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World Religions

Eastern Traditions

Edited by

Willard G. Oxtoby

Roy C. Amore

Amir Hussain

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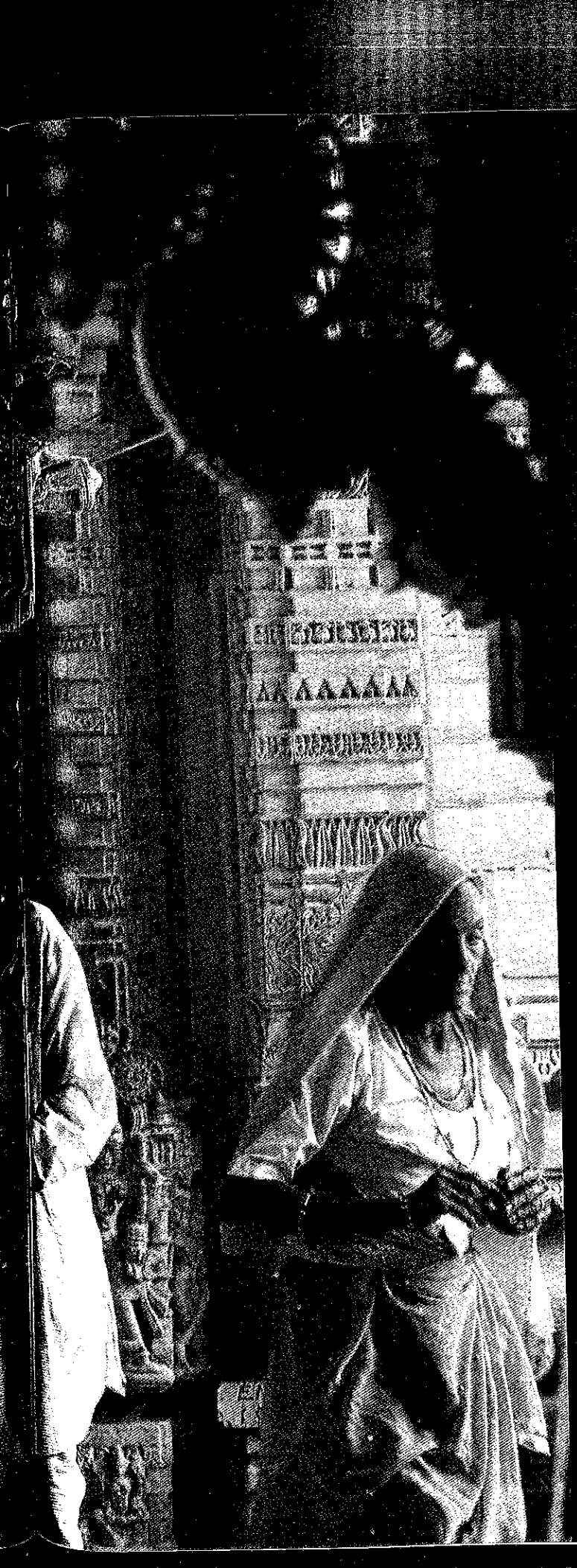

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Jaina Traditions

Anne Vallely

Traditions at a Glance

Numbers

Estimates range from 5 to 8 million worldwide.

Distribution

Primarily India; smaller numbers in East Africa, England, and North America.

Principal Historical Periods

599–527 BCE	Traditional dates of Mahavira
c. 310 BCE	Beginning of the split within the Jaina community
2nd century BCE	Possible composition of *Kalpa Sutra*
6th century CE	Crystallization of Svetambara sect
17th century	Emergence of the Svetambara Sthanakvasi subsect
18th century	Emergence of the Svetambara Terapanthi subsect

Founders and Leaders

The 24 Jinas or Tirthankaras: a series of "ford-builders" who achieved perfect enlightenment and serve as guides for other human beings. The most important Tirthankaras are the two most recent, Parsavanath and Mahavira.

Deities

None in philosophy; a few minor deities in popular practice; some Jainas also worship Hindu deities such as Sri Lakshmi. Although the Tirthankaras are not gods, their images are revered by many Jainas.

Authoritative Texts

All Jainas agree that the earliest texts were lost long ago. The Svetambara sect reveres a collection called the *Agama*, consisting of various later treatises known as the *Angas*, as well as the *Kalpa Sutra*, which contains the life stories of the Tirthankaras. The Digambara sect believes that the original *Angas* were lost as well and focus instead on a set of texts called *Prakaranas* (treatises).

Noteworthy Teachings

The soul is caught in karmic bondage as a result of violence, both intended and unintended, done to other beings. Non-violence is the most important principle, in thought, word, and deed. Freed from karma, the soul attains crystal purity.

