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Course Packet

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Contents

AN OVERVIEW OF JAINISM

From the web site of the *World Religions & Spirituality Project VCU*
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JAINISM TIMELINE

Distant Past. According to Jain tradition, the first through the twenty-second Tirthankaras (twenty-four enlightened beings who emerge in the course of a cosmic cycle to teach the path to liberation) had enormous life spans and date back in time as far as several billion years. Each Tirthankara has a shorter life span than the previous one. The current series ends with Mahavira, the twenty-fourth, who is held to have lived for seventy-two years.

2600-1900 BCE. Advanced phase of the Harappan, or Indus Valley, Civilization. Some Jain scholars perceive connections between the culture of the Indus Valley Civilization, as reflected in its archaeological remains, and Jainism, suggesting that some items depict Rishabha, or Adinatha, the first Tirthankara, and speculating that Rishabha was a very important cultural figure for–and perhaps even a founder of–this civilization (Parikh 2002).

Rishabha

Inscribed seal, Indus valley civilization

1500-1000 BCE. Conventional scholarly dating of the composition of the *Vedas*, which are the earliest extant sacred writings of the Hindu traditions. References to Rishabha and Arishtanemi in the *Rig Veda* are taken by some Jain scholars to be references to the first and twenty-second Tirthankaras, respectively.

877-777 BCE. Traditional dating of the twenty-third Tirthankara, Parshvanatha, held by both Jain and non-Jain scholars to be an actual, historical figure.

599-527 BCE. Traditional dating of Mahavira, twenty-fourth (and last) Tirthankara of our current era. Mahavira's given name was Vardhamana Jñatriputra. Mahavira is an epithet that means "Great Hero," and refers to his heroic ascetic practices.

499-427 BCE. Dating of Mahavira according to current scholarship, which places the time of the Buddha, a contemporary of Mahavira, a century later than do traditional sources.

327 BCE. Alexander of Macedon invades northwestern India, creating a power vacuum exploited by Chandragupta Maurya of Magadha.

320-293 BCE. Reign of Chandragupta Maurya, founder of the Maurya Dynasty, and held by one Jain tradition to have been a Jain layman. According to one account, he left the kingship late in life to become a Jain monk, dying of voluntary self-starvation at the Jain pilgrimage site of Shravana Belgola (in the modern Indian state of Karnataka). Some scholars suggest that this account refers to the last Maurya ruler, Samprati Chandragupta, who lived around 200 BCE.

c. 200 BCE. Jains begin to migrate beyond the northeastern region of India to the south and west. This may be a factor in the eventual division of the Jains into their Shvetambara branch (which is located predominantly in western India, in the modern states of Gujarat and Rajasthan) and their Digambara branch (which is located predominantly in Karnataka and Maharashtra, though there have long been northern Digambaras as well). This is also the period of the composition of the oldest extant Jain scriptural texts.

c. 100-200 CE. Life of Umasvati, composer of the Tattvartha Sutra, a summary of Jain teaching held to be authoritative by both Shvetambara and Digambara Jains. This is also the period of the schism between these two Jain communities.

c. 200-300 CE. Life of Kundakunda, important Digambara philosopher and mystic.

c. 700-800 CE. Life of Haribhadra, Shvetambara philosopher known for his pluralistic approach to non-Jain traditions based on the Jain teaching of anekanta-vada, or “doctrine of non-one-sidedness.”

1089-1172 CE. Life of Hemachandra, prominent Shvetambara philosopher, historian, and literary figure.

1000-1200 CE. Period of major Jain temple construction and the climactic phase of a Jain “golden age” of artistic, architectural, literary, and philosophical achievement that began with Umasvati.

Adinath Jain Temple in Ranakpur, India

c. 1400-1500 CE. Life of Lonka Shah, Jain reformer who rejected the worship of images (murtipuja) and inspired two later aniconic (non-image-using) Shvetambara groups, the Sthanakavasis and the Terapanthis.

1867-1901 CE. Life of Rajacandra Maheta, a spiritual adviser to Mahatma Gandhi. The movement of his followers is known as the Kavi Panth.

1889-1980 CE. Life of Kanji Svami, founder of the Kanji Svami Panth, a modern Jain movement also based on the mystical teachings of Kundakunda.

1970 CE. A Shvetambara monk, Chitrabhanu, becomes the first monk in modern history to break the traditional ban on overseas travel in order to spread Jain values globally. He is soon followed in 1975 by Sushil Kumar who, in 1983, establishes Siddhachalam, a Jain center in Blairstown, New Jersey.

The main temple at Siddhachalam retreat in New Jersey

1914-1997 CE. Life of Acharya Tulsi, a leader of the Terapanthi Shvetambara Jains who pioneered a socially engaged Jainism. He established Jain Vishva Bharati, a center for the study of Jainism, in Ladnun, Rajasthan, and the anuvrat movement–a movement that is intended to inject Jain values into Indian and global politics.

In 1980, Acharya Tulsi established the saman and samani orders of ascetics who were not bound by the traditional restrictions on travel for Jain monks and nuns, to enable Jain ascetics to do the kind of global work pioneered by Chitrabhanu and Sushil Kumar, albeit without running into conflict with their monastic vows.

c. 1900-present. The Jain community becomes increasingly global, with Jain migration to various parts of the world, particularly to Britain and North America, and a growing number of temples and other Jain institutions being established outside of India.

