community. In contrast to the freestanding Kālā Bhairava 1 who holds a head skull and has a frightening facial expression, Kālā Bhairava 2 in the *Dādāvāḍī* has a benevolent quality, smiling as it were, while showing his respect by folding his hands. The sign in front of Kālā Bhairava 1, urging people not to use alcohol in their offerings, indicates that this had previously been a part of his diet. At this stage he has already been somewhat tamed since he no longer needs this according to the sign, but it is in the *Dādāvāḍī* that we see Kālā Bhairava completely converted or *jainised*. Being somewhat dubious and on the edge with regards to his place in the Jain scheme of things in his first form (Kālā Bhairava 1), there is no ambiguity in his *Dādāvāḍī* form (as Kālā Bhairava 2). Here he is in the service of the Jain teachings, worshipping Jain ascetics. Hence there is no need to remind people not to use

alcohol in the *Dādāvāḍī*, for it would simply be unthinkable. While Kālā Bhairava 1 receives offerings on a metal tray with flames, Kālā Bhairava 2 has marks of the typical Jain *aṅga pūjā* where substances are anointed directly on the idol.

In this way, the Bhairavas in Nākoḍā illustrate the different stages through which a Jain deity can come into being. These stages are no doubt analogous to the case of Sacyā Mātā and the *jainising* of other clan deities or non-Jain supernaturals (Babb 1996:155-70). The “iconographical translation” of *kapāla* from “human skull” in the case of Kālā Bhairava 1, to simply “bowl” in the case of Nākoḍā Bhairava 2 can be understood in this way.

In an article on “popular Jainism”, Padmanabh Jaini makes a clear distinction between deities that are of Jain nature, and those that are not (1991:193-4). He argues that it is possible that “Jaina teachers” devised new guardian deities to replace local ones. My findings on the history of Nākoḍā show that local deities can be transformed over time and that Jain mendicants can be very active in such transformations. A clear cut distinction between Jain and non-Jain based on the origin of a given deity seems static and unhelpful when trying to understand transformation in South Asian religion over time. The process of *jainising* is clearly guided by the dominant values of asceticism in which violence is avoided and ascetics are worshipped. These processes, I would argue, make it possible to speak of “Jain deities” irrespective of their alleged origins. In his newest form Kālā Bhairava has been transformed from a fierce, violent Hindu deity, into a peaceful deity who worships Jain ascetics. Similarly when the image of Nākoḍā Bhairava was given his “true form” on the basis of visions of Jain ascetics, he could not have a human skull in his left hand. Instead he was given a bowl in his right hand, a bowl that looks strikingly similar to the ones lay Jains use when they anoint substances on idols during the worship of Jinas. Like lay Jains, Nākoḍā Bhairava has also become a follower of the Jina.

6.6 Nākoḍā Bhairava as a Jain Layman: Economy and Religion

As Babb convincingly argues (1996:79-82), there is a clear link between lay Jains and deities simply because they both worship the Jinas. This is the nature of deities and simultaneously the core of lay Jain religiosity. In Jain cosmology, the gods are the first to celebrate and worship the newborn Jina. Lay Jains re-enact this in rituals. When the winners of auctions in Nākoḍā wear the tinsel crown, therefore, they are identified with the worshipping gods. In this respect gods appear almost equal to humans. The gods however, are more powerful than humans in their capacity to cause miracles or injuries,

but less powerful in the sense that they cannot perform asceticism and attain liberation. Hence there are stories of various Jain ascetics subduing deities and other super-human agents. Asceticism is stronger than the power of deities. In this way Nākoḍā Bhairava is said to have been the subject of Kīrtiratnasūri (Sālecā n.d.:6). This identification of deities and lay Jains, the recognition of Nākoḍā Bhairava as a devotee of Jain ascetics, be it Kīrtiratnasūri or Pārśvanātha, has been utilised for economic purposes in a rather intriguing manner.

The Jains have developed a specific system of donation that has interesting consequences for the economic organisation of temples and *tīrthas*. According to this system a Jain layman can donate wealth to seven different "fields" (*sātkṣetra*). Hemacandra explains:

Thus, one who is firm in [the twelve] vows and with devotion strews his wealth in the seven "fields", including [image, temples, scriptures, male mendicants, female mendicants, layman [and] laywomen], and one who out of compassion [strews his wealth on] the oppressed, [such a person] is said to be an exceptional layman (Qvarnström 2002:69).

Kelting has noted how donations through auction fit with these categories allowing the auctions to serve both religious and social ends (2009:293). It goes without saying that donations are highly valued among Jains, generating both social status and religious merit.

A curious development, however, which is not found in Hemacandra's work, is the contemporary hierarchical understanding of these donations (Cort 2001:105, n.11). This entails that donations given to a lower field can be "invested" in higher ones, but not the other way around. The fields in which one can "strew" ones wealth, in descending order, are: Image, temple, scripture, male mendicants, female mendicants, layman and laywoman. To take an example, this means that money donated to mendicants can be used to restore an image or a temple, but money donated to an image can not be used for mendicants. How are we to understand this development?

Torkel Brekke (1998) has argued that there is a common ideology surrounding the gift in Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism that hinges around a contradiction. The contradiction lies in understanding the gift as a sacrifice or a charitable gift (1998:290). If understood as a charitable gift, the intention of the giver becomes the important issue, not the quality of the recipient. But if "the giving is seen as a sacrifice, the qualities of the recipient are naturally the focus of the attention" (ibid:312). I believe that the hierarchical understanding of the seven fields of donation has developed because in this

sort of donation the giving is understood as a sacrifice and not as a charitable gift. Because “the quality of the soil determines the harvest” (ibid:300), the people handling the donation must make sure that a specific donation is planted in the right soil, lest the religious harvest of the giver be compromised. A donation given in a lower field can be used in a higher for that will simply mean that the giver receives more benefit from his donation, whereas the opposite would imply a loss to the giver that cannot be accepted.

Whatever the reason and rationale behind the current hierarchical understanding of the seven fields, this tradition creates a problem in the case of pilgrimage sites such as Nākoḍā, but also other temple complexes. If the Nākoḍā Trust wants to repair or expand the more practical facilities for themselves and the laity, they cannot employ the monetary donations that are given to fields higher than the laity. If the main source of monetary income is donated to Nākoḍā Bhairava and he is considered an image, then all donations given to him can only be used for images, and not, say, the enlargement of facilities at the site. And while the need to fund the making and maintenance of images can only go so far, the possibilities of improvements and enlargements of a pilgrimage site in other areas than images are endless. Hence, the hierarchical understanding of the seven fields has created some problems that, as far as I know, have not been noted by other scholars.

An old informant who had been involved in the Nākoḍā Trust for decades told me that there had been a discussion of this topic during the time of Himācalsūri. The two highest fields, he explained - image and temple - are collectively called *devdravya*⁴⁶ and money donated to these could be used interchangeably, but not for anything in the lower fields. The dispute in Nākoḍā revolved around whether or not donations given to the Bhairava was *devdravya* or not, that is, only to be used in the two highest fields of donation. While some had claimed this, Himācalsūri on the other hand had argued that Nākoḍā Bhairava is in fact a Jain layman and that donations to him should be defined thereafter.

In the end, Himācalsūri won the argument and the economic consequences of this have been of major importance – and continue to be. To define Nākoḍā Bhairava as a layman meant that all donations given to him could be used to finance all sorts of improvements at the *tīrtha* that again would make it more attractive for potential visitors. The construction of the more modern, showroom-like *smṛti bhavan*, the under-

⁴⁶ The term *devdravya* is also used to denote ritual offerings “given to” a Jina (Babb 1996:93).

construction *samosaraṇa* and other unconventional constructions⁴⁷, could hardly have begun without this important income. The same must be true for the *dharmśālās* and various other facilities at the *tīrtha*. This stroke of genius by Himācalsūri, defining Nākoḍā Bhairava as a layman in terms of donation, is one of the reasons why Nākoḍā has grown to become so successful. It might seem strange that a deity could be classified in such a way, but as we have seen, this does resonate with Jain cosmology wherein gods are nothing but reborn, pious Jain men and women, and also with the fact that deities function as lay followers in that they are worshippers of the Jina. In Babb's words: "[Nākoḍā] Bhairav is really a lay Jain who, out of fellow feeling, will come to the aid of other pious lay Jains" (1996:81). It also makes sense to see Nākoḍā Bhairava as a lay Jain since deities like himself are thought to have been converted and made into followers of the Jain ascetics. Hence, the Bhairava in the *Dādāvādī* is standing with folded hands: he worships the Jain ascetics just like lay Jains do.

The same senior informant told me of other trusts that had problems related to the restricting tradition of the seven fields. They had temples which received huge sums in donation, but were not able to use this for other activities than building and renovation of images and temples. Being very rich in *devdravya*, they could not use this money to develop their *tīrthas*. One such troubled trust had contacted my informant while he was active in the Nākoḍā Trust. They had requested if they could donate some of their *devdravya* to Nākoḍā so that they again could re-donate it to their *tīrtha*, this time as a donation to the laity. In this way they hoped to transform the donations from a high to a low field in order to be able to develop their *tīrtha*; a sort of religious laundering of donated money. My informant and his trust had not accepted this dubious request.