In this chapter you will learn about:

- the socio-cultural context in which Jaina traditions emerged in northwestern India between the ninth and sixth centuries BCE
- the geographic spread of the early Jaina community and the concomitant rise of distinctive branches of belief and practice, including an overview of their historical development until the modern period
- the singularity of the soul in Jainism's intricate cosmology, its need to free itself from the material world, and the centrality of non-violence for its liberation
- the rigorous demands of the idealized renouncer path, as well as the mainstream householder path and its relationship with the ideals of Jainism
- the central teachings, prayers, practices, and festivals that constitute the lifeblood of Jainism for the millions of its adherents.

A frail monk sits cross-legged on a bed, leaning against the wall for support as his followers enter the room. Everyone knows this is the last time they will gather for *darshana*—to pay homage to their guru and receive his blessing—for he has taken the vow of ***sallekhana*** and the process is nearing its

← Jaina pilgrims at a temple in the Jaisalmer Fort, Rajasthan (© Craig Lovell/Eagle Visions Photography/Alamy).

end. *Sallekhana* is the ritual death achieved at the end of a long fast. No Jaina is required to undertake such a fast; in fact, Jainas are expressly forbidden to cause harm to any living being, whether in thought, speech, or action. But the Jaina path is one of **renunciation**—of departure from life during life—and *sallekhana* is merely its logical end. Voluntary death is the most radical statement possible of detachment from the body and the world. A dispassionate death is a triumph for the eternal soul on its journey towards perfection.

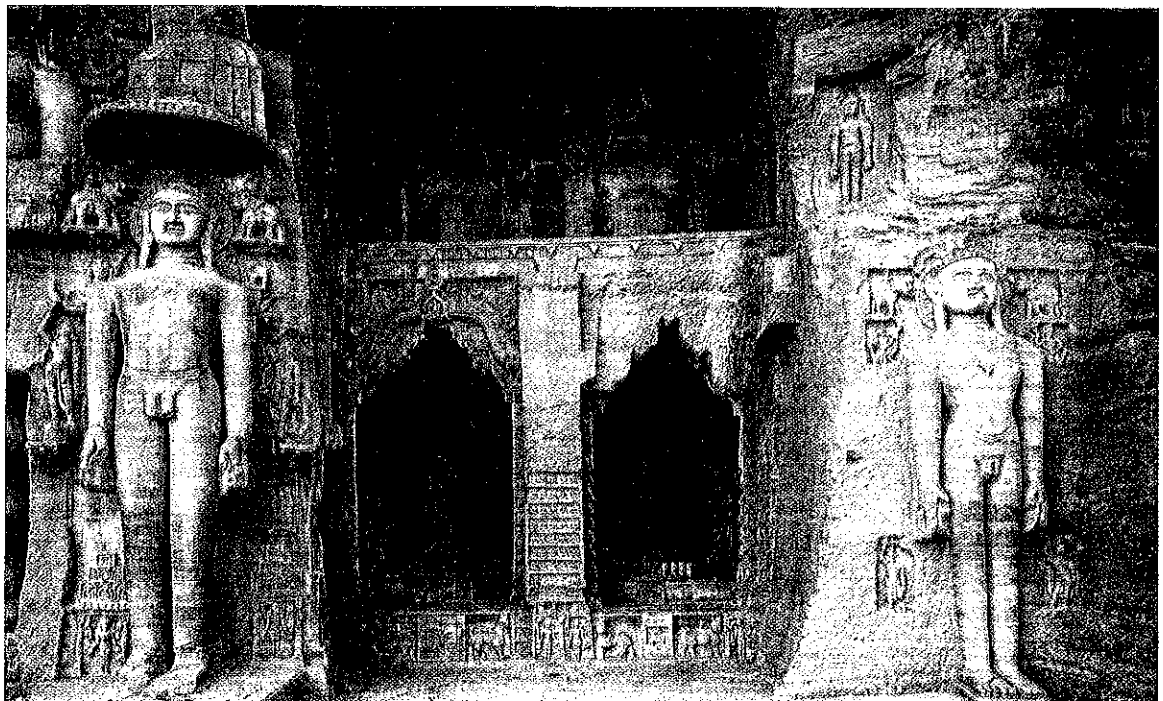
Overview

Jainism confronts us with a simple yet extraordinary message: the path to happiness, truth, and

Sites

Gwalior Fort, Madhya Pradesh

The Gwalior Fort in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh contains architectural treasures from several historic northern Indian kingdoms. Colossal rock-cut sculptures of the Tirthankaras (dating from the ninth to the fifteenth century) gaze down on Gwalior city below. According to legend, the city was named for a Jaina saint named Gwalipa after he cured a Rajput chieftain of leprosy.