FOUNDER/GROUP HISTORY

Jainism is held by Jains to be a collection of eternal and unchanging truths, and therefore, strictly speaking, to have no history, in the sense of a definite beginning in time. Jains, in general, think of the history of their tradition in terms of the "Universal History, which provides a description on a massive scale of the destinies, enacted over a vast period of time, of the twenty-four Jain teachers, the fordmakers [called Tirthankaras], and their contemporaries (Dundas 2002:12)." Even the eon-spanning Universal History represents a tiny portion of the eternal sweep of time as conceived in Jainism.

The current Jain community can be traced to Mahavira and his predecessor, Parshvanatha–the twenty-fourth and twenty-third Tirthankaras. Tirthankaras are twenty-four beings who emerge in the course of a cosmic cycle, or kalpa, to re-discover and re-establish the path to liberation from the cycle of karma and rebirth.


Mahavira


Parshvanatha

Parshvanatha and Mahavira were leaders of an ascetic movement that emerged in the northern part of India in the first millennium BCE. This *shramana* or "striver" movement was made up of many sub-groups (including the Buddhists). The shared ideology of this movement was one of asceticism, according to which freedom from suffering can only be achieved by liberation from the cycle of rebirth. This cycle is fueled by karma, which causes beings to experience the results of their actions, good and bad. Morally correct action leads to pleasant experiences and immoral action leads to unpleasant experiences. Because one lifetime does not allow enough time to experience all these results, rebirth is necessary. This also explains why persons are born in such varied circumstances. Good fortune is due to good past actions and misfortune to bad past actions.

Even good action, though, produces impermanent results, which are therefore ultimately unsatisfactory. A state of true and lasting happiness only comes when one becomes free from the effects of karma. Such freedom is the goal of the shramana traditions. Despite the differences that separate their approaches to this problem, all share the idea that one must remove oneself from society and from conventional social duties and norms if one is to achieve perfect freedom, engaging in a life of ascetic practice and meditation.

The ideology of the shramanas was distinct from that of their chief rivals, the Brahmins, who upheld the Vedic tradition. In early Vedic writings one finds no explicit mention of karma and rebirth, or the ideal of liberation from rebirth. These ideals, which the Brahmanical and shramana traditions share, emerge in Vedic literature relatively late, in a series of philosophical dialogues called the *Upanishads*, composed in the same period in which the shramana movement emerged.

According to Brahmanical belief, one measure of a person's spiritual evolution, and so proximity to the goal of liberation, is that person's social station, or varna–now widely known as "caste"–the highest caste being that of the Brahmins themselves. The Brahmins are traditionally the priests of the Vedic religion, and some of their rituals in ancient times involved the sacrifice of animals in a sacred fire.

In the ancient Brahmanical worldview, the Brahmins are essential to maintaining the cosmic order, for their regular performance of Vedic ritual is key to upholding this order, and only they are qualified to perform it. Shramana teachers, on the other hand, held that caste was a man-made institution created for the maintenance of society, and not an indicator of spiritual evolution. Anyone, of any caste, who puts forth sufficient effort can transcend karma and rebirth and reach liberation. Animal sacrifices, moreover, violate the principle of nonviolence (ahimsa), observance of which is vital to achieving liberation. Shramana groups like the Jains and Buddhists therefore rejected the notion that birth caste had any relevance at all to the spiritual life–though they did not reject the institution of caste as such, as a form of social order. They also rejected the Vedic ritual of animal sacrifice, while retaining much Vedic terminology and continuing to honor Vedic deities, such as Indra. It is simplistic to claim that Jains and Buddhists "rejected caste," as if they were social revolutionaries; for both communities continued to organize themselves into castes, and Jains choose marriage partners, for example, on the basis of caste to the present day. It is equally simplistic to equate ancient Brahmanical traditions with which Mahavira and the Buddha contended with the Hinduism of later centuries, and of today. For while Hindus do maintain a strong sense of continuity with the Vedic tradition, many of the practices to which the shramanas objected have also been rejected by most Hindus (such as animal sacrifice), and Hindu movements have emerged through the centuries that have rejected the identification of spiritual evolution with caste.

Born into a royal family in the northeastern region of India known as Greater Magadha (Bronkhorst 2007), at the age of 30, Mahavira chose to renounce his status in search of the path to liberation from cycle of rebirth and freedom from suffering for all beings. After twelve years of gruelling and intense ascetic practice, he attained a state of perfect freedom and knowledge known as kevala jñana.

Over the course of the next thirty years, Mahavira developed a following of monks, nuns, and laypersons which became the nucleus of the Jain community. The Shvetambara and Digambara Jain traditions differ on the details of this period.

The Shvetambara scriptures depict Mahavira as a teacher possessed of extraordinary wisdom, but as recognizably human, and engaged in such conventional activities as speaking and walking from place to place. According to Digambara tradition, however, a Tirthankara, upon achieving kevala jñana, engages in no activity whatsoever and teaches by means of a spontaneously emitted sacred sound called the *divyadhvani* that is interpreted by his disciples as verbalizable concepts.

At the age of 72, Mahavira died at Pavapuri, in the ancient Indian kingdom of Magadha, located in the modern Indian state of Bihar.

In Mahavira's lifetime, according to Jain tradition, he established a fourfold community of male and female ascetics and householders that persists to the present. In the century following Mahavira, this early Jain community was but one of many shramana groups that existed alongside one another and the Brahmanical community in northern India. To be sure, these communities were neither hermetically sealed nor mutually exclusive. A part of the cultural texture of South Asia has long been the phenomenon of "open boundaries" (Cort 1998), in which members of a religious community easily frequent and participate in the institutions, rituals, and celebrations of others. A sense of religious exclusivity has tended to be the preserve of the "professional religious"–that is, ascetics and priests–and is not even consistently observed among these persons.