So far we have seen how Nākoḍā Bhairava can be seen as the protector of the *tīrtha*, as a follower and devotee of Pārśvanātha and Kīrtiratnasūri, as the brother of Kālā Bhairava and finally as a Jain layman. In the next chapter we will see that he also manifests himself as a possessive deity.

⁴⁷ Balbir (1987) reports from the Jain *tīrtha* Hastinapur that one can do boating on the site, an attraction she calls an "undisputable success". This is however, but one of the many unconventional constructions found in the various Jain pilgrimage sites in Hastinapur that I visited in June 2010.

Chapter 7. Oracular Possession in Nākoḍā: Understanding Possession in Jainism

In this chapter I will attempt to situate my fieldwork on the possession cult in Nākoḍā into a broader discussion around Jainism and possession. Studies on Jain possession are scarce, and because of it, I believe that the possession cult in Nākoḍā has something to offer in terms of understanding Jainism as a whole. First, I will present some arguments that I wish to establish by using my fieldwork on the possession cult in Nākoḍā as a starting point. The presentation of earlier studies on Jain possession and various occurrences of possession in the history of Jainism will provide a fruitful background for understanding the possessions in Nākoḍā.

Conducting my fieldwork in Nākoḍā I was surprised to find that a number of Jains were involved in a possession cult. It turns out that I am not alone in this reaction. Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, conducting fieldwork at another Jain pilgrimage site were also “surprised...to discover such a flourishing possession cult in a Jain temple” (2001:231). Why, one might ask, are we surprised to find Jain possession? One reason is certainly connected with the Jain focus on asceticism and self-control. Jainism, after all, started out as a salvation technique which focused on stopping the influx of karma and removing its earlier accumulation. Thus correct conduct is extremely important in Jain soteriology. Jain teachings are full of lists related to ideals of self-control, the most obvious being the five great vows (*mahāvratas*): causing no harm (*ahiṃsā*), speaking only truth (*satya*), not taking what is not freely given (*asteya*), celibacy (*brahmacarya*) and possessing nothing (*aparigraha*). A list of three restraints involving the progressive control of mental, vocal and physical activities (Cort 2001:24) and a list of five careful actions including “care in motion” (Dundas 2002:164) are contemporary and classical examples of variations on the theme of self-control so typical of Jain soteriological teachings. Locating such core ideas, not only in Jainism, Gombrich and Obeyesekere writes:

The great classical religions of India - Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Jainism - ...inculcated self-control and decorum...Possession is of course the very converse of self-control and is normally accompanied by the display of violent emotion. One could say that the Indian classical religions precisely censored out possession and opposed emotionalism (1988:457).

This characterisation is perhaps true if we look at Jain soteriology and early Jainism, but taken as a description of Jainism through history, and as a full-fledged religion and not just a soteriology, it is highly problematic. As scholars we can extract a certain ideology

from the core teachings of a religion and see these in relationship to actual practice, but the usefulness of this exercise has its limits in a religion like Jainism because its core teachings are derived from a soteriology that was never meant for all to practice: the religiosity of lay Jains is not, and was never, modelled on soteriology alone.

If we put the quote above into present tense we would commit two mistakes. Firstly, we would conflate religion with soteriology and risk making a *model for* how Jainism ought to be, rather than a *model of* Jainism as it is practiced in real life (Cort 1990a:54ff). Secondly, we would make the assumption that there is a fundamental opposition between asceticism (*tapas*) and enthusiastic, emotional devotion (*bhakti*), an assumption that has been challenged in recent studies (Cort 2002a, 2002b). I am not suggesting that possession is a completely unproblematic activity among Jains, and that its possible clash with Jain teachings is merely the invention of scholars overemphasising certain aspects of normative Jainism. Contemporary scepticism towards possession among Jains is widespread and not without its history. Still, possession is certainly not something new or foreign to Jainism. Further, possession is not one thing. There are various types of possession - depending for instance on who possesses and who is possessed - and they have different implications in the Jain scheme of things.

In the following I will present new ethnographic material on Jain possession and use this as a starting point for a discussion on how we are to understand possession in Jainism, and Jainism in general. By means of exploring the positive, oracular possession in Nākoḍā and comparing it to other cases of Jain possession I hope to highlight aspects of Jain religiosity that are often marginalised or simply overlooked.

7.1 Earlier Studies on Jain Possession

There is very little information available on spirit and deity possession in Jainism and according to most literature on Jainism it does not seem to be a part of the religious repertoire of Jains at all. There have been a few references to spirit possession among contemporary Jains in fairly recent anthropological literature. They mostly appear as scattered remarks here and there, the Jain pilgrimage site of Padampura being the most often mentioned and known location for the phenomenon (Banks 1992:103; Humphrey 1991:222; Laidlaw 1995:267). Typically we learn that Jains are possessed by malign spirits which they try to rid themselves of by various religious means. One instance of spirit possession is briefly mentioned in an ethnographic work focusing primarily on the religious life of Jain women (Kelting 2001:104). A notable exception to this lacunae is Anne Vallely's ethnographic book on Jain female ascetics (2002) and an article where

she explores various types of Jain possession (forthcoming 2010). Valley's ethnographic account is of special interest here, for it deals with possession among the ascetic community and their attitudes towards it. I will return to her work in detail when looking at the role of soteriology in Jainism and how it relates to possession.

Besides Valley's work on possession, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual* by Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994) is the only work where Jain possession is discussed. Here we are taken to the above-mentioned Padampura where people come to rid themselves of evil spirits by the help of the Jina and his ancillary deity residing there. The authors describe in great detail the movements and actions of possessed Jains during the evening *ārati* for the Jina, before they rush to the entrance where the ancillary deity might drive the spirits out (ibid:230-39). However interesting these observations, their subsequent analysis is concerned with placing these possessions in relation to ritual theory. Hence their discourse on Jain possession remains far removed from the discourses Jains themselves have on possession. It is exactly this discourse I am interested in here. While many studies on possessions have revolved around psychological and psycho-social theories, trying to uncover the factors *behind* such behaviours, this chapter investigates how possessions are viewed and understood within the Jain community.

In the following I will present some background on possession in South Asia in general before looking at various cases of Jain possession through history. This will provide the context in which the ethnographic material from Nākoḍā can be presented and subsequently discussed in relation to other cases of Jain possession.

7.2 Possession in South Asia

Spirit and deity possession is a widespread phenomenon in South Asia, to which Smith's monumental study *Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asia* is a testament (2009). A definition of possession is not easy to give⁴⁸. Very generally it can be said to be an altered state of consciousness believed to be induced by an external agent. Possession appears already in the Ṛgveda under the term *āveśa* (from the root *ā-vis* meaning "to enter"), the most common word for possession through the religious history of South Asia up until modern times (Smith 2009:xxii). In the later Vedic period we also find terms derived from the verb root *grh* ("to seize") indicating a more negative sort of possession. This distinction between the positive oracular possession, and the negative disease-producing possession is found already in the Ṛgveda, and is still observable

⁴⁸ See Smith (2009:35-39) for definitions of possession.

today (ibid:14). While positive possessions are typically voluntary and by heavenly beings and deities, negative possessions are typically involuntary and done by ghosts and hellish beings. Though there are certainly many types of possession that can be placed somewhere between these two, the distinction between the positive and the negative possession is a good starting point for understanding possession in Jainism.

There is a widespread reflex, both in academia and indigenous orthodoxies to associate possession with "people of lower social ranks, including low castes, tribals, and women, or more generally those lacking literacy" (ibid:4). It turns out, however, that the picture is more nuanced than this. In this thesis, for instance, we are in fact mainly dealing with middle-class, well-educated Jains. These cases of Jain possession support Smith's claim that possession does not only have a horizontal, but also a strong vertical presence in South Asian society (ibid:598).

Possession in South Asia does not appear as a clearly distinguished, well defined category covered by one specific indigenous term. The possessed subject can be young or old, male or female. The possessive agent can also be of both genders and belong to various superhuman categories. It can be benevolent, malevolent or a combination of the two, or it can in fact be a living human being. The result can be divine or destructive. Following Smith we can say that possession is an indigenous category distinguished by "extreme multivocality" (ibid:598). In his study he looks at possessions as they occur in Sanskrit literature and finds that possession can be "...destructive, instructional, healing or unifying, protective, symptomatic of perfected devotion, a tool used by advanced Yogins, or indicative of a state of immersion in erotic love" (ibid:579). One of the few general conclusions Smith manages to draw from his extensive study is that: "Both classical texts and modern ethnographies suggest that possession was [and is] a common way of thinking in Indian culture and performance" (ibid:595). A central assumption in this thesis is that Jains are very much a part of this culture and not some separate group devoted solely to ideals of asceticism. Jainism, like other Indian religions, has "open boundaries" (Cort 1998). Possession, therefore, has also been a common way of thinking in Jain culture, and Jain literature reflects this.