Phototravel/Corbis

Timeline

c. 850 BCE	Parsavanath, the 23rd Tirthankara
599–527	Traditional dates of Mahavira
4th century	Possible beginning of split within Jaina community with southward migration of one group
2nd century CE	Umasvati, Digambara author of the *Tatthvartha Sutra*
5th century	First Jaina temples
9th century	Jinasena, Svetambara philosopher
10th century	Colossal statue of Bahubali erected in Shravanabelagola, Karnataka
11th century	Dilwara temple complex in Rajasthan
12th century	Hemachandra, Svetambara philosopher
15th century	Lonkashaha initiates reform in the Svetambara tradition
16th century	Banarsidass initiates reform in the Digambara tradition
17th century	Formation of Svetambara Sthanakvasi subsect
18th century	Formation of Svetambara Terapanthi subsect
20th century	Revitalization of the Bhattaraka tradition within the Digambara sect

self-realization is the path of restraint. Happiness is the product not of doing but of not-doing; not of embracing the world but of disengaging from it.

It is this emphasis on restraint that gives Jainism its distinctive ascetic character. To study the Jaina tradition, however, is to realize that it cannot be contained within such narrow bounds. For one thing, the Jaina community is equally well known for its business acumen, worldly success, and strong social identity—in other words, for its effective, dynamic engagement with the world.

Outsiders often perceive a paradoxical disjunction between the Jaina community's this-worldly achievements and its other-worldly ethos. But this seeming paradox reflects the spirit of the tradition: the path of renunciation is a path of transformative power. The power of renunciation lies not in opposing worldly power, but rather in transcending and subsuming it. Some of the most interesting dimensions of Jainism can be traced to this interplay between the worldly and the other-worldly, both in scripture and in lived practice. Ultimately, following the Jaina path means withdrawing from the world—not just from its sorrows but also from its ephemeral joys, from family and community, from desires and pride, even from one's own body. Conquering our attachment to the world is the most difficult of all battles, but for Jainas it is the only battle worth engaging. Such is the message of the **Jinas** ("victors" or "conquerors"), the 24 ascetic–prophets—the most recent of whom was **Mahavira** (c. 599–527 BCE)—who taught the path to eternal happiness.

Jainism is a tradition that expresses itself ritually through the veneration and emulation of the Jinas (also known as "**Tirthankaras**"—builders of bridges across the ocean of birth and death, or ***samsara***). The Jina is the highest expression of the Jaina ideal, and the focus of the Jaina devotional apparatus. A commanding figure who could just as easily have been a worldly ***chakravartin***—the ideal benevolent ruler—endowed with all the powers and possessions the world has to offer, the Jina "conquers" the world by turning his back on it. Indeed, the Jina is venerated in both his potentialities: as the regal

chakravartin, magnificently bejewelled and crowned, and as the unadorned ***Arhat*** (perfected being), deep in meditation, entirely detached from worldly concerns. World renouncer and world conqueror, though antithetical in their orientations, both trace their beginnings to the auspicious karma accrued through a life of non-violence. Restraint, self-discipline, and commitment not to harm are the starting points for the Jina and the *chakravartin* alike.

To grasp the vigorous, even forceful character of Jainism, we need to keep in mind that the Jaina path of renunciation is one not of retreat from the harshness of the world, but of triumph over it. The world surrenders its bounty spontaneously to those who conquer it through detachment—though of course the true renouncer is indifferent to such rewards.

For Jainas the highest possible value is non-violence. So central is this value that Jainas commonly express the essence of their tradition in three words: "*ahimsa paramo dharma*" ("non-violence is the supreme path"). This is not to say that Jainas seek to eradicate the violence of the world. In a universe where every life exists only at the expense of others, such a commitment would be futile; furthermore, any engagement with the world only causes us to sink deeper into its depths, generating ever more karma to fasten to our souls. Rather, the Jaina commitment to non-violence is a commitment to radical non-interference.

Jainas equate non-violence with renunciation because it is only through the total cessation of activity—of mind, speech, and body—that one can truly avoid harming others and, consequently, oneself.

We are surrounded by countless life forms, many of which are invisible to the eye. All possess an eternal soul (***jiva***), and none desires to be harmed. Yet their omnipresence means that we cannot perform any action without causing them harm. And in causing them harm, we harm ourselves, for every act of violence we perpetrate increases the negative karma attached to our souls, impeding our ability to know our true selves. Lack of intention to commit harm is an important mitigating factor. But even unintended acts of harm still result in some degree of karmic bondage—though that karma is less heavy, dark, and damaging than the kind created when the harm is intentional.

Jainism tells us that attachment to the world, our bodies, and the cultivation of our personalities comes at the expense of knowing our true Self. The Self has nothing to do with this world—not with its sounds, its colours, or its rhythms, nor with our own talents, aptitudes, or experiences, nor even with the relationships we forge with others. The worldly, social selves constructed with such care from the time of our birth are no more than elaborate sand castles, washed away with each wave of the ocean of *samsara*.

The Self is fundamentally other. Its deep, silent tranquillity is indifferent to the cacophony of the world. And precisely because the soul does not lobby for the attention of our consciousness, its presence is easy to ignore amidst the endless distractions created by the demands of the body. Nevertheless, the soul is luminous, radiating peace, and on very rare occasions our conscious minds may catch a glimpse of its magnificence. Jainas call this momentary awakening ***samyak darshan*** ("right faith" or "correct intuition" into the workings of the world), and it is the starting point of Jainism.