In 327 BCE, with Alexander of Macedon's attacks in northwestern India and the power vacuum that these created among the leaders of rival Indian states, a series of events was set in motion that would have profound consequences for the shramana traditions. Taking advantage of this power vacuum, Chandragupta Maurya, the king of Magadha, conquered much of northern India, establishing the Maurya Dynasty.

The Maurya rulers tended to patronize shramana traditions (though, in keeping with the "open boundaries" principle, were not exclusive in this regard). This patronage resulted in many material resources being bestowed upon groups such as the Jains and Buddhists (the latter group being the special object of support by Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka).

Under Maurya patronage, monastic institutions emerged and Jain and Buddhist scriptural texts, heretofore passed on orally, began to take written form.

According to one tradition, Chandragupta himself was a Jain layman who spent the final years of his life as a monk at the Jain pilgrimage site of Shravana Belgola, in the southern Indian region of Karnataka. Recent scholarship suggests that this story refers to Samprati Chandragupta, the grandson of Ashoka and the last Maurya emperor (Wiley 2004:51). This story speaks of a famine in the northeastern heart of the Maurya Empire which led many Jains to migrate to the south and west, where most Jains have resided since ancient times. There are relatively few Jains today in the original northeastern homeland of this tradition, but many Jains in the southern state of Karnataka and in western states such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. There were also considerable ancient communities of Jains in the southern state of Tamil Nadu and the eastern state of Orissa.

This famine and dual migration, separating the Jain community into southern and western branches, is sometimes cited as a major factor in the subsequent schism between the two main sects of Jainism: the Digambaras (predominant mainly in the south, though there are northwestern Digambara groups as well) and the Shvetambaras (predominant exclusively in the northwestern and western parts of India).

The next thousand years, after the Shvetambara-Digambara schism, were something of a “golden age” for the Jain community, which flourished in both the northwest and in the south. Unlike Buddhism, and in contrast with the transmission of Hindu traditions into Southeast Asia, Jainism was not carried outside of India until the modern period, due to the restrictions upon movement imposed upon all Jain ascetics–who are required to travel everywhere by foot and are not permitted to travel in artificial conveyances due to the harm that these bring to tiny life forms. Within India, though, the Jains became a highly prosperous minority community. Having attracted, from an early period, much of their following from the merchant communities, Jains have tended to be identified primarily as a business community throughout Indian history.

Despite their small numbers, the wealth of the Jains, as well as the respect commanded by the strictness of Jain ascetic practices, led them to have an influence upon Indian culture far broader than a focus on numbers might suggest. The first millennium of the Common Era, in particula, was a period of prodigious Jain achievement in literature, philosophy, architecture, and visual art, with many famous Jain temples being built during this period. Temple building especially became, and remains, a popular way for wealthy Jain laypersons to earn religious merit, and the wealth that is lavished upon these structures is the most evident marker, for outsiders, of the wealth of the community as a whole (which otherwise tends to discourage ostentatious displays of wealth).

In the area of philosophy, prominent contributors from this period include Umasvati, the second-century composer of the Tattvartha Sutra, a compendium of Jain teaching that is held to be authoritative by both Digambara and Shvetambara Jains. Basic Jain doctrines have deviated remarkably little from Umasvati's presentation across the various Jain sub-groups, and across the centuries. Most differences among Jains, including the Digambara and Shvetambara division, as we have seen, are focused on the details of practice, rather than on issues of basic belief.

Other major Jain intellectuals of this period include Kundakunda, a Digambara figure whose teaching includes a prominent thread of mysticism. Kundakunda articulates a Jain version of the "two truths" doctrine found in the Buddhist writings of Nagarjuna and in the Advaita Vedanta tradition of Hinduism advanced by Shankara. The "two truths" are a conventional truth, that can be expressed in words and consists of the basic worldview of the tradition in question, and ultimate truth that is beyond words, to which the worldview of the tradition points only in an imperfect fashion.

Kundakunda is followed by Haribhadra (c. 700-800 CE), who is part of a series of Jain intellectuals who develop the "doctrines of relativity." According to these doctrines, the nature of reality is irreducibly complex and allows for a variety of interpretations. In the hands of Haribhadra, this doctrine becomes a justification for a remarkably pluralistic and accepting approach to the teachings of Hindu and Buddhist schools of thought (Chapple 2003).

With the multiple invasions of India by foreign powers that begin near the end of the first millennium of the common era and continue until the Mughal period (which begins in the fifteenth century), the fortunes of the Jain community wane somewhat. The community continues to be prosperous in pockets of India where their presence is accepted and their distinctive traditions tolerated; but the level of intellectual and architectural production is diminished from its earlier period of flourishing, and there are some Jain temples that fall prey to the destructive whims of the invaders.

The last couple of centuries have been characterized by major developments, such as the emergence of a global Jain community (due to greatly increased Indian migration and settlement abroad), the rise of charismatic Jain teachers teaching paths that emphasize lay spirituality and a highly individualized and personal approach to Jainism, and the rise of neo-orthodoxy–a highly rationalized way of seeing Jainism as consistent with science.

A global Jain community gives rise to the need for a more global monastic community to teach and provide spiritual inspiration to householders, as well as a sense of Jainism as a universal tradition, with doctrines and insights highly relevant to modern problems such as the threat of nuclear war and environmental degradation, as well as the ongoing issue of conflict among the world's religions. In 1970, a Shvetambara monk called Gurudev Chitrabhanu felt the need to spread Jain values globally and became the first monk in modern history to break the traditional ban on overseas travel, attending a conference on the world's religions at Harvard University. He was followed by Sushil Kumar, a monk who came to the US and, in 1983, established Siddhachalam, a Jain center in New Jersey.