7.3 Stories of Jain Possession

Possession is not something new among Jains. In Śvetāmbara canonical literature we find the story of the garland-maker Ajuṇae who gets possessed by a *yakṣa*. The story,

as given in the *Antagaḍadasāo* (Skt. *Antakṛddasāh*), goes as follows⁴⁹. Ajjūṇae was a garland-maker living in the city of Rāyagihe with his wife Bandhumaī. Like his forefathers he worshipped the protective deity (*yakṣa*) Moggarapāṇī. At this one particular day, Ajjūṇae brought his wife with him to the shrine of Moggarapāṇī. Happily entering the shrine they were brutally attacked by a gang of six men. Ajjūṇae was tied up and the assailants went on molesting his wife. Being in this helpless situation Ajjūṇae started questioning the existence of the *yakṣa* Moggarapāṇī, who was standing idle to these atrocities: if the deity was in fact real, would it not do something to help him? Noting the doubts in Ajjūṇae's mind Moggarapāṇī entered Ajjūṇae's body and effectively possessed him. Possessed by the *yakṣa*, Ajjūṇae was now able to break loose and consequently killed the entire gang including his wife, using a heavy iron mace. Ajjūṇae remained in his possessed state and Moggarapāṇī did not leave him for days. Instead the possessed Ajjūṇae went on killing six new men and one woman every day, like he had done on that fatal day of the attack. The people of Rāyagihe were frightened and the king issued a warning to his people concerning the possessed madman.

Now, in another part of town, a rich merchant named Sudamṣaṇe heard that a Jain ascetic was coming to visit. He decided to go and show his veneration despite the fact that he could be attacked by the possessed Ajjūṇae. He confidently went on his way and sure enough, the possessed Ajjūṇae saw him and charged towards him to kill. But Sudamṣaṇe remained calm, joined his palms, gave homage to the Jinās and declared that he would become a monk. The deity Moggarapāṇī, acting through the possessed Ajjūṇae, still tried to attack the merchant, but without result. Instead Sudamṣaṇe stared at the possessed Ajjūṇae with the effect that Moggarapāṇī left his body and went back to his shrine. In that very moment Ajjūṇae collapsed. He woke up shortly after and Sudamṣaṇe explained to him what had happened and that he was on his way to greet a visiting Jain ascetic. Ajjūṇae, having regained control of his own body and actions, decided to join him. Reaching the ascetic they heard his sermon and Ajjūṇae was convinced by the doctrine on the spot and became a monk the same day. At the same time he took a special vow to stay in constant mortification due to the wrongdoings he had caused when possessed. Keeping his vow, enduring the abuse he got from the many inhabitants of Rāyagihe who had lost relatives due to his killings, he was eventually liberated.

⁴⁹ I follow the translated version of Barnett (1907:86-92).

Though somewhat unclear in its moral message, the story allows for the possibility of possession while squarely placing it under the supremacy of the Jain doctrine. At first it would seem that justice is being done when the possessed Ajuṇae breaks free to stop the assault, but the following events serve more as a warning of what can happen when invoking deities in this manner. In the end, however, a man that was once involved in deity possession, reached the highest religious goal of Jainism.

A very different kind of possession is treated in the *Yogaśāstra* written by the 12th century Jain scholar Hemacandra. In its fifth chapter Hemacandra explains how one can enter the body of various creatures through controlling one's breath. But we are advised only to enter dead bodies, beginning with small birds. Hemacandra explains:

However, entering into living bodies has not been described out of fear of sin (Qvarnström 2002:142).

In the subsequent chapter Hemacandra offers a critique of such forms of possession, arguing that they are only tricks, and that such skills or practices will not lead to liberation:

This [unorthodox method of] entering into another's body [by means of controlling breath] creates merely a miracle [and still] one may or may not accomplish [the path of liberation] even after a long time of practice...even if one has accomplished the incredible passage into another body, it is [still] not possible to attain the path of liberation for one who is exclusively devoted to such skills (ibid:143).

This sort of critique is typical in Jainism, clearly separating soteriology from other forms of religion. Being possessed by deities and possessing others are both possible, but such activities can, and often will, lead to harmful karmic activity and are therefore not advisable. According to these sources, Jainism does not deny or forbid possession, but it also does not recommend it.

Another genre of Jain literature depicting possession is the hagiography of various illustrious monks, often linked to the histories of Jain clans. There are for instance stories of various Jain ascetics who cured people from spirit possession (Babb 1996:107, 165). In clan histories we sometimes meet deities who are deceased members of the clan. Having met a violent or unusual death they proceed to possess others in the clan. These deities are known as *vyantaras*, and are troublesome until the Jain ascetic convert them or force them to protect the Jain community (Granoff 1989:202, 206). Typically the deity or spirit in question is revealed through the possessed subject and the deity's demands are given through the possessed's mouth. Before she became the Jain clan deity Sacyā

Mātā, Cāmuṇḍā Devī possessed lay Jains demanding to be offered what she could “crunch and munch”, i.e. meat offerings (Meister 1998:126). As a response, a Jain ascetic gave a sermon to the possessed person and thereby converted the meat-eating Cāmuṇḍā into the vegetarian Saciyā Mātā. She became a Jain deity. In these stories possession is not something positive, but simply a method of communication through which superhuman forces can be pacified, controlled and properly categorised within the Jain cosmos.

Moving into recent times, we find that some Jain women go to the pilgrimage site of Padampura to expel spirits that possess them. From Humphrey and Laidlaw we learn of a man who took his possessed wife to Padampura for this purpose (2001:186). He explained how they sat her in front of the Jina and did various Jain rituals: “We started doing abhishek, pūjā, arti, singing hymns, everything” (ibid). In this case, like in the stories of the eventually pacified *vyantaras*, we can only conclude that Jains, like so many other religious groups in South Asia, are tormented and troubled by spirits of various kinds. But although they share this problem with other non-Jain Indians, the remedies employed in these stories are specific to Jainism. They are all examples of specific Jain treatments or solutions to a pan-Indian problem of spirit possession.

An even clearer example of this is given by Vallely (2002:136ff). Conducting fieldwork among Jain Terāpanthi⁵⁰ ascetics in Ladnun, she came across a *samanī*⁵¹ who was possessed by a ghost (*bhūt*). Trying to drive the ghost away, the ascetics around her employed a specific mantra, famous for its exorcising power. A similar incident is found in *Jvālāmālīnī Kalpa*, a Jain tantric text, where the Jain monk Helācārya drives out a demon that had possessed a nun, with the help of a mantra (Cort 1987:246). The mantra employed by the ascetics in Ladnun was made up of the first letters in the names of famous Terāpanthi monks (Vallely 2002:136, n13). Somewhat surprisingly, we also learn that these and other methods of exorcism are described in the ascetic order’s guidebook (ibid:136). Not only do we here have a specific Jain solution to possession, we also see that possession is not something foreign to Jainism even among ascetics.

Going all the way back to canonical literature, the contemporary dealing with possession is certainly not a new trend in Jainism. The story of Ajjuṇae tells us that the Jain doctrine has the power to subdue malign spirits, and the same logic is found in all other forms of exorcism we have seen. But when we now move to Nākoḍā we will find a completely different kind of possession, namely the positive oracular one.

⁵⁰ Terāpanth is an aniconic sect belonging to the Śvetāmbara side of Jainism.

⁵¹ A category of female semi-ascetics that are not fully ordained as nuns, created by the Terāpanthī sect.

7.4 Possession in Nākoḍā

Already on my first day of fieldwork in Nākoḍā I witnessed the first of what was to become several possessions. Since the pilgrimage site has both Jain and non-Jain visitors, I first suspected that the possessed were not Jain, but quickly learned that many Jains partake in the cult. Unlike the possessions Humphrey and Laidlaw witnessed in Padampura, the ones in Nākoḍā did not fall into a predictable pattern of more or less standardised acts (1994:233). Instead they were spread both geographically and in time, covering both genders, varying in length and intensity, and provoking different responses from the surrounding people (see picture 3). One of the reasons why the possessions differ in Padampura and Nākoḍā is that the respective possessive agents at the two locations are different.

Especially during the annual fair held in Nākoḍā on the day of Pārśvanātha's birthday, I witnessed an array of possessions during both day time and evening, *pūjā*⁵² and *ārāti*, inside and outside the temple. Although I would be surprised if people do not also come to Nākoḍā in hope of being cured of malign spirit possession (this is, as we will see, in fact mentioned in hymns and brochures connected to Nākoḍā), the main pattern seemed to be that people were possessed by Nākoḍā Bhairava himself. This was repeatedly explained to me during the possessions, the typical statement being that "God comes inside man". "God" referred to Nākoḍā Bhairava, and not the Jina. Everyone was very clear on this point. There seems to be no mentioning of the Bhairava being a possessive agent in the literary sources on Nākoḍā. I have pointed out, following Smith, that we can divide most South Asian possessions into two groups: the negative disease-producing possession, and the positive oracular possession (2009:597). While all the above-mentioned studies and mentionings of Jain possession belong to the former⁵³, most cases in Nākoḍā belong to the latter.

I suspect that the time of the annual fair is a time in which Nākoḍā is prone to more possessions than usual. On my visits to Nākoḍā at other occasions, and according to other reports, possessions usually take place on Sundays, during the *ārātis* of Nākoḍā Bhairava. This was also the time in which I saw most cases of it, on regular weekends and during the fair as well. The evening *ārāti* of Nākoḍā Bhairava is the last of the daily *pūjārī*-led activities in the temple. The ones who get the honour of performing the *ārāti* will stand in front of the Bhairava and after they have received their ritual items, the

⁵² Here I am referring to the congregational *pūjās* that are auctioned, not the individually performed ones.