In the absence of *samyak darshan* Jainism makes little sense. The restraint and self-discipline it calls for are challenges to be undertaken only by those with an awareness of both the uniqueness of human birth—the only incarnation from which liberation can be attained—and the perils of worldly attachment.

According to Jainas, there is only one path to emancipation: the path of self-discipline and non-harm. Yet this singular path leads to a remarkable range of Jaina communities, and the lived traditions of Jainism vary widely in both interpretation and practice. In fact, diversity is one of the distinguishing characteristics of Jainism.

The most fundamental distinction is the one between the two Jaina sects: **Digambara** (naked or "sky-clad") and **Svetambara** (white-clad). This sectarian split occurred some 200 years after the death of Mahavira, and was the product of enduring differences in views regarding ascetic practice,

women's spiritual capacity, and the nature of the Jina, among other things.

Other issues that divide Jainas include the worship of images or idols and the use of "living beings" such as flowers, water, and fire in worship. Despite the diversity of their interpretations, however, all Jainas share the commitment to renunciation and non-violence that is the heart of the tradition. The message of restraint is unambiguously conveyed by the "sky-clad" ascetics who literally embody the principle of renunciation, but it is also present in the beliefs and practices of lay Jainas, including those who live in a context of plenty. Out of the clamorous diversity of Jaina expression emerges the unbroken and unvarying message that non-violence is the only path to liberation.

The Shramana Revolution

Jainism appeared on the historical scene sometime between the ninth and sixth centuries BCE as part of the same *shramana* ("world-renouncing") movement that gave rise to Buddhism. The imprecise dating reflects the meagre data that historians have at their disposal. The later date is the more commonly accepted because the historicity of Mahavira (born Vardhamana Jnatrpura) has been widely established. The earlier date is associated with the life of the twenty-third Tirthankara, Parsavanath, for which the evidence is limited to the occasional scriptural reference (for instance, Mahavira's parents were said to be devotees of the lineage of Parsavanath).

The followers of Mahavira, like other *shramana* groups (most notably the followers of the Buddha), rejected the brahminical orthodoxy of the day. As their name implies, the "world renouncers" considered the brahmins' preoccupation with cosmic and social order to be fundamentally flawed. All the elements that went into maintaining that order—the hierarchical caste system, the elaborate liturgy, the rituals, and above all the cult of sacrifice—were anathema to the renouncers.

United in their condemnation of the status quo, the *shramanas* also held similar views regarding the need for salvation from a meaningless cosmos. All regarded the cosmic order not as the creation of a transcendent, cosmic god—the existence of which they denied—but rather as a purposeless place of suffering that must be transcended. Finally, each *shramana* group claimed a unique insight into the workings of the cosmos, as well as the means to escape its confines and attain ***moksha*** (liberation/nirvana). Despite their similarities, therefore, the various *shramana* groups developed as distinct traditions and even rivals.