Meanwhile, Acharya Tulsi, the monastic leader of the Terapanthi Shvetambara Jains in the latter half of the twentieth century pioneered a socially engaged Jainism. He established Jain Vishva Bharati, a center for the study of Jainism, in the town of Ladnun, Rajasthan, and the anuvrat movement. The anuvrat movement, named after the vows of a Jain layperson, is an anti-corruption movement intended to incorporate Jain values into both Indian and global politics.

In 1980, Acharya Tulsi established the saman and samani orders of Jain ascetics. These ascetics, whose lifestyles could be described as an intermediate step between the life of the Jain householder and the thoroughgoing asceticism of the "full" monk or nun, are not bound by the traditional restrictions on travel for Jain monks and nuns. This enables them to do the kind of global work pioneered by Chitrabhanu and Sushil Kumar without running into conflict with their monastic vows.

Growing Jain communities in countries such as the US and Britain, in conjunction with increased Indian immigration, have also led to the emergence of a new kind of institution not generally found in India, but consistent with the ancient Indian pluralistic principle of and "open boundaries": the "Hindu-Jain" temples. These institutions serve both the Jain and Hindu communities and allow for both predominantly Indian groups to pool their resources in the common cause of preserving their religious practice and culture in a land where both groups are a tiny minority of the total population (Long 2009:4-13).

Charismatic teachers of the modern period who have pioneered a very mystical, personal approach to Jainism include Kanji Svami (1889-1980), founder of the Kanji Svami Panth, which is based on the teachings of Kundakunda, and Rajacandra Maheta (1867-1901). Maheta, popularly and respectfully known as Shrimad Rajacandra, was a closer advisor to the young Mohandas K. ("Mahatma") Gandhi. Often called "Gandhi's Guru," Maheta's teaching and example had a profound impact on Gandhi's thought–particularly in regard to his emphasis on nonviolence and the necessity of personal transformation as integral to any effort to change the world (Long 2009:78-79).

DOCTRINES/BELIEFS

According to traditional Jain belief, the universe has always existed and will always exist. There is no creator. But it would be a mistake to conclude that Jains are atheists, in the sense of not believing in a higher power or non-material reality. There is a concept of divinity in Jainism. This divine reality is not a creator, however, but is the essence of the immortal soul of every living being.

"God," for Jains, refers to any soul that has become liberated and has realized its intrinsic nature as infinite bliss, knowledge, energy, and consciousness.

So is God one or many in Jainism? Again, God is any soul that has achieved liberation. "Each of these souls exists in identical perfection, and so is indistinguishable from any other such soul. Due to this identity of perfection, God for the Jains can be understood as singular. Because there are many liberated souls, God can also be understood as plural (Cort 2001:23)." Jains have not, however, for the most part, tended to see the essence of all souls as forming a "supersoul" like the Brahman of the Vedanta tradition of Hinduism, but have emphasized the numerical distinctness of each soul.

The primary aim of life, according to Jainism, is the realization of the intrinsic divinity of one's own soul. Souls are intrinsically divine–intrinsically joyful and perfect. However, this divinity has been obscured through countless time due to the effects of karma. In the Jain understanding, karma is more than simply the principle of moral causation found in other Indic traditions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. It is also the substance that forms the mechanism by which this principle operates. Karma, in other words, is a "thing" in Jainism: a type of non-conscious, non-living "stuff" (ajiva) that adheres to the conscious, living soul (jiva). Karma is of different kinds. Some of it produces unhappy experiences and some of it produces happy experiences. The kind of karma one attracts to one's soul depends upon the action one performs and the passion that accompanies it.

This is an important point. It is not only a good or bad action that draws correspondingly good or bad karma to the soul. The passion (raga) or volitional quality with which one performs an action is a central factor as well. Violent, angry passions that manifest in the form of harmful thoughts, words, or actions are the worst, attracting the most obscuring and painful varieties of karma to the soul. Peaceful actions, aimed at alleviating suffering or doing good for others, bring good karma to the soul. The ultimate aim, though, is to be free from all karma. One must strive, therefore, to act with calm equanimity, and without anxiety for the outcome of one's action, in order to achieve a state of perfect freedom.

Jain moral and ritual practice is centered around cultivating such a state of equanimity, as well as around purging the karma that currently adheres to the soul. The moral principles of Jainism are expressed in five vows. Persons who take up the ascetic life, and who are therefore aiming at achieving liberation in the relatively near future, follow a version of these vows that is as rigorous and intensive as humanly possible. Laypersons, who may see liberation as a very difficult and distant goal, and focus instead on achieving greater well-being in the near term, in the form of good karma (or a reduced karmic load overall) will adhere to a less demanding (though still quite rigorous) version of these principles (though whether they actually undertake them formally, as vows, varies a great deal). The form of the vows taken by the monks and nuns is called a mahavrata, or great vow. The layperson follows the anuvratas, or lesser vow. The five vows are:

