

V&A

Jina Fact File



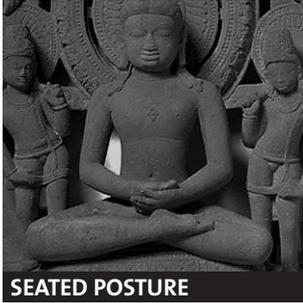
Name



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Symbols, signs and their meanings



SEATED POSTURE

Seated posture

The Jina is seated in the *padmasana* or lotus position and is meditating. Jains are meant to meditate for 48 minutes or one thirtieth of each day.

Standing posture

This is known as the *kayotsarga* or body abandonment posture. Standing like this, completely immobile with arms hanging free from the body, was considered a form of severe penance. It also shows that the Jinas were following the doctrine of *ahimsa* or non-violence as by keeping still they could not harm any creatures, even accidentally.



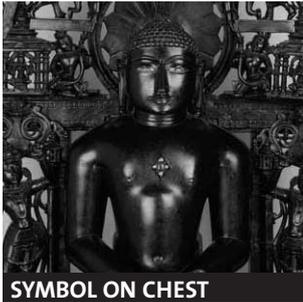
STANDING POSTURE

Clothing

Jinas are sometimes shown wearing very simple clothing. These sculptures were made by members of the *Svetambara* sect whose monks and nuns wear simple white clothing. *Svetambara* means 'white clad'.

Nudity

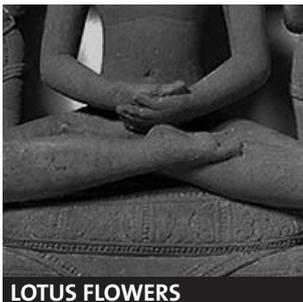
A second sect called the *Digambaras* believe in complete renunciation and their monks renounce all possessions including clothing. *Digambara* means 'sky clad' or naked. Only Jinas are represented naked. Other spirits are shown clothed.



SYMBOL ON CHEST

Symbol on chest

Most sculptures of Jinas bear a distinctive mark on their chest known as a *srivatsa*. This helps to distinguish them from other religious figures especially the Buddha. Hindu images of the god Vishnu sometimes have different forms of *srivatsa* on one side of the chest.



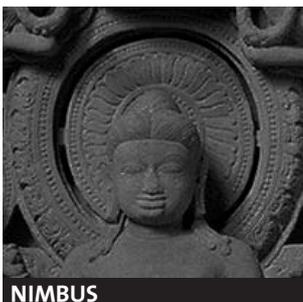
LOTUS FLOWERS

Bump on the top of head

Sign of great wisdom.

Lotus flowers on palms of hands and soles of feet

Lotus flowers are symbols of purity and perfection. You may also find Lotus flowers used for decorative effect on the Jina's nimbus or on his throne.

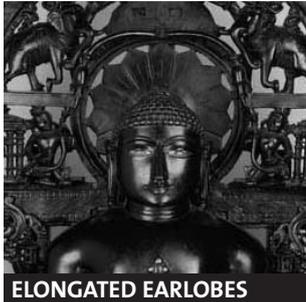


NIMBUS

Nimbus

This halo-like structure around the head emphasises the divinity of the Jina.

Symbols, signs and their meanings (continued)



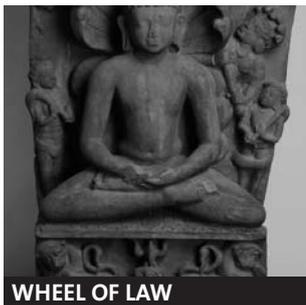
ELONGATED EARLOBES

Elongated earlobes

This reminds viewers that the Jinas renounced wealth in their search for liberation. Their ears are elongated because when they were rich they wore heavy earrings that stretched their earlobes.

Wheel of Law

This is often found under the Jina's cushion or throne. It is a symbol of Jain teaching. It is called the *dharmachakra*.