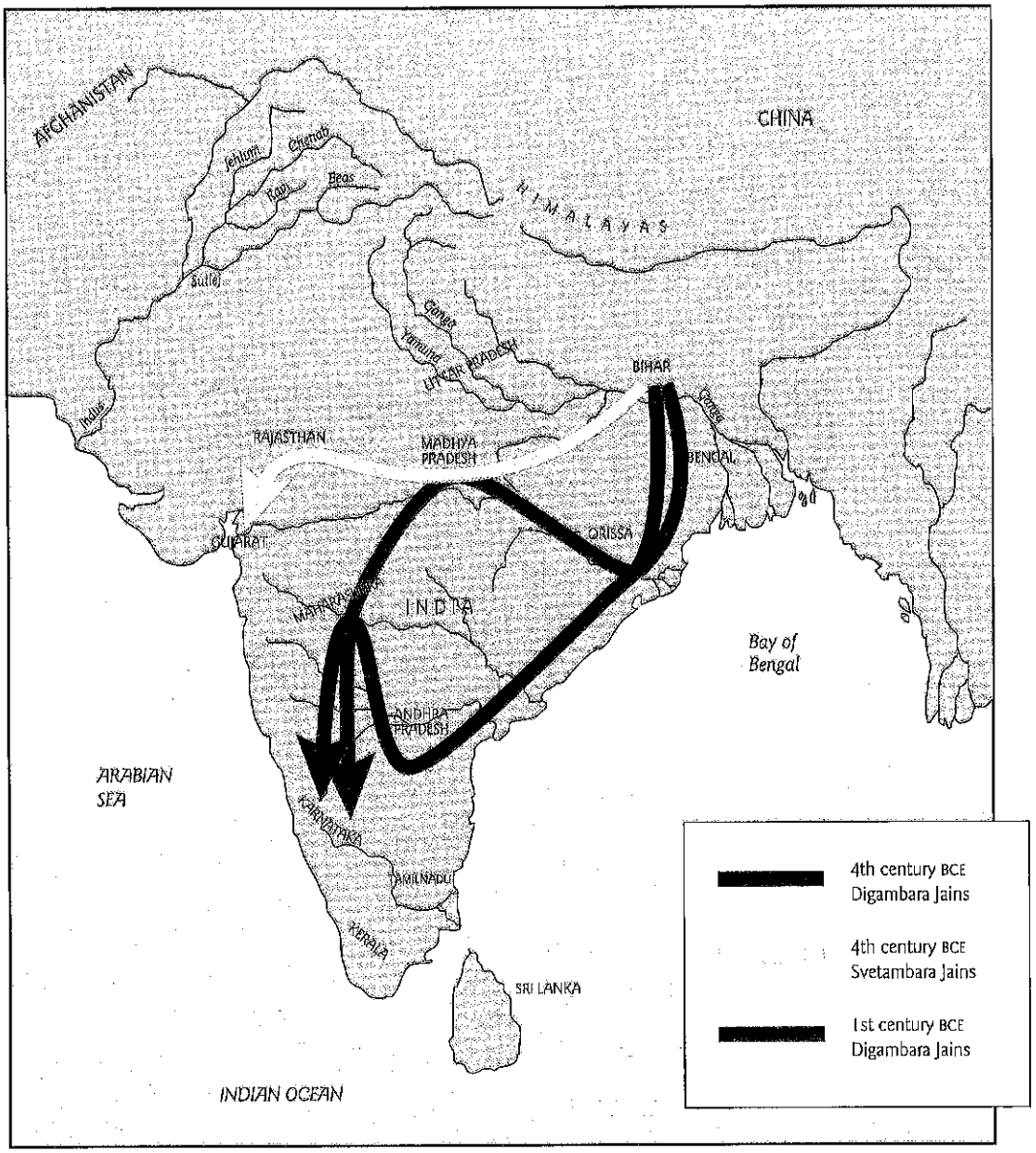
Mahavira is said to have been born to a ruling family in the region of Nepal–northeastern India. Our knowledge of his life is derived from very limited scriptural sources (Jaina texts and parts of the Buddhist Pali canon). Almost all that can be said with any authority is that he was a historical personage whose teachings on restraint attracted a considerable number of disciples and lay followers.

Nevertheless, the Jaina tradition has many tales of the teacher they call Mahavira, or "Great Hero," beginning with the miraculous transfer of his embryo from the womb of a brahmin woman named Devananda to that of Queen Trisala (which unequivocally established the supremacy of the kshatriya caste over the brahmins). Indeed, Jainas are familiar not only with Mahavira's life story, but with the stories of his previous lives. Accounts of his life are retold and re-enacted throughout the year, but especially during the festival known to Svetambara Jainas as Paryushana and to Digambara Jainas as Daslakshana.

Discussion of origins in any religion is often fraught with ambiguities, as historicity and mythology are interwoven in such complex ways that they become hard to separate. The ambiguities are multiplied in the case of Jainism, because the Jainas have both a strong sense of historical continuity and an equally strong sense of being embedded in a system of eternally recurring time, cycles of generation and degeneration so vast that mytho-historical particularities, though "real" (never illusory), are ultimately meaningless.

Jainas believe that the cycles of generation (*utsarpini*) and degeneration (*avasarpini*) produce predictable patterns in social, moral, and physical life. Thus within each cycle of generation and

Map 4.1 Origin and dispersion of Jainism



Today most Svetambara Jainas live in central and western India (Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh) and most Digambara Jainas in the south, but communities of both sects can be found throughout the country, as well as abroad.

degeneration alike there are periods that favour the emergence of Jinas who teach the path of liberation. For Jainas, therefore, Mahavira—far from being the founder of Jainism—is merely the final Jina of the current degenerate time period. In the next cycle, which will be one of generation, another 24 Jinas will appear, preaching the same wisdom. And during the cycle of decline that will inevitably follow, yet another 24 will appear, and so on, in an unending cycle of decay and growth.

Sites

Shravanabelagola, Karnataka

Home of the colossal 18-metre (57-foot) statue of the renouncer Bahubali (also known as Gomateshwara), a prince who, in the midst of a battle, gained sudden insight into the senselessness of violence (*samyak darshan*) and renounced all attachment to worldly existence, including his kingdom. Digambaras believe he was the first person in our time cycle to attain *moksha*. Every 12 years, thousands of pilgrims make their way to Shravanabelagola for the Mahamasthaka Abhisheka (Great Head Anointing Ceremony) of Bahubali.

Perched on scaffolding constructed especially for the festival, Jainas bathe the head of the Bahubali statue with substances that range from milk and sugarcane juice to saffron, sandalwood, vermilion, and flowers. Technically, these are not "offerings" since Bahubali, in a state of *moksha*, can neither receive anything from, nor give anything to, devotees. Instead, the ritual is understood as an act of pure devotion.