1. ahimsa: nonviolence in thought, word, and deed

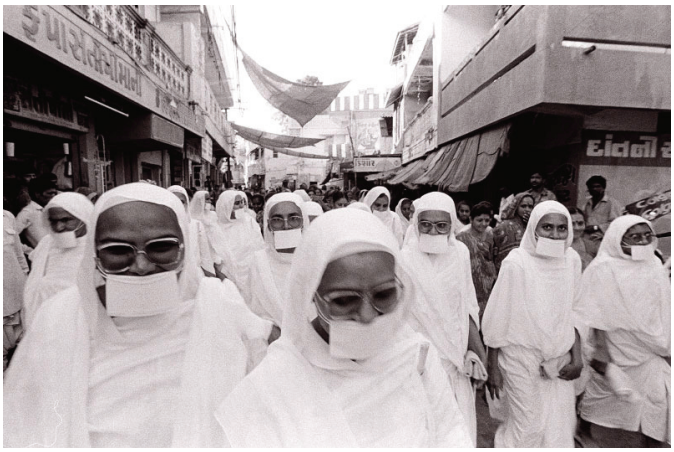
2. satya: telling the truth

3. asteya: non-stealing

4. brahmacharya: restraint in the area of sexuality

5. aparigraha: non-ownership, or non-attachment

The great vow of ahimsa entails the strict practice of nonviolence that characterizes the life of the Jain monk or nun. Some (though not all) monks and nuns even wear a muhpatti, or mouth-shield, to avoid accidentally ingesting tiny life forms, as in the photo below:



The lesser vow, on the other hand, entails no deliberate killing of any living thing, and the observance of a vegetarian diet. The great vow of brahmacharya entails celibacy for ascetics, but marital fidelity for laypersons. The vow of aparigraha entails no ownership of anything whatsoever for ascetics, who do not technically "own" the items that they use, such as the ceremonial whisk, bowl, and, in the case of Shvetambara ascetics, clothing. For laypersons, the lesser vow of aparigraha involves living simply and avoiding greed or extravagance in regard to personal luxuries.

One might ask, if intention is part of what attracts karma to the soul, why Jain ascetics are so concerned with avoiding accidental harm to living things. The answer is that, once one is aware of the presence of tiny living things throughout cosmic space, such as in the air one breathes or the water one drinks, one becomes responsible for not harming them. Clearly intentional taking of life is far worse than accidental harm. However, to do harm through moving about in an unmindful fashion rises to the level of deliberate harm if one knows about this consequence of one's behavior. A large portion of Jain teaching consists of an account of the myriad forms of life inhabiting the universe, as well as the karmic actions that can lead to rebirth in these forms. The mindfulness of the living environment which Jainism inculcates has led to a heightened interest in this tradition as a potential resource for ecological thinking (Chapple 2002).

Finally, Jainism has a sophisticated system of logic addressed to the issue of the diversity of worldviews in the form of its doctrines of relativity (Long 2009:117-172). The basic concept of reality at the heart of the Jain doctrines of relativity is expressed in anekanta-vada. Anekanta-vada literally means the "non-one-sided doctrine," or the doctrine of the complexity of reality.

According to anekanta-vada, reality is complex, or multi-faceted. That is, all things have infinite aspects. No phenomenon can be reduced to a single concept, such as permanence or impermanence. Philosophies like the Advaita Vedanta tradition that emphasize the reality of one permanent entity, claiming all change and diversity are illusory, or philosophies like Buddhism, affirming impermanence and denying permanence, are seen as "one-sided" (ekanta).

These other philosophies are seen as emphasizing only one aspect of experience at the expense of all the others. Jainism, however, emphasizes the validity of all aspects of experience, and claims that an adequate philosophical account of reality must include all these aspects, reducing none to the realm of illusion.

This insistence on the both permanent and impermanent aspects of experience seems to originate in the Jain concept of the soul, or jiva, which has a permanent, unchanging nature (consisting of infinite bliss, energy, and consciousness), and a constantly changing aspect (the modifications of the karmic accretions).

This doctrine is also rooted in the Jain belief in the omniscience of Mahavira. The doctrine that all things have infinite aspects is rooted, in part, in the scriptural accounts of Mahavira's discourses, in which he addresses various questions by referring to the many aspects of reality, and the correspondingly many points of view from which such questions could be answered. The person, for example, is said by Mahavira to be, in one sense, eternal (if one emphasizes the unchanging nature of the soul), and in another sense, non-eternal (if one emphasizes the physical aspect of the person), etc.

One implication, just mentioned, of anekantavada, the doctrine that things have many aspects, is nayavada, the doctrine of perspectives. According to this doctrine, there are as many ways of examining an entity as there are aspects of it. Again, there is an eternal aspect, which leads to its being defined in one way, a changing aspect that leads to its being defined in another, etc.) This implies the next doctrine, syadvada.

Syadvada means, literally, "maybe doctrine," though a better translation is "doctrine of conditional predication." This doctrine, implied by the other two, amounts, essentially, to the claim that all claims can be both true and false, depending upon the perspective from which they are asserted. The truth of any claim is conditioned by and dependent upon the perspective from which it is made.

This doctrine is also called the saptabhanginaya, or sevenfold perspective, because of its claim that all claims have seven possible truth-values.

Depending on the perspective from which it is affirmed, a claim can be:

(1) true,

(2) false,

(3) both true and false,

(4) inexpressible (neither true nor false, or both true and false at the same time and in the same sense, in violation of the principle of non-contradiction),

(5) true and inexpressible,

(6) false and inexpressible, or

(7) true, false, and inexpressible.

With the understanding of truth that is operative in this doctrine, one could conceivably reconcile the conflicting claims of the world's religions and philosophies.