⁵³ One possible exception is the Jain clan medium (*bhomiā*) in Valley's article (forthcoming 2010).

pujārī will start singing the Bhairava's *ārātī* hymn while beating the temple bell. At this moment all attention is directed towards the Bhairava.

Most people join in on the hymn singing, clapping their hands to the rhythm while gazing at the deity. The singing reaches its peak after approximately three and a half minutes when the *pujārī* significantly increases the tempo for the last 30 seconds. It is mainly during this singing that Nākoḍā Bhairava possesses his subjects. Here, many of the observations done by Humphrey and Laidlaw (2001) in Padampura coincide with mine. Possessions mostly happened during evening *ārātī* while the rhythmically clapping congregation sang the hymns and the *pujārī* hit his bell producing deafening clangs (Humphrey and Laidlaw 2001:230-231). The possessed people would lose themselves in the act of clapping and singing while making continuous and increasingly intense rotating or rocking movements and breathing convulsively (ibid). In some cases they would collapse and lie still for a short while or continue to move frantically around until someone would assist them to come closer before the Bhairava. Visiting Padampura in may 2010 I observed how the possessed-to-be were led to stand directly in front of the Jina idol, separated from the rest of us by a rope. No such separation was found in Nākoḍā.

On one occasion, when I was invited to join a family who had won the rights of performing the *ārātī*, I witnessed a young man as he got possessed close at hand. First singing and clapping, I could see his face twitching as he got more and more intense and swifter in his forward rocking movements of his upper body while hyperventilating. Then, he suddenly stiffened, his limbs apparently frozen, and his eyes wide open with a fear-provoking look on his face. His hands were folded and clutched together with great force. During his rushed movements people had cleared up around where he was standing, right in front of the Jina along the route for *darśana* (see map of Nākoḍā Pārśvanāth's temple). His body and face was directed towards the Bhairava, and not the Jina. One young boy was crying while clinging to his mother. At this point some men assisted the possessed man towards the Bhairava and tried to bend him down. He was then taken into an open area inside the temple, where all the worshippers go after having *darśana* of the Bhairava. People flocked around, clearly engrossed in the drama. Meanwhile the possessed subject was held down on the floor and a man started stroking downward his legs. They also hit him on his back, all the while trying to open his folded hands without success. Several people told me of this phenomenon explaining that since the possessed get the powers of Nākoḍā Bhairava, their strength would be enormous.

That it was impossible to open the grip of the folded hands of the possessed was therefore evidence that the Bhairava was present in him.

The people who stepped in to help the possessed man were not working in the temple. They did not appear to know the possessed man and their help and assistance was spontaneous. It seemed obvious, however, that they had experience in dealing with possessed people. But not all possessed subjects got such treatment; many possessions were quite short and the possessed would come out of the trance without any assistance. In the middle of a large *pūjā* held during the fair, one of the main sponsors got up to dance in honour of the Jina and his protector deity in front of the crowd. Suddenly he collapsed on the floor before kneeling in front of the idols with his palms joined. This quick possession appeared to me to be a display of perfected devotion. While some possessions were celebrated with declarations of the Bhairava's power (see picture 3), the young abovementioned man with his clutched hands seemed to induce fear.

At one point this young possessed man was taken to a separate room by the *pūjārī*. I was not able to find out what had been done in that room. He was the only one I saw that was taken there. Before this, however, he sat up for a moment, made strange facial expressions and began speaking with what appeared to be an unusually deep voice. More people gathered around him at this point, for it marked what has become a speciality of Nākoḍā: the oracular possession. In these sessions, the Bhairava communicates with the worshippers through his possessed subjects. Before turning to the peculiarities of this phenomenon it is worth mentioning that many people came to get blessings from this possessed man while he was possessed. This was true in the case of other possessed subjects as well. Flocking around those who got possessed, people would proceed to touch their feet and bodies or bend down before them, sometimes getting the hands of the possessed on their heads as a blessing. This, I take it, is a clear indication that the possessions in Nākoḍā are considered positive, induced not by malign spirits, but by a deity.

The people who are possessed by Nākoḍā Bhairava offer two things to those interested: the general blessings we have just seen, but also oracular services. In the first category fall all those actions in which people would simply touch the possessed or get touched by them, usually through a pat on the head. This was clearly more rehearsed by some possessed than by others. One man I witnessed was allowed to stand next to the Bhairava (the guards and temple servants usually make sure that no one is allowed to remain in front of the Bhairava for too long, otherwise they will block

the traffic of eager devotees), touching everyone who passed, thereby giving them the direct blessings of Nākoḍā Bhairava. He displayed some signs of being possessed although remaining a lot more controlled than most others. We will return to this person later for he was by some accused to be a faker. A woman I saw was sitting, rocking back and forth while stretching her hands out to bless whoever placed their heads under her searching hands.

The oracular services provided by the possessed were advocated to me by many Jains. One could ask anything about the future, I was told, and one would get advice on what to do. Be it family matters such as marriage, or business matters such as investments; the Bhairava would give you the answer through the speech of the possessed person. It was not possible for me to record the verbal interactions between the persons asking questions and the possessed. Interestingly, the already quoted *Yogaśāstra* of Hemacandra also describes a type of oracular possession in which a deity is invoked into a young girl who can then answer questions regarding ones longevity (Qvarnström 2002:128). This ritual, generally known as *svasthāveśa*, is also described in various *Śaiva* and Buddhist Tantras. In these texts, the presenter of this secret ritual is often named Bhairava (Smith 2009:429).

One woman I witnessed was doing the above mentioned circular movements of the upper body very rapidly before two men, presumably in her family, led her to the open area inside the temple where she sat down and continued the movements in a slower fashion. Finally she stopped and people came to sit down around her. The first, most eager person began explaining some problem or conflict that needed advice or simply put a question concerning future outcomes. The woman, presumably with the Bhairava controlling her movements and responses, then answered in a composed and calm manner the more than a dozen people who approached her. Her eyes were closed during the entire session which lasted about 20 minutes.

7.5 Jain Explanation and Critique of Possession

These patterns of possession are not unique in South Asia, but seen in the perspective of Jain studies they are. Observing a Jain woman getting possessed during a *pūjā*, Kelting noted that some of the Jains around her would not acknowledge that the woman was in fact possessed. Referring to possession, one of the observers simply stated that: "No, we Jains don't do that" (2001:104). Although usually not flat out denied by the many lay Jains with whom I discussed possessions in Nākoḍā and in general, many of them certainly underscored that this sort of activity had nothing to do with Jainism. During my

months of fieldwork, I gathered many different opinions on possession in Nākoḍā and its relationship to Jainism. The answers I got from Jains did not fall into one singular pattern, and not one of the people I spoke to would agree to my suggestion that this might perhaps be unsuitable activities for a Jain temple, or directly criticise it. This stands in contrast to the one possession Kelting observed, after which she concluded that: "To lose control was unacceptable and doubly so inside the Jina's temple" (2001:104). A sample of some of the responses I got will demonstrate this. One businessman, belonging to the Sthānakvāsī sect, stated: "Since I don't know much about this, I should not comment upon these things. Whether it should be there or not, whether it is true or not." On the reality of the phenomenon he continued: "This is a myth I suppose, but you know, still people believe, so in all these matters one cannot comment. It's all belief - *śraddha*. So there is no logic. No logic works before belief." The same reluctance to take a definite stand with regard to possession was repeated by another: "I cannot say much about it. I have seen this, but I don't know since I have never experienced it myself".

A Jain scholar, well versed in the Jain scriptures, who even referred to the story of the garland-maker Ajjunae, and knew that possession is a possibility according to Jain canonical literature, still stated: "No no, Bheru-jī [Nākoḍā Bhairava] can't come in that way." He further explained: "It may be a drama also. And it may come to some people really. Really in the sense, they are mentally not healthy. They have some complex. And due to this complex this happens, this occurs. In India we see some societies, in the villages, where it usually happens. It is mental disease I think, which is expressed in those situations." On the other hand, a woman who had recently retired from teaching political science and who conducted distance courses in Jainism, said: "It [possessions] can happen. According to our Jain philosophy also, they can come, yeah, they can come. If you call them, then they will come." Another Jain business man's response to my enquiries was simply: "It is not Jainism. It is not Jainism." A practicing Jain lawyer expressed his doubts in the following manner: "We never know if it is Bheru-jī or not. But at times I have found that whatever Bheru-jī says turns out to be correct...If he is only coming to one person, you may have a doubt that he is not genuine. But I've seen different people, so maybe it's correct. But I am not very sure, because you can't test". A former administrative worker (trustee) at the pilgrimage site commented: "We, who are living in the scientific world, we are not able to convince ourselves how it can happen. But it is happening; we cannot deny that when we see it with our own eyes." One informant summarised it thus: "There are two sections of people. One says it is all

bogus. One says: how can it be bogus when a person gets so powerful that not even five people can hold them down, even if it's an old lady?"

While many lay Jains felt that possession did not have anything to do with Jainism, they would not openly criticise it. This was not true of the people who were more familiar with the possessions in Nākoḍā. Both a long standing administrative employee of the pilgrimage site and other Jains I met in Nākoḍā (including one of the *pujārīs*) stated that *most* of the possessions in Nākoḍā were not real. In other words, they were not criticising whether or not this was appropriate behaviour in a Jain temple for Jains, rather they were questioning the validity of the possession itself. Most people only acted, I was told, in order to "promote themselves".