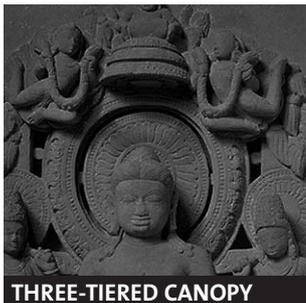
WHEEL OF LAW

Three-tiered canopy or umbrella

It was customary for kings to have umbrellas or parasols held above their heads so a canopy above the head of the Jina is a symbol of his spiritual sovereignty.

Guardian spirits and heavenly attendants

The Jina may be attended by guardian spirits called yakshas (male) and yakshis (female) and by heavenly attendants.



THREE-TIERED CANOPY

Look out for the following:

Dharanendra, the Serpent King

The serpent king protected the Jina Parsvanatha with his coils and by forming a canopy with his hoods. His consort, the Yakshi Padmavati sometimes holds an umbrella above Parsvanatha's head.

Heavenly musicians

Attendants carrying garlands

Attendants carrying flywhisks

These are used by the Jina's attendants to whisk away all insects so that the Jina does not harm them accidentally when moving. They are also symbols of royalty or divinity.

Attendants carrying nooses

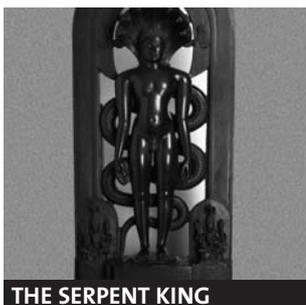
The attendants use these to catch evil-doers and draw them towards the truth.

Attendants carrying goads

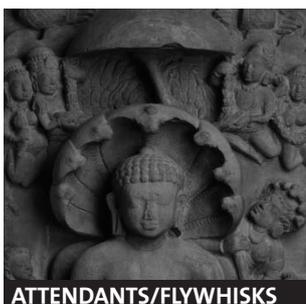
Usually used to prod elephants, attendants use these to push those who do wrong, to steer them along the right path.

Animals

Lions are often found on the throne of a Jina.



THE SERPENT KING



ATTENDANTS/FLYWHISKS

Key words

Ahimsa	Jain doctrine of non-violence and respect for all life.
Dharanendra	A yakshi serpent king.
Dharmachakra	Wheel of Law that symbolises Jain teaching.
Digambara	An austere sect of Jainism. Digambara means 'sky clad' and its followers believe in the renunciation of all worldly possessions so Digambara monks go completely naked.
Gyanbazi or Gyanbaji	Jain version of Snakes and Ladders.
Jina	A series of 24 leaders or teachers whom Jains revere. Jina means 'conqueror' or 'liberator' because the Jinas succeeded in casting off all worldly concerns.
Kalpasutra	Sacred text, the Book of Ritual which tells the story of the life of Mahavira and of the three other Jinas (Rishabhanatha, Neminatha and Parsvanatha), and gives rules for monks and nuns during Paryushan festival.
Kayotsarga	Standing in the 'body-abandonment' posture.
Karma	A substance that becomes attached to the soul, weighing it down and making liberation from the cycle of rebirth impossible.
Maharvira	The 24th and last of the Jinas.
Padmasana	Seated in the lotus position.
Padmavati	The yakshi who is consort to Dharanendra, the Serpent King.
Parsvanatha	The 23rd Jina. Usually shown protected by the Serpent King Dharanendra.
Rishabhanatha	The 1st Jina. Identifiable by his long hair.
Samavasarana	The hall where Jinas preach sermons.
Samvara	A demon who attacked Parsvanatha.
Santinatha	The 16th Jina.
Svetambara	A sect of Jainism meaning white clad whose followers wear simple white clothes.
Srivatsa	Mark on the Jina's chest which identifies the figure as a Jina.
Tirthankara	Jinas are also known as tirthankaras which translates as 'ford-makers'. Jinas, unlike other liberated souls, help others to liberation from the cycle of earthly life, death and rebirth, as well as achieving liberation themselves.
Uttaradhyayanasutra	Religious text which sets out rules for monastic behaviour.
Yakshis and Yakshas	Male and female spirits that act as guardian spirits to the Jinas.