RITUALS

Jain ritual is tied closely to the broader Jain worldview and is understood in Jain textual sources as a form of meditation, aimed at purging karma from the soul and cultivating a state of equanimity that will prevent further karma from entering. Seen from this point of view, Jain ritual is integral to the moksha-marga, or path to liberation. At the same time, however, many Jains also conceive of their ritual practice as conducive to well-being in the world: to penultimate goals, such as health, wealth, and long life for themselves and their families, and a good rebirth (Cort 2001:186-202).

Superficially, many Jain rituals appear to have the same structure as analogous Hindu rituals. Like Hindus, many Jains practice the worship of images, or murtipuja: namely, the image-worshiping (Murtipujaka) Shvetambaras (who make up the majority not only of Shvetambaras, but of Jains worldwide), and the Digambaras.

Only Shvetambara Terapanthi Jains and Sthanakavasi Jains refrain from image-worship. Image worship includes such actions as abhishekha, or anointing, in which pure substances such as milk, yogurt, sandal paste, and water are poured over the top of an image; arati, in which lit candles or lamps are waved in front of the image, usually to the accompaniment of singing and the ringing of a bell; and the offering of food to the image.

The rationale for Jain worship, however, is quite different from that for Hindu worship. The differences between the two can be seen to arise from the distinct theologies of the two traditions–the ways in which the two traditions conceive of divinity and the relations between human beings and the divine.

For Jains, "God" refers to the liberated soul. Any liberated being is divine–such as the Tirthankaras–and all liberated beings are one, inasmuch as all souls have the same basic essence of infinite knowledge, consciousness, energy, and bliss. These souls are not the creators of the world; nor do they play an active role in assisting Jains toward liberation, beyond having, in the past, set forth the teaching and the practice of the path and started a community to perpetuate these. Honoring an image of a liberated being, or Jina, through abhishekha and arati, for example, is therefore, ultimately, to pay homage to the divinity within oneself. It is a kind of meditation and affirmation of one's commitment to the Jain path. And in the offering of food, the most striking difference between Jain and Hindu theology is illustrated. Hindus offer food to a form of divinity and then consume the food amongst themselves as prasad, or grace, a symbol of the divine blessing that comes from worship. Hindu worship, in other words, is a kind of transaction, in which the worshiper gives praise and thanks to the divine, and the divine, in return, bestows blessings. Jain deities, however, as wholly transcendent beings, do not bestow blessings in this fashion. Offering of food to Jain deities is understood as a form of renunciation–of showing one's detachment from the things of this world. Food offered to Jain deities is therefore not consumed by the Jain community, but must leave the community–usually as charity to the poor from the surrounding communities (which, in India, are usually Hindus) (Babb 1996).

Other Jain rituals are of a more explicitly meditative nature, such as caitya-vandan, a rite which involves prostration before an image and the recitation of a variety of hymns and mantras from Jain scriptural texts. After this prostration and recitation, one stands in a meditative posture that is distinctive to Jainism, known as kayotsarga. In kayotsarga, one stands "with feet slightly apart, arms hanging down and slightly away from the body, palms turned inward, and eyes fixed in a meditative gaze (Cort 2001:66)." Liberated beings are often depicted in this posture in Jain art, for it is believed to be the position in which the Tirthankaras achieved liberation. While in this posture, one silently recites the Namokara Mantra, "the most sacred and widespread of all Jain praises (Cort 2001:66)."

Namo arihantanam

Namo siddhanam

Namo ayariyanam

Namo uvajjhayanam

Namo loe savvasahunam

To which the Murtipujaka Shvetambaras add:

Eso pañca namokkaro savvapavappanasano

Mamgalanam ca savvesim padhamam havai mamgalam

This prayer is in the ancient Prakrit language of the Jain scriptures. (Prakrits are ancient vernacular forms of Sanskrit, from which modern northern Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali, and Gujarati are derived.) It means:

I bow before the worthy ones [those living beings who have attained liberation].I bow before the perfected ones [those who have attained liberation and have left their bodies]. I bow before the leaders of the Jain order.I bow before the teachers of the Jain order. I bow before all the ascetics in the world.

The additional line recited by Murtipujaka Shvetambaras means:This fivefold salutation, which destroys all bad karmas, is the best, the most auspicious of all auspicious things (Long 2009:114-115).

The Namokara Mantra is recited in many other contexts as well, in addition to caitya-vandan, and could perhaps be analogized with the Lord's Prayer of Christianity. Many Jains perform caitya-vandan daily, as well as samayika. Samayika, or equanimity, is, of course, aimed at cultivating this mental state, which is so central to the Jain path to liberation. It involves practicing meditation for a period of roughly 48 minutes (Wiley 2004:184). This 48-minute period, which is known as a muhurta, is a traditional Indian unit of time, and is used in Hindu contexts as well.

Rishabha first of the 24 tirthankaras; right Mahavir, the last of those 24; both depicted in *kayotsarga*

ORGANIZATION/LEADERSHIP

There is no single, central institutional authority to which all Jains subscribe. The most basic religious institutional distinction is that between ascetics and laypersons. Ascetics are generally regarded as the ultimate religious authorities for Jains, and as embodiments of the ideals of Jainism. They are held in deep reverence by most Jains, but they are also observed very closely and the expectations of the laity that they uphold the standards of their chosen way of life are very high.

Jain ascetics are organized into branches known as gacchas. Gacchas are generally of a geographic character, though there are gacchas that overlap particular regions. They are generally distinguished by subtle differences in ascetic practice. If a disagreement arises within a gaccha over a question of practice, a new gaccha is usually the result. The likely origins of most gacchas today are such disagreements, as well as geographic separation arising from the wanderings of groups of monks from place to place. Gacchas are further subdivided into successively smaller groups that are known as samudayas, parivaras, and sanghadas (Cort 2001:41).