Probing further I learned that the man who had taken up a position next to the Bhairava and was allowed to stay there during the evening *āratī*, and who had displayed what to me seemed to be a quite controlled possession, had his own shrine near his home. It appears that through the possession, he - and other possessed subjects - communicated to the others that he had a special connection with Nākoḍā Bhairava. The idea is that those who had been possessed would be contacted, after the session, by people who needed some ritual assistance involving possession. This needs further investigation, but if we are to accept the critique of possession as faked, it seems that whatever else a possession might be an expression of, in Nākoḍā, it can also work as an advertisement of special spiritual gifts. The possessions in Nākoḍā, therefore, were not openly criticised by lay Jains because they somehow go against ideals of self-control or the "true spirit of Jainism", but rather because some of them were faked in order to attract potential clients.

The fact that there is no mentioning of the positive, oracular possession in the brochures and literature connected to Nākoḍā, or indeed literature on Jainism in general, could indicate that it is a new development. The brochures, hymns and books on Nākoḍā do however link Nākoḍā Bhairava with protection from negative possession. One brochure presents the various reasons to why people want to have *darśana* of Nākoḍā Bhairava. One of them is to get rid of spirits and ghosts (*bhūt-pret*) (Jain n.d. a:41). The popular list of the 8 miracles (*camatkār*) of the Bhairava found in various brochures includes his power of providing freedom from ghosts, male and female evil spirits, and witches⁵⁴. Nākoḍā Bhairava is also praised in various hymns for driving these problematic forces away or keeping them at bay (Bhandarī n.d.:21; *Śrī Bhairav Cālīsā*). None of these

⁵⁴ "Bhūt-pret, śākinī, ḍakinī se chuḍakārā."

sources mention that the Bhairava himself possesses his devotees. He manifests himself as a dancing boy or through a voice, but there is no mentioning of him possessing humans. In the various mytho-historical accounts of Nākoḍā's history Nākoḍā Bhairava does appear in several dreams of both laity and mendicants, revealing valuable information such as the whereabouts of hidden Jina idols. One could perhaps argue that it is not a long way from appearing in peoples' dreams, which is already quite intimate, to possessing people. But while the appearances of deities and other auspicious elements in dreams have a long history and an important place in Jainism, oracular possession does not.

All this seems to indicate that the possession cult in Nākoḍā has gone from being about getting rid of ghosts and evil spirits with the help of the Bhairava to getting possessed by the Bhairava himself. The two types of possession are very different, but only the first is in a possible conflict with Jain tenets. There is a widespread tradition in Rajasthan for believing in lingering souls of people who have had untimely and premature deaths⁵⁵. Such lingering souls are often found to harass people and sometimes possess individuals. Since Jain doctrine states that the soul of a dead body is reincarnated within less than a second after the death of an individual, this is not possible according to Jain orthodoxy. When coming across a Jain family struggling with such a lingering soul, Vallely discovered that one member of the family would not participate in a ritual to appease and remove this lingering soul on the grounds that it was un-Jain (2010 forthcoming). His critique was inspired by Jain doctrine.

The same is hardly true when possessions are critiqued on the grounds that they are faked. One way of understanding this critique lies in Jainism's preference for controlled states of consciousness and the disembodied, both of which are downplayed in possession (Vallely 2010: forthcoming). To state that most cases of possession are fake is in fact an attempt to limit them. Talking to a senior Digambara nun who had seen possessed women in Padampura, I was told that most cases there were also faked. She effectively explained them away as psychiatric cases. Possession in Padampura even further challenges important tenets of Jain religious teachings since the possessed mainly go to the Jina to be exorcised, not necessarily the residing protective deity. Doing fieldwork with such women, Vallely was presented with a Jina that was not understood as transcendent and detached, but rather as immanent, involved and even caring (forthcoming 2010)⁵⁶. No such claims are made in Nākoḍā, and further the possessive

⁵⁵ See e.g. Gold 1998, Chapter 2.

⁵⁶ This was also my experience from visiting Padampura in May 2010.

agent is not some lingering soul. Still, most possessions are critiqued on the grounds that they are faked.

7.6 Possession in Jainism and Buddhism

In *Buddhism Transformed*, Gombrich and Obeyeskere (1988), describe cases of possession among Theravāda Buddhists in Sri Lanka that can be compared to the ones in Nākoḍā. They conclude that there is only one “truly Buddhist way to deal with...spirits”, and that is to convert them (1988:19). Both Jain and Buddhist canonical literature feature spirits and superhuman forces of various kinds that attack humans, and the typical solution is to subdue them and convert them from aggressive foes into powerful protectors. In South Asian culture such attacks involve various types of harm and injury and sometimes also possession. But as in Nākoḍā, Gombrich and Obeyesekere discovered that possession could also be something positive in Sri Lanka, and that “patients could become priests”. In these cases the possessive agent changed from ghosts and spirits (*bhūt-pretis*) to deities (*devās*) (ibid:40). This, the authors claimed, was a recent change in the Sinhala religious scene (ibid:37). If the possessed succeeded in their claims of not being patients but vehicles of gods, they would sometimes set up shrines at their homes and establish a clientele (ibid). It is hard to determine whether this is also a “recent change” in Jain religiosity⁵⁷, but the many parallels are obvious, including the alleged “fake possessions” which are induced, perhaps, by people who wish to establish themselves as priests, parallel to the Sinhalese cases. But while Gombrich and Obeyesekere found that mostly women were possessed and interpreted this as an elevation of their position in Sinhala society (ibid:38), the possessions in Nākoḍā appear more unisex.

A feature also not prominent in Nākoḍā in contrast to Buddhism in Sri Lanka, is mendicant involvement in possession cults. I never saw any monks or nuns involved in the possessions in Nākoḍā. At one point, during the annual fair celebrations, a monk was present in the temple while possessions were going on. Although clearly within his field of vision, he never looked at the possessed subjects directly and seemed to ignore them altogether. Answering my questions as to whether possessions are to be tolerated in Jain temples, many lay Jains answered that, although they themselves were not sure, they felt convinced that the mendicants would not approve of such behaviours. The fact that lay Jains feel that the experts of their religion (monks and nuns) will not believe in or

⁵⁷ There is also a report of a man being possessed by Sacyā Mātā in her temple in Osian (Cort, personal communication).

encourage possession is in line with their statements that possession has nothing to do with Jainism as such. What they were saying is that while possessions might be real, they have nothing to do with Jain soteriology, and in this they are completely in line with the Jain scriptures.

Gombrich and Obeyesekere make a distinction between ecstatic cults with strong emotions and love for a god - typical of the less educated - and the contemplative withdrawal of senses, typical of the better educated (ibid:15). At the same time they agree that these expressions of religiosity can be combined and give some examples of this. For instance, they came across Buddhists who got possessed through meditation, or "unsoteriological contemplation" (ibid:157). They argue that this combination is not without contradiction and conflict, and that their combination is a new trend (ibid:293). Possession, we learned from the quote at the beginning of this chapter, is the very opposite of self-control, and self-control is a major theme in Buddhism, Brahmanism and Jainism. Thus possession was censored out and emotionalism was opposed by these religions (ibid:457). This opposition, between self-control and emotionalism, or between asceticism (*tapas*) and devotion (*bhakti*), has been challenged in two fairly recent articles on Jainism by John Cort.

Cort argues that the two forms of religiosity are "not so much alternative practices as they are mutually reinforcing practices in Jainism" (2002a:719). He demonstrates how Jain intellectuals and religious teachings have long argued that Jains can advance on their road to salvation, not only through practicing asceticism, but also through enthusiastic devotion of others who perform asceticism, or by emotional devotion of asceticism itself (ibid:731). Hence *bhakti* need not be theistic. This is not a recent invention or necessarily the result of merely borrowing from the Hindu traditions, in fact, Jains have performed and discussed *bhakti* for over two thousand years (2002b:59-60). We also learn of Śvetāmbara *Mūrtipūjāk* Jains who often combine devotional and ascetic activities while visiting pilgrimage sites (2002a:728). Here they engage in fasting *and* various devotional activities: "Asceticism is done in the spirit of devotion, and devotion is done in the spirit of asceticism" (ibid).

This is true in Nākoḍā as well, but there the devotion extends beyond ascetics and asceticism. In Nākoḍā Jains are displaying strong emotions towards a deity. During the annual fair, a great number of lay Jains complete fasts of different kinds. Some of these fasts also involve not talking. I observed one group of men who combined asceticism with devotion. The entire group was fasting, abstaining not only from food but also from talk. Abstention from talk is a well-known practice in Jainism and it led the

group of men to develop an extensive sign language during the three days of the fair. But along these practices of asceticism, they also performed various forms of devotion such as hymn-singing⁵⁸, dancing and participation in auctions to win the rights to perform various forms of worship. Moreover, at least one of the men in the group was also possessed by the Bhairava on more than one occasion. He was in other words combining self-control and emotionalism, asceticism and possession, *tapas* and *bhakti*. There was clearly no opposition between the two forms of religiosity for this man. He was emulating the Jina and his asceticism *and* getting possessed by the Jina's protective deity at the same time. While Cort demonstrated that this combination need not be foreign to Jain philosophy, this man demonstrated it in practice.