Focus

The Life of Mahavira in the Kalpa Sutra

Mahavira's Birth

[When] the Venerable Ascetic Mahavira was born, . . . [there] rained down on the palace of King Siddhartha one great shower of silver, gold, diamonds, clothes, ornaments, leaves, flowers, . . . sandal powder, and riches.

. . . [His parents] prepared plenty of food, drink, spices, and sweetmeats, invited their friends, relations, kinsmen. . . . His three names have thus been recorded: by his parents he was called Vardhamana; because he is devoid of love and hate, he is called sramana (i.e., Ascetic); because he stands fast in the midst of dangers and fears, patiently bears hardships and calamities, adheres to the chosen rules of penance, is wise, indifferent to pleasure and pain, rich in control . . . the name Venerable Ascetic Mahavira has been given him by the gods (Jacobi 1884: 251–6).

Enlightenment

When the Venerable Ascetic Mahavira had become a Jina and Arhat, he was a Kevalin [liberated one], omniscient and comprehending all objects; he knew and saw all conditions of the world, of gods, men, and demons: whence they came, whither they go, whether they are born as men or animals or become gods or hell beings, the ideas, the thoughts of their minds, the food, doings, desires, the open and secret deeds of all the living beings in the whole world; he, the Arhat for whom there is no secret, knew and saw all conditions of living beings in the world, what they thought, spoke, or did at any moment (Jacobi 1884: 263–4).

Mahavira's Physical Death

In the fourth month of that rainy season . . . in the town of Papa . . . the Venerable Ascetic Mahavira died, went off, quitted the world, cut asunder the ties of birth, old age, and death; became a Siddha [a liberated being], a Buddha, a Mukta, a maker of the end (to all misery), finally liberated, freed from all pains . . . [that night, the kings who had gathered there said]: "since the light of intelligence is gone, let us make an illumination of material matter" (Jacobi 1884: 264–6).

In this context linear time carries very little weight. Jainas can be said to be both diachronically and synchronically oriented, moving nimbly between the two perspectives. Most crucially, however, Jainas assert that Jainism—like the cosmos itself—has no point of origin. Just as the cosmos has existed from "beginningless time," so too has the struggle for liberation from it—as well as the truth about how to attain salvation. "Jainism" is simply the name we give to this path. By declaring the cosmos to be eternal, Jainism directs our attention away from the fruitless question of origins to the more pressing existential issue of our bondage in *samsara* (the cycle of birth and death).

Jainism is overwhelmingly concerned with conveying its message of liberation through restraint. This task is urgent because, even though the message is eternal, it is accessible only to specific incarnations (human beings), residing in specific regions of the cosmos (the *karmabhumi*, or realms of action) and, as noted above, during specific time periods. Under any other conditions the message would not reach us. Thus we who have the good fortune to hear it must not squander our chance to learn from it how to escape.

The Early *Sangha*

Mahavira established Jainism as a four-fold community (***caturvidhyasangha***) made up of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. His open acceptance of women in his sangha is noteworthy, particularly

Gift of the Ernest Erickson Foundation, Inc./Brooklyn Museum

A page from a fifteenth-century copy of the *Kalpa Sutra*, the devotional text narrating the lives of the Jinas. Here Mahavira is shown preaching to renouncers and householders.

since the *shramana* groups generally regarded women as "objects of desire," to be avoided lest they distract male ascetics from their path. (The Buddha's initial reluctance to permit women to join his order is well known.)

For its first 30 years the sangha was held together by the charismatic example of the living Jina. It is said that Mahavira's sangha grew to include 36,000 nuns and 14,000 monks, as well as 318,000 laywomen and 159,000 laymen (Jaini 1979: 37). The preponderance of nuns over monks—highly unusual for a religious order in India—has remained a distinguishing feature of Jainism throughout its history.

At the age of 72 Mahavira "left his body" and attained *moksha*. For Jainas, *moksha* is a state of complete detachment from the world, a state from which communication with those still in the cycle of *samsara* is impossible. Thus Mahavira's followers were deprived of the sort of post-mortem cult typical of some other religious traditions, in which followers have sought to maintain contact with their central figures through prayer. Instead, the Jainas faced the enormous challenge of sustaining their tradition without any hope of spiritual guidance from the Jina.

Mahavira's disciples assumed leadership of the community, but the process of institutionalization soon gave rise to dissension. Within two centuries of Mahavira's death, the once cohesive Jaina community had begun to split into two discrete traditions. The precise causes of the split remain unknown, but many sources suggest that the turning point came in the fourth century BCE, when one group moved south (possibly in response to a severe famine in the north). Thereafter the two groups developed in isolation. Differences inevitably arose, and in time each group came to see the other as deviating from the vision of Mahavira, and therefore as inauthentic.