In the modern period, particularly in the global Jain community outside of India, one can note a distinct rise in lay leadership, though there is evidence of prominent householders having always had an influential role in the wider Jain community. The running of Jain temples has always been largely a lay preoccupation, which, in the modern period, takes the form of boards of trustees made up of prominent donors and persons willing to give of their time and energy to ensure the smooth, continuous running of the institution and the transmission of Jain values to younger generations.

ISSUES/CHALLENGES

Two main types of challenge currently face the Jain community, one of which could be characterized as internal and the other as external.

Internally, there is sectarianism. The oldest schism in the Jain community is that between the Shvetambaras and the Digambaras. This schism, dating to roughly the second century CE, is based on the interpretation of the vow of aparigraha, or non-possession, which all Jain ascetics take upon joining the monastic order. Digambara Jain monks do not wear any clothing. Their only possession is a small whisk made of peacock feathers, which is used to sweep the ground where a monk walks or the space on which he is about to sit in order to prevent the accidental killing of insects. This, in fact, is the origin of the term Digambara, or “sky-clad.” Digambara nuns wear simple white robes and are not permitted to practice aparigraha to its logical extreme.

Shvetambara, or “white-clad” Jains uphold a tradition in which both male and female ascetics wear simple white robes. Shvetambara Jains see aparigraha as more of a matter of one’s inward attitude or disposition, not requiring the kind of radical renunciation that the nude Digambara monk exhibits.

Their disagreement over the necessity of monastic nudity results in other differences in the teachings of these two communities. Because the Digambaras see monastic nudity as a necessary pre-requisite for liberation from rebirth, and because women are not allowed to follow this practice, Digambara tradition teaches that in order for a woman to become liberated, she must be reborn as a man. Shvetambaras reject this view, and indeed hold, on the basis of their scriptures, that both Mahavira’s mother and Mallinatha, the nineteenth Tirthankara, were women who attained liberation. Partially on this basis, the Digambaras do not accept the validity of the Shvetambara scriptural canon. These two groups of Jains also treat the images used in the worship of Jinas, or enlightened beings, differently, with the Shvetambaras adorning the images that they use with various decorations. Digambaras leave their images of the Jinas unadorned, or “nude” (Jaini 1992).

The next major divisions in the Jain community occurred in the medieval period. Lonka Shah (c. 1400-1500), a Jain lay scholar and calligrapher who was copying the Shvetambara scriptures, came to believe on the basis of his studies that the use of images, or murtis, in worship violated the principle of nonviolence: the central moral principle of Jainism (Dundas 2002:246). His efforts to draw Jains away from murtipuja, or image-worship, inspired the emergence of two Shvetambara groups: the Terapanthis and Sthanakavasis.

The Terapanthis and Sthanakavasis follow Lonka in rejecting murtipuja. This distinguishes these two groups of Jains from the mainstream Murtipujaka (image-using) Shvetambaras.

The difference between the Terapanthis and the Sthanakavasis is that the former use monastic facilities, whereas the Sthanakavasis believe that dwelling in monasteries, too, involves violations of nonviolence (due to the violence involved in building a structure), as well as creating attachment to a particular dwelling place.

Around the same period as the emergence of the Terapanthis and Sthanakavasis from the Shvetambara community, divisions emerged in the northern Digambara community on the issue of bhattarakas. Bhattarakas are monks employed in a monastery to interact with the laity and oversee administrative matters. In order to avoid giving offense or drawing unwanted attention to themselves when interacting with the laity, bhattarakas do not observe traditional Digambara monastic nudity, and instead wear simple orange robes. Seeing the use of bhattarakas as a violation of traditional Digambara ascetic strictures, a group of Digambara Jains formed a separate community, known as the Terapanthis (who are not to be confused with the non-image-using Shvetambara community of the same name). Those northern Digambaras who did not object to using bhattarakas are called Bisapanthis. The Digambaras of the south are undivided and use bhattarakas.

A growing number of Jains, particularly outside of India, decry intra-Jain sectarianism as counterproductive to the more pressing goal of promoting Jain values to the world at large. A comment that one often hears is that it is shameful for such a small community, especially one dedicated to peace and nonviolence, to be so divided by disagreement over practice and the ownership of temple facilities and pilgrimage sites. One means by which contemporary Jains combat sectarianism is to develop institutions that are explicitly non-sectarian, or of an "all Jain" nature. Two such institutions are Siddhachalam, established in Blairstown, New Jersey in 1983 by the monk Sushil Kumar, and the International Summer School of Jain Studies, in India, which hosts college students, graduate students, and professors from a variety of countries and travels to a range of Jain institutions, crossing sectarian boundaries and giving students a sense of the rich internal variety of Jainism.

Externally, a growing number of Jains see the challenges facing all of humanity–such as environmental degradation, war, terrorism, and inter-religious conflict–as issues to which a distinctively Jain response is needed. Such a this-worldly orientation on the part of a religion that has traditionally been more about transcending the world than changing it – an "engaged Jainism" analogous, in many ways, to engaged Buddhism – marks a change in the way that Jainism is conceived by its followers (Chapple 2002:98-99).

A growing number of scholars not raised in the Jain tradition have also begun to see this tradition as an intellectual resource, both for deep ecology and religious pluralism (Chapple 1993 and 2002; Long 2009:117-72; Tobias 1991). Regarding religious pluralism, the Jain ideals most often invoked are the doctrines of relativity mentioned above (anekantavada, naya-vada, and syadvada). In regard to deep ecology, the Jain principle most often invoked is the teaching Parasparopagraho Jivanam, which literally means "living beings helping one another," but that is generally translated as interconnectedness or interdependence. "This principle recognizes that all life forms in this universe are bound together by mutual support and interdependence." (Dr. Sulekh Jain, personal communication).