We also saw, in the previous chapters, how the careers of Kīrtiratnasūri and Sundarśrī involved both *tapas* and *bhakti*. Sundarśrī, although an ascetic, apparently evolved strong emotions towards Nākoḍā Bhairava, crying while having her last *darśana* of him. All in all, the cult of Nākoḍā with its various aspects seems thoroughly to refute "the common academic assumption, that *bhakti* and *asceticism* are incompatible practices" (Cort 2002b:66).

7.7 Possession and Soteriology

So far we have been dealing with possession among lay Jains, but there are in fact instances of possession among Jain ascetics as well. Doing fieldwork among Jain female ascetics in Ladnun, Valley came across several stories and incidents of "demon⁵⁹-attacks", although the ascetics generally would dismiss such demons as unworthy of their attention (2002:120). In most of these stories, the ascetics were tormented by demons, but not possessed by them. Such stories of ascetics battling with evil spirits and finally winning due to their ascetic power were popular, well-known and openly discussed. Some nuns had even become famous as "demon-bashers" (ibid:123). In other instances the demons would in fact possess the female ascetics. Possessions however, were not much talked of. Although Valley was told that they were very rare, she quickly learned that they were more concealed than uncommon. They were "downplayed, trivialized, and deliberately omitted from popular discourse" (ibid:126).

According to Valley, possession among ascetics is problematic because it threatens the distinction between the worldly (*laukik*) and the transcendental (*lokottar*). The ideological split between these two realms is used to construct Jain reality and its

⁵⁸ It was obviously felt that the ban on talking did not extend to hymn-singing. In other words, the ascetic vow of not making verbal utterances was not felt to extend to the verbal expression of *bhakti* through singing.

⁵⁹ Valley here translates *bhut* as "demon".

moral universe, she argues (ibid:20). The ascetics strive to create and demarcate this split, and represent the transcendental (ibid:131). She continues:

Possession, therefore, is very distressing - not because it denotes the "occupancy" of an individual by another spiritual being, which is accepted as possible, but, I suggest, because it threatens to blur the distinction between the spiritual and the worldly - to collapse the boundaries between ascetics and *shravaks* [laity] (ibid:131).

There are many accounts of Jain ascetics being attacked by demons and evil spirits of various kinds. In a famous story of the 23rd Jina Pārśvanātha, he is continuously followed and troubled by his "transmigratory moral alter" Kamaṭh. In their final encounter Kamaṭh attacks Pārśvanātha in the form of a demon, but in the end Pārśvanātha wins because of his ascetic power. Ascetics dealing with demon-attacks in Ladnun is not something new. That Valley's ascetics are troubled by such beings and even possessed by them does not run counter to Jain teachings, but what is problematic, and perhaps embarrassing, is that they do not conquer and subdue these powers. In the Jain universe, demons and evil spirits exist, but the power of Jain ascetics, the main bearers of Jain doctrine, is always superior to their powers. Remaining completely undisturbed by Kamaṭh's attacks, Pārśvanātha continues his meditation and finally reaches omniscience. When Jain ascetics are possessed, they are not inconsistent with Jain teachings, but they have lost a battle they should win. It indicates something wrong in the practice of the individual ascetic, or worse, that the Jain doctrine is not supreme.

If we compare the possessions in Nākoḍā and Ladnun, we find that they are different in many respects. The possessions in Ladnun are considered involuntary and negative, they are induced by demons and befall ascetics. The possessions in Nākoḍā are considered positive, they are induced by a deity and happen to the laity⁶⁰. It is difficult to determine whether the possessions in Nākoḍā are voluntarily induced, but in the alleged cases of those who have their own shrines that they wish to promote, the possessions are arguably more voluntary than involuntary. Looking at Jain scriptures we see that possessions can happen. However, there seems to be no "charter" for positive possessions as they transpire in Nākoḍā. If Jain ascetics were involved in actively seeking to be possessed by deities it would go against central ideas in Jain teachings and threaten the hierarchy of the Jain cosmos wherein ascetics are placed above deities. Cort states that, since they cannot be possessed by Jinas, Jains

⁶⁰ The recently deceased scholar monk Jambūvijay was seen by some to be a medium of Sacyā Mātā (Cort, personal communication). Such a case and similar ones would be interesting to look into in future research.

...have always been highly suspicious of practices that in any way approach possession, for that possession, by definition, is by an inferior, transmigratory being (2002b:85).

In Ladnun, Jain ascetics are in fact possessed, but these possessions are involuntary and negative. This is not an impossibility according to Jain teachings, but the problem is that asceticism should win over the crude power of demons. These instances are hushed down because Jain ascetics represent and are directly involved with Jain soteriology which does inculcate self-control, but also because they represent a blow towards the power of asceticism and the Jain doctrine. They are lost battles in a struggle that Jain ascetics should win.

In Nākoḍā there is also evidence of tensions even though the possession cult only involves the laity. Most of the Jains I met in Nākoḍā and elsewhere would separate possession activities from their idea of Jainism. But the reason for this separation need not be found only in theology. Yes, Jain soteriology does inculcate self-control and decorum, but Jain soteriology is mainly salvation technique for the few specialised. Jainism has always been *soteriologically elitist*⁶¹. When Jains speak of Jainism, they typically start talking about Jain soteriology. But when we as scholars talk of Jainism as a religion, we mean something more. That some Jains state that Jains do not get possessed (Kelting 2001:104) or otherwise reject possession altogether need not come from Jain religious teachings promoting self-control. Jain rejection of possession, I suggest, is also connected to modern discourses related to Jainism being rational, scientific and modern as opposed to superstitious, irrational and rural.

If one comes across an introductory book on Jainism in English produced by Jains, one is very likely to find the words "science" or "scientific" several times. This is a part of a popular discourse of what one might call a modernised Jainism, a Jainism that is presented as superbly rational and in complete harmony with various branches of science that only in recent time has begun to discover what the Jinās have always known. This modernised Jainism has little or no space for possession. One booklet on Jainism published in 2010 states that there is "no provision for free souls roaming here and there" and that although certain deities (*dev*) do exist, they have "their own bodies and can't get into somebody else's body" (Jain 2010:28). While the existence of ghosts are refuted on the ground that souls are immediately reborn, possession is explained as a "psychiatric case" (ibid). In his first argument the author is using teachings found in Jain scriptures, in the latter he is referring to modern psychology.

⁶¹ Term adopted from Gellner (2001:93).

There is a certain overlap between an *etic* perspective on Jainism highlighting and privileging soteriology and the *emic* perspective found in modernised Jainism. Both fail to acknowledge the richness of Jain religiosity which includes spirit and deity possession (Vallely 2010: forthcoming). In the words of Folkert, “the Jain layperson...leads a richly varied religious life, one that is not directed at withdrawal from worldly affairs in the way that monastic rule demands” (1993:167). A Jain rejecting the possibility of possession must look outside Jain scriptures – and perhaps in modern psychology instead - to find support for his claim. A Jain rejecting the validity of possession in Jain soteriology is in line with Jain scriptures. The toning down of possession among mendicants in Ladnun is related to soteriology and ideals of self-control, while the toning down of possession in Nākoḍā is more related to a modernised view of Jainism.

7.8 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have tried to demonstrate that the long and rich history of Jainism includes possessions of various kinds to which we can add the oracular possessions in Nākoḍā. Possession is not foreign to, or new in Jainism. Why then, I asked in the introduction, does Jain possession come as a surprise? While it could be that the contemporary instances of the phenomenon are rare exceptions in the history of Jainism, I have argued that the surprise is the outcome of a certain representation of Jainism in which soteriology is given such an emphasis that other aspects of Jain religiosity are forgotten or overlooked.

It is soteriology that makes Jainism peculiar. We noted above how Hemacandra explained how to possess other creatures while simultaneously criticising possession in the light of soteriology. In this way Jains have divided soteriology from other practices of religion. This explains why many lay Jains in Nākoḍā did not oppose the possessions, but at the same time conceptually separated it from their religion, which they identify mainly with soteriology. Following Hemacandra, the Jains were generally not enthusiastic about possession, but they did not condemn it. Jainism, like Buddhism, started out as a technique for salvation, that is, as soteriology. In the very beginning, the ascetics involved in this technique were the only Jains⁶² (Brekke 2002:123). Later, however, Jainism evolved into a full-fledged religion of the masses. Still, its main doctrines revolved around soteriology.

When Jains are talking about what Jainism is or is not, they deploy similar divisions as those found in Hemacandra. But when we as scholars try to understand Jain

⁶² They were originally known as the *nigaṇṭhas* (“free from bonds”) (Dundas 2002:3-4).

religiosity, we find that it is much more than soteriology. In this perspective, Gombrich and Obeyesekere's statement that Buddhism and Jainism as religions inculcated self-control, would be more precise if "religion" was exchanged with "soteriology". The reason why this more-than-soteriology should be understood as part of Jainism, is that it is related to this core of soteriology, and thereby often takes on peculiar forms specific to the Jains. Clearly the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava has obvious parallels to non-Jain Hindu cults, but at the same time we see that the cult, through its connections with Jain soteriology, has its own peculiarities. The cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava is related to Jain soteriology through stories of the Jain monk Kīrtiratnasūri who found his idol, through his relationship with the Jain nun Sundarśrī. Jain monks and nuns are the main bearers and representatives of Jain soteriology. The possessions in Nākoḍā are connected to Jain soteriology through the fact that Nākoḍā Bhairava is the protector of the temple of Pārśvanātha, but the cult itself is concerned with this-worldly matters and not soteriology. Still, Jains in Nākoḍā are able to combine ascetic practices such as fasting - an important part of Jain soteriology - and possession. In the perspective of Jain soteriology, spirit or deity possession is not helpful, but that is true for much of the everyday behaviour and conduct of any lay Jain.