That the northern group had abandoned Mahavira's principle of nudity and begun wearing a white robe was a particular abomination to the southerners, for whom nudity was among the most elemental expressions of non-attachment and non-violence. The northerners argued that a simple garment had no bearing on spiritual progress. Nevertheless, the matter of clothing was such a central and visible difference that it became the basis for the two groups' self-identification. Eventually, in the early centuries of the Common Era, the northerners came to be known as the Svetambara (white-clad)

and the southerners as the Digambara (sky-clad, or naked). The lay followers of both groups (including the fully clothed lay followers of the naked monks) likewise took on these appellations as markers of their religious identity.

This was not the only point of division, however. Another important disagreement involved women's eligibility for initiation into the order. The Digambaras' insistence on nudity meant that women were, *a priori*, disqualified from taking the vows of renunciation. The Svetambaras, by contrast, imposed no such condition and therefore did permit women to join them.

Both groups regard women's bodies as inferior to men's in that they are weaker by nature. Therefore the ascetic path is more difficult for them. For the Svetambaras, however, the female body is not an insurmountable obstacle; they permit women full initiation, and even maintain that the nineteenth Jina (Mallinath) was female. Digambaras vehemently disagree, arguing that asceticism requires a powerful, "adamantine" body, which women lack (Jaini 1979: 39). They believe that rebirth in a male body is a prerequisite for full renunciation, but in the interim they permit women to become *aryikas* (noble women) and lead a life of semi-renunciation.

Finally, the nature of the Jina's omniscience when embodied (that is, while in life) came to be a point of contention between the two groups. According to the Digambaras, one who is omniscient must already have transcended bodily appetites and functions. Thus the Jina has no need of normal bodily activities such as sleep or the consumption and elimination of food, and does not preach but rather communicates by a divine, supernatural sound. The Svetambaras, by contrast, believe that all embodied beings are subject to bodily demands; therefore the omniscient Jina eats, sleeps, and communicates in the regular way through the spoken word.

Sacred Literature

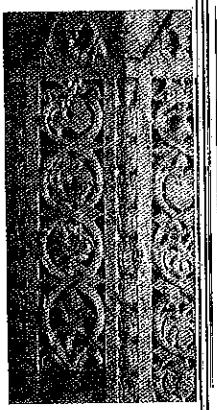
Scholars of religion today acknowledge that the boundaries separating one religion from another have never been as watertight as the scriptures of those religions suggest they are. The creation of a sacred literature or canon might seem to require the existence of a well-defined community. But in practice the development of such a community may depend (at least in part) on the creation of such a canon. While a socially recognized community of some kind must have existed in order for a canon to develop, it would always have been, and continues to be, more porous than scriptures suggest.

The sacred literature of the Jainas is said to have been transmitted by the Jina Mahavira to his followers, but it is not believed to have originated with him. In our time cycle, the eternal teachings were first propounded by the Jina **Rsabha**, and then promulgated anew by each succeeding prophet. Mahavira's teachings were committed to memory by his closest disciples, the *ganadharas*, who then transmitted them orally to other disciples, who in turn passed them along down the generations. Thus the

Sites

Sammet Shikarji, Jharkand

Known as the "King of the Tirths" (*tirthraj*), Sammet Shikar (or Sammed Shikar) is said to be the place where 20 of the 24 Jinas achieved omniscience. Part of a remote mountain range in the western state of Jharkhand, in the deep forest of Madhuban, the hilltop is adorned with temples and shrines dedicated to the 20 Jinas and countless renouncers who attained *moksha* here. To reach it, pilgrims must make an arduous trek of more than 30 kilometres (18 miles).



Jaina canon (*Agama*) for many years existed as a purely oral tradition.

The entire *Agama* consists of three main branches: the *Purva* ("the ancient"), concerned with Jaina metaphysics, cosmology, and philosophy; the *Anga* ("the limbs"), which includes discussion of mendicant conduct, doctrine, karma, and religious narratives; and the *Angabahya* ("ancillary limbs"), a subsidiary collection of commentaries on the above topics, along with dialogues on topics such as astrology and the cycles of time.

The canon was faithfully preserved and transmitted orally from generation to generation within the ascetic orders for more than 200 years. In the early fourth century BCE, however, northern India was struck by a devastating famine that is said to have continued for 12 years. The Jaina canon was nearly lost altogether as both the ascetics and the householders, whom they depended on for sustenance, struggled to survive.

From this point on, what actually happened to the *Agama* becomes sketchy and contentious. The *Purvas*—the most ancient section, believed to date back to the time of Parsavanath, in the ninth century BCE—disappeared, although it is thought that much of the content was contained in the final section of the *Anga*, called the *Drstivada*. Unfortunately, according to the Svetambaras, the *Drstivada* was also lost to memory, but its essence was preserved through mnemonic allusions in a text contained within the *Angabahya*.