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Session A: Karma and Its Importance in the Jain Path

> Karma is one of the most central concepts of Jainism, and of Indian spiritual traditions in general. The distinctive Jain understanding of karma will be examined from three perspectives: (a) the ways in which the Jain understanding of karma is unique among the Indian traditions, (b) how karma is presented in important Jain texts such as the *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, and (c) the practical application of the Jain understanding of karma to the spiritual path and to everyday life.

The background reading for this session is drawn, with modifications, from the textbook, *Jainism: An Introduction* (London: IB Tauris, 2009).

Basic Concept of Karma in Indic Religious Traditions[1]

Like Hindus and Buddhists, Jains affirm the reality of a universal moral principle of cause and effect called *karma*. Derived from a Sanskrit word meaning 'act,' karma governs all action. It can be likened to Newton's Third Law of Motion: for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. But traditional Indic worldviews do not make the sharp distinction, so typical of modern Western thought, between the realms of fact and value. Karma thus manifests not only in the form of physical laws, like gravity, but also as a moral law governing action. If one engages in actions that are violent, or motivated by hatred, selfishness, or egotism, the universe will respond in kind, producing suffering in the one who has caused suffering to others. Similarly, if one engages in actions that are benevolent, pure, and kind, the universe will respond benevolently, and one will have pleasant experiences. There are Western expressions that convey a similar sensibility to that of the idea of karma: You reap what you sow. What goes around comes around.

Like Hindus and Buddhists, Jains deduce from the principle of karma the idea of rebirth, or reincarnation. All religions must address the issue of why bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people. Why, if

[1] This section is drawn from the author's *Jainism: An Introduction*, pp. 1-2

there is universal justice–which is essentially what karma amounts to–does the world in which we live appear to be as unjust as it does? Indic religions explain this phenomenon in terms of past and future lives. Today's joy or suffering may be the fruit of karma from a previous life. And the actions one takes today will inevitably bear fruit, if not in this life, then in a future one.

Like Hindus and Buddhists, Jains see the ultimate good as escape from the cycle of rebirth–*mokṣa*, or liberation from karmic bondage, or *nirvāṇa*, as it is also called in all of these traditions, a state of absorption in unending bliss. But, as for most Hindus and Buddhists, this final goal is widely conceived as remote and difficult to attain, the more immediate goal of religious activity being merit-making: the acquisition of 'good karma.'

Like Buddhists, and unlike most Hindus, Jains do not affirm the idea of a God, at least as this idea is understood in the Abrahamic religions–a creator and moral arbiter of the universe. Karmic 'reward' and 'punishment' is a wholly impersonal process, and we are each responsible for our own joy and suffering. There is no divine judge. It is up to us to follow the path that leads to ultimate freedom, or not.

The Jain Approach to Karma (Drawn from the Jain Textual Tradition)[2]

But the distinctively Jain vision of karma, rebirth, and liberation conceives of the universe in a way that is radically dualistic: that is, as consisting of two completely different types of entity called *jīva* and *ajīva*, or spirit and matter.

Jīvas, when in their pure, unobscured state, have the four characteristics of unlimited knowledge (*jñāna*), perception (*darśana*), bliss (*sukha*), and energy or power (*vīrya*)–sometimes called the "four infinitudes" (*ananta-catuṣṭaya*). There are as many *jīvas* as there are living beings in the cosmos. The word *jīva*, derived

[2] This section is drawn, with some modifications, from *Jainism: An Introduction*, pp. 90-97.

from the Sanskrit verbal root *jīv*, which means 'live,' suggests that this concept is closely connected to the idea of a living being, as its essential 'life force.' But though there are many *jīvas*, each *jīva* is identical in terms of its four essential characteristics. They have the same nature, though they are numerically distinct.

This is an interesting point of comparison and contrast with several Hindu schools of thought. Much like Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems, and unlike Vedānta, Jainism claims that, although all the *jīvas* have the same essential nature (and are therefore, in that sense, identical), their numerical distinctiveness is final. In other words there is not, in Jainism, an 'oversoul,' such as the Vedāntic Brahman–one supreme soul of which all individual souls are parts, or in which they participate, or on which they are strung like pearls on a thread–though the Jain tradition does use the same term that the Vedānta tradition does–*paramātman*–to refer to the *jīva* in its pure, liberated state.

This is the main *metaphysical* difference between Vedānta–in which all souls are ultimately one–and Jainism (though there is dualistic, or *Dvaita* Vedānta that is similar to Jainism and Sāṃkhya in insisting on the ultimate distinctiveness of all souls). The unity of souls, according to Jainism, is a unity of *nature* or *essence*. All souls are 'one' in the same sense in which all apples are 'one.' There is not one single 'supreme apple' of which all actual apples are different manifestations or appendages. But all apples share certain characteristics that mark them off as apples. In the same way, all the *jīvas* have the same four essential characteristics. But their numerical distinctiveness is not illusory.

Jainism is non-theistic. Jains, especially contemporary Jains, do use the word 'God' in their discourse. I have heard Jains say, very much like Hindus, that "God dwells within you" or that "God dwells within all beings," and I was once even told by a Jain monk, "May God bless you." There seems to be a concern in the Jain community to avoid the possible misunderstanding that because Jains are