Possession is not a singular phenomenon and hence there cannot be one Jain attitude towards possession from the point of view of doctrine. Some forms of possession, such as those where the possessive agent is a lingering soul of a deceased individual and the process of exorcism involves a Jina, are more at variance with Jain doctrine than others. The possession cult in Nākoḍā is not in open doctrinal conflict with Jainism, but it is still questioned and somewhat critiqued by certain Jains. A modernised Jain of today's India will often dismiss all kinds of possession as rural and foreign to the Jain religion that he understands to be a rational and scientific way of life. Hemacandra argues that an advanced ascetic can possess other living beings, but warns against it since it may lead to harm, and further states that it has no real, soteriological value.

The possession cult in Nākoḍā appears to have changed over time. Local sources indicate that Nākoḍā Bhairava can give you freedom from evil spirits, but today the main pattern appears to be that devotees are possessed by Nākoḍā Bhairava himself. This then, is a special type of Jain possession for it seems that one could actively induce possessions, a questionable activity from the perspective of soteriology. Still, as a lay practice, possession can be found on the same continuum as other forms of *bhakti*, and *bhakti* is an integral part of Jain religiosity (Cort 2002b:85). Jain *bhakti*, however, is to be directed towards ascetics and the values they stand for, not towards deities such as

Nākoḍā Bhairava. Even so, it tells us that emotional forms of worship, to which possession belongs, were not absent in Jainism before lay Jains got possessed in Nākoḍā. If mendicants were to induce possessions it would run counter to central Jain teachings, not only of spiritual hierarchy, but also of self-control. Hemacandra described how an ascetic can possess others, because as long as he is the possessive agent, the ascetic is still in control of his actions. The reverse is not permissible.

Chapter 8. Thesis Summary

The sole aim of this thesis has been to explore the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava among Jains in Rajasthan. Not having been studied before, one of the more straightforward aims was to present ethnographic material on how the cult is expressed in Nākoḍā itself. Moreover, Jain deity cults have not been given much attention in general although anthropological studies within the last few decades have supplemented the earlier image of Jainism informed mostly by scriptural studies. Anthropological studies of Jainism have provided much needed information on the rich expression of Jain religiosity, which includes much more than soteriology and asceticism. This rich variety of religious expressions includes elements that seem far removed from the austerities of the Jain mendicant. Yet, in Nākoḍā we have seen that such elements are related to the core of Jain teachings and soteriology. The cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava is, after all, a Jain cult. Both its history and contemporary expressions demonstrate this.

The history of Nākoḍā *tīrtha*, as it is laid out in local sources, revealed that Nākoḍā Bhairava was first incorporated into the Jain temple of Pārśvanātha in 1455 by the monk Kīrtiratnasūri. According to legend, Nākoḍā Bhairava appeared in the dream of a Jain layman indicating to him the location of a hidden idol of Pārśvanātha. After it was found, Kīrtiratnasūri installed it in the temple and simultaneously erected an aniconic idol of Nākoḍā Bhairava next to the temple entrance. Over the years, the *tīrtha* was forgotten only to be rediscovered by the nun Sundarśrī in the beginning of the 20th century. She instigated a renovation of the place that resulted in establishing it as one of the most popular Śvetāmbara pilgrimage sites in India today. One of the key elements in bringing about this popularity was the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava.

The history of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava is closely linked with the mentioned Kīrtiratnasūri and Sundarśrī. This fact reveals aspects of Jainism that are often overlooked. The contemporary cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava is intimately connected to the career of Sundarśrī. In local sources she is much celebrated for her asceticism, but her devotion (*bhakti*) and strong emotional relationship to Nākoḍā Bhairava is also mentioned. During a large portion of her career she functioned as a fundraiser for Nākoḍā *tīrtha*. In this way she demonstrated the multifaceted role that a Jain mendicant can have. The religious career of Sundarśrī was much more than soteriology and asceticism. She was simultaneously a representative of the "great" tradition *and* a contributor to the "little" tradition. Hence her case seems to question the dichotomized model of the two traditions. I have argued that the data that seem to defy the model of

a “great” and “little” tradition may be a part of the explanation for how Jainism managed to stay alive in India, as opposed to Buddhism. Not only did Jain mendicants display a willingness to accept popular religiosity, they also helped shape it in ways that marked it out from non-Jain religiosity.

In various ways, worship in Nākoḍā demonstrates just how the relationship between the ideal and the real, the actual and doctrinal comes to play in Jainism. Normative Jainism provides Jains with a clear hierarchy of values and worship-worthiness. Still, the trials and tribulations of everyday life and our hopes and aspirations for it often override the ideal. In this sense there are two Jain versions of what actually goes on in Nākoḍā. The first version establishes the hierarchy of Jain values, while the second challenges it. The version consistent with normative Jainism is found in the physical arrangement of the temple, in the order of rituals, and in official statements and expressed opinions of Jains themselves. The centre of the pilgrimage site is Pārśvanātha’s temple, and his is the main idol of the *tīrtha*. When entering the temple one is led directly to Pārśvanātha first. In congregational worship, he is also given precedence before the Bhairava. Yet, a large sign in front of the temple urges people to pay their respects to Pārśvanātha first, the underlying assumption being that not everyone does. This represents the version of Nākoḍā that I have tried to reveal; the, in a sense, unofficial version of what goes on in Nākoḍā, which is not explicitly expressed by the tradition itself. Here we find that the Bhairava’s *ārati* hymn is longer than that of Pārśvanātha and that it is sung with more gusto and devotion. While many devotees seem to pass the Jina rather hastily, prayers in front of the Bhairava are longer and more intense. The prices for performing the rituals of the Bhairava usually exceed that of Pārśvanātha. A curtain is drawn before Pārśvanātha when the worship of Nākoḍā Bhairava commences. This curtain, in many ways, symbolize the division between the two versions. These two versions of what goes on in Nākoḍā reveal the tension between a Jina and a deity. At its deepest level these tensions lie at the heart of a religion that started out as a soteriology that gave little or no heed to the worldly needs of man as a social animal, but much to the individual who aspires to leave such needs behind. In many ways these tensions *are* Jainism.

The two cults, that of the Jina and that of the deity, are not kept completely separate. According to some Jains one will not receive any miracles from the Bhairava if one appeals directly to him. Instead the Bhairava will only come to the aid of those that worship the Jina correctly. In this way Nākoḍā Bhairava is considered a fellow lay Jain, something which turned out to be important to the economy of Nākoḍā *tīrtha*. Because

Nākoḍā Bhairava is considered a layman, all donations directed to him are not defined as *devdravya* in the donation system of the seven fields. Here also lies a part of the success story that is Nākoḍā *tīrtha*.

The importance of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) in Jain self-understanding can hardly be overstated. It is in this perspective that Bhairavas in a Jain context become interesting since they are typically associated with death and the terrible, especially among Hindus. Hindu deities must be altered to some degree in order to fit into the Jain universe. This altering we have named *jainising*. By looking at the different Bhairavas in Nākoḍā we have seen various stages of this process. The present idol of Nākoḍā Bhairava was shaped and created by the Jain community in 1933. In his "true form" the standard Bhairava attribute *kapāla* was no longer a human skull, but a bowl. He was then promoted from the temple entrance and installed next to the Jina inside the Jain temple. The freestanding Kālā Bhairava 1 appeared much less tamed and seemed to be on the edge of Jainism, both metaphorically and geographically. His shrine was on the outskirts of the *tīrtha*, while the idol of Kālā Bhairava 2 was inside a *Dādāvāḍi*. In his *Dādāvāḍi* form, his lower hands did not carry the sword and head skull, instead, they were held together, palms joined, in veneration of Jain ascetics. He was now a proper Jain deity in service of the Jain doctrine.

Deity cults, such as that of Nākoḍā Bhairava, go straight to the issue of separating Jain from non-Jain, i.e. to questions of identity. It is both a question of how Jains identify themselves and their religion, but also of how we as scholars define Jainism as a world religion. On the one hand, Nākoḍā demonstrates the open religious borders so typical of South Asian religiosity. A rich metropolitan Jain from Mumbai can be seen standing next to a local Rajasthani Bhil taking *darśana* of Nākoḍā Bhairava (see picture 8). There are also cases where non-Jains partake in the ritual auctions. On the other hand, Jains have managed to keep their own separate identity and tradition for more than 2000 years. The Hindu goddess Cāmuṇḍā was transformed into Saciyā Mātā, the clan deity of Osvā Jains. Bhairavas are typically linked with the Hindu god Śiva, but Nākoḍā Bhairava has been transformed over time and slowly incorporated into the Jain universe. Because such deities are *jainised* they become different from how they once were, and they should therefore be understood as Jain deities.

In the last chapter on Jain possession I tried to demonstrate that possession is not something new in, or foreign to Jainism. I have shown that there are ancient stories of possession in Jain scriptures, specific techniques for possessing others developed for Jain mendicants and various other cases of possession in Jain clan histories as well as

contemporary instances of it, e.g. as we find it in Nākoḍā. I have argued that if we are surprised to find Jain possession it is because we have a specific model of Jainism, and unless Jain possessions are - and always have been - very rare, this surprise indicates that we need to change that model. I am inclined to believe that Jain possessions have not been so rare.

On the one hand I have argued that there is a tendency to equate Jainism with Jain soteriology. The reason for this is that soteriology was the beginning of Jainism and much of Jain religiosity is focused around it. Jain scriptures are to a large degree devoted to soteriology and textual studies of Jainism reflect this. Jains themselves also have a tendency to understand their religion as soteriology only. Still, lay Jain religiosity has never been modelled on soteriology alone, and unless we wish to exclude the majority of Jains, that is lay Jains that never became ascetics, we should take heed of this when we define the religion we call Jainism. Our understanding of Jainism and its history cannot rely on scriptures alone, and ethnographic studies reveal this. On the other hand I have argued, with Cort (2002a, 2002b), that *bhakti* and *tapas* need not be opposites and that this misconception has added to the soteriology-centred understanding of Jainism that excludes emotional expressions of religion. Various aspects of the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava, today and in its history, show that Jains have no problem with combining elements of *bhakti* and *tapas*.

Possession, however, is not one thing and various types of possession have various implications in the Jain scheme of things. Nākoḍā features oracular possessions in which only lay Jains partake. My fieldwork revealed that these possessions were criticised, not necessarily as going against the “true spirit of Jainism”, but rather as faked in order to attract potential clients. Hence, I argued that possessions can also be understood as a form of advertisement of special spiritual gifts.

Jain scepticism towards possession is widespread and not without its history. Historically, Jains have separated soteriology from other forms of religion, hence Hemacandra revealed how to possess others while simultaneously criticising possession in the light of soteriology. In this way many Jains feel that possession and deity cults are not part of Jainism proper. This is important in understanding Jain religiosity. The Jain dismissal of possession, however, is not inspired and influenced by Jain doctrine alone. Recently, the ever-demanding and rapidly increasing presence of modern science has profoundly influenced the identity and self-understanding of many Jains giving them what we might call a modernised view of Jainism. In this vision of a “scientific Jainism” there is little space for possession and exorcism.

Comparing the oracular possession in Nākoḍā with other types of possession I argued that there cannot be one Jain view on possession from the perspective of doctrine. A possession is defined by the nature of the possessor and the possessed, as well as by the reason behind the possession itself. Different kinds of possessions carry different meanings in Jainism. Furthermore, Jains themselves react differently to the phenomena. Some Jains today reject all types of possession and dismiss them as psychiatric cases. Some Jain ascetics are tormented and possessed by evil spirits that they cannot easily fight back. Similarly, many lay Jains go to Padampura to get rid of evil spirits that have possessed them or their loved ones. In Nākoḍā, Jains are possessed by Nākoḍā Bhairava while simultaneously performing ascetic practices inspired by Jain soteriology.

Religious traditions never speak with one single, homogenous voice. In other words, there is not one Jainism, but many. The many faces and aspects of Nākoḍā Bhairava and his cult point to the many faces and aspects of the religious traditions we collectively refer to when we use the word "Jainism".

Glossary

Sanskrit/Hindi	English
<i>adhiṣṭāyak deva</i>	ancillary deity of Jina
<i>ahiṃsā</i>	non-violence
Ajjuṇae	lay Jain who is possessed by the <i>yakṣa</i> Moggarapānī in the <i>Antagaḍadasāo</i>
<i>āṅga pūjā</i>	form of worship where lay Jains anoint different substances on images
<i>Antagaḍadasāo</i>	Śvetāmbara canonical text in which we find the story of Ajjuṇae
<i>āratī</i>	form of worship where lamps are moved in a circular motion before an image
<i>aṣṭaparakāri pūjā</i>	a specific form of <i>āṅga pūjā</i>
auctions	see <i>boli</i>
<i>bhagvan</i>	God, Lord - a term used for Jinas as opposed to deities (<i>deva</i>). Also commonly used by Hindus
Bhairava	generic name for deity in South Asia, often of <i>Śaiva</i> nature
<i>bhakti</i>	devotion
<i>bhomiya</i>	protective male deity of a locality
<i>boli</i>	an auction held to decide who will finance a ritual and get the honour of performing it
Buddhisāgarusūri (1874-1925)	Śvetāmbara monk who propagated the cult of Ghaṇṭākarna Mahāvira
<i>camatkār</i>	miracle
Cāmuṇḍā Devī	ferocious Hindu goddess that was transformed into Sacyā Mātā
<i>cāturmāsa</i>	the four month rain retreat for Jain ascetics
Dādāgurus	four Śvetāmbara monks from the past who have their own cult
<i>Dādāvāḍi</i>	a religious building/shrine where images of the Dādāgurus are worshipped
<i>ḍamaru</i>	drum

<i>darśana</i>	the act of seeing (and possibly being seen) by a deity or Jina
<i>deva</i>	male deity
<i>devdravya</i>	the two highest fields of donation in the <i>sātkṣetra</i> system; or offerings "given to" a Jina
<i>devī</i>	female deity
Dharaṇendra	Pārśvanātha's <i>yakṣa</i> , the snake god
Ghaṇṭākarna Mahāvīra	popular male protective deity with a cult similar to that of Nākoḍā Bhairava
<i>ghī boli</i>	see <i>boli</i>
Hemacandra (12 th century)	Śvetāmbara philosopher and composer of the <i>Yogaśāstra</i>
Himācalsūri (20 th century)	Śvetāmbara monk who had a vision of the true form of Nākoḍā Bhairava and was instrumental in defining him as a layman in the <i>sātkṣetra</i> system
<i>jainising</i>	process through which a (Hindu) deity changes and becomes Jain
Jina	one of the 24 human beings in each cosmic half-cycle that reaches enlightenment and promulgates the Jain religion
Kālā Bhairava	the black Bhairava of which there are two different versions of in Nākoḍā
<i>kapāla</i>	skull; bowl
Kesarīmaljī (20 th century)	lay Jain who supported Sundarśrī
<i>khadga</i>	sword
Khartar Gacch	one of the five Śvetāmbara ascetic lineages
Kīrtiratnasūri (15 th century)	Śvetāmbara monk who installed the image of Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha and Nākoḍā Bhairava
<i>kṣetrapāl</i>	male protective deity of a locality
<i>kuldevī</i>	lineage goddess
Mahāvīra	the 24 th Jina of our time and region
<i>mangal dīp</i>	worship with lamps similar to <i>ārāti</i>
<i>melā</i>	fair
Mevanagar	the village in which Nākoḍā <i>tīrtha</i> is situated

Moggarapānī	the <i>yakṣa</i> that possesses Ajjuṇae in the <i>Antagaḍadasāo</i>
<i>mokṣamārg</i>	the path of liberation; Jain soteriology
<i>mūrti</i>	idol, image
<i>Mūrtipūjāk</i>	Śvetāmbara Jains who worship images in temples
Nākoḍā (village)	the village in which the idol of Nākoḍā Pārśvanātha was found
Nākoḍā Bhairava	the protective deity of Nākoḍā <i>tīrtha</i>
Nākoḍā <i>tīrtha</i>	Jain pilgrimage site in Mevanagar
Nākoḍā Trust	the elected board of Jains overseeing the Nākoḍā <i>tīrtha</i> established in 1924
Padmāvātī	Pārśvanātha's <i>yakṣī</i>
Pārśvanātha	the 23 rd Jina of our time and region
<i>piṇḍākar</i>	aniconic idol
<i>prasād</i>	food offerings that are given to a deity and returned as a blessing
<i>pūjā</i>	worship
<i>pujārī</i>	non-Jain temple servant
Ratnaprabhsūri	Jain monk who pacified Cāmuṇḍā Devī into Sacyā Mātā
Sacyā Mātā	lineage goddess (<i>kuldevī</i>) of Osvā Jains
<i>sādhu</i>	monk
<i>samosaraṇa</i>	the mythical gathering of animals, humans and gods who come to hear the first sermon of a Jina
<i>sātkṣetra</i>	the seven fields in which lay Jains can donate
Sundarśrī (1859-1937)	Śvetāmbara nun who renovated Nākoḍā and re-established the cult of Nākoḍā Bhairava
Tapā Gacch	the biggest of the five Śvetāmbara ascetic lineages
<i>tapas</i>	ascetism
<i>tīrtha</i>	pilgrimage site
Tīrthāṅkara	Formaker, synonym for Jina
<i>triśūlā</i>	trident

<i>vidyādevī</i>	tantric goddesses of magical wisdom
Vikram Samvat (VS)	Indian lunar calendar which is about 56.7 years ahead of the Gregorian solar calendar
Virampur	old name for Mevanagar
<i>vyantara</i>	deity that may be the reincarnation of a deceased member of a Jain clan
<i>yakṣa</i>	male ancillary deity of a Jina
<i>yakṣī</i>	female ancillary deity of a Jina

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