The Digambaras, however, claim that they managed to retain much of the *Drstivada*, and they eventually put it in writing around the second century CE. This work, called the *Satkhandagama*, was the first Jaina scripture to be preserved in written form, and it is one of very few canonical works that the Digambaras recognize as authoritative. They reject the scriptures retained by the Svetambaras as inauthentic deviations from the original canon.

In addition to the *Agamas*, vast collections of post-canonical writing were produced by the learned *acharyas* (mendicant scholars) of both the Svetambara and Digambara sects, including

Document

From the Bhaktamara Stotra

The Bhaktamara Stotra *is one of the most beloved Jaina texts. It is addressed to Adinatha—another name for Rsabha, the first Tirthankara.*

In the fullness of faith
I bow
to the feet of the Jina,
shining as they reflect the gems in the crowns of the gods
who bow down in devotion,
illuminating the darkness
of oppressive sin,
a refuge in the beginning of time
for all souls
lost in the ocean of birth (1)

. . .
Praising you
instantly destroys
the sinful karma that binds
embodied souls
to endless rebirth
just as the sun's rays
instantly shatter
the all-embracing
bee-black
endless dark night (7)
. . .

(*Bhaktamara Stotra, Manatunga*, 1, 7, 20–1, 26, 44; Cort 2005: 95–8).

Jinasena, Hemachandra, Kundakunda, Haribhadra, and Umasvati. Known collectively as *Anuyogas* ("branches of scripture"), their writings achieved canonical status within their respective traditions and are today among the most celebrated works of ancient and medieval Indian philosophy.

The seemingly intractable dispute over the Svetambara and Digambara canons aside, the gulf between the two groups is not as wide as it may appear. Many fundamental ideas—on the nature of the soul, karma, non-violence, the cosmos—are common to both groups, as are many practices. It would be patently wrong to suggest that differences do not exist within Jainism on these fundamentals, but there is enough consensus across sectarian lines to permit us to consider them "tenets" of the tradition.

The ***Tatthvartha Sutra*** of Umasvati (second century CE) merits special note here. It is an extraordinarily comprehensive treatment of the fundamentals of the tradition, and remains a cherished manuscript among both Svetambara and Digambara communities. Finally, the recent text *Saman Suttam* (1974)[1] is the first cross-sectarian effort to produce a concise summary of Jaina thought. Following are the fundamentals of Jaina cosmology on which the two sects agree.

Cosmology

Jainas believe that the entire cosmos (*loka*) is made up of six eternal substances, called *dravya*, and that knowledge of these *dravya* is an important step towards self-perfection. These substances are classified in two broad categories—*jiva* (soul) and ***ajiva*** (non-soul). *Jiva* is an eternal substance with consciousness. *Ajiva* is a substance without consciousness and consists of five types: *pudgala* (pure matter), *kala* (time), *dharma* (principle of motion), *adharma* (principle of rest), and *akash* (space). The latter four—all variants of *pudgala*—are "supportive" forms, without which existence would not be possible.

Pudgala is a concrete substance with the attributes of touch, taste, smell, and colour. Although it has no special function, in its most subtle form it is the basis of all matter and energy. All activities of the mind and body, including thought and speech, are considered to be *pudgala*. All worldly knowledge is acquired by means of *pudgala*—including the knowledge of how to free ourselves from it! Indeed, it is only through perception, which is also a form of *pudgala*, that we can know the cosmos and its contents.

Thus *pudgala* is not antithetical to *jiva*. It is neutral in this regard, although its natural tendency is to become attached both to other forms of matter and to *jiva*. This is an important point, because the renouncers typically speak of matter in highly negative terms (for example, referring to the world as vomit, or the body as a trap). Those terms are chosen largely for rhetorical impact, however, for *pudgala* is *jiva*'s friend as well as its foe. The effective omnipresence of *pudgala* makes this unavoidable. The worldly soul that seeks release from it is nevertheless utterly dependent on it.

The most fundamental existential problem, shared by all beings in the cosmos, is the fact that *jiva* and *ajiva* are thoroughly enmeshed. This is what prevents the soul from achieving a state of bliss, for bliss can be experienced only in a state of purity and separation from all that is not-soul. Jainas do not posit an original state of separation from which there was a "fall." Instead they assert that this state of entanglement is eternal, "without beginning," and that we are constantly exacerbating it, since every activity of the mind as well as the body causes vibrations that create ever more particles of sticky, binding karma. These karmic particles come in two types—auspicious ("good karma," called ***punya***) and inauspicious ("bad karma," called ***paap***)—but ultimately all forms of karma must be purged. The forces behind those karma-creating activities, and hence the root causes of our bondage, are the passions.

This is the quandary from which the Jaina path of self-restraint offers a coherent way out. By limiting—eventually, eliminating—the inflow of karma and cleansing the soul of all the karmic particles that have become encrusted on it through eternity, we can eliminate the cause of the soul's suffering. The process of purging is called *nirjara*, and it is the purpose behind most Jaina practices. Normally, karma dissolves when (after giving its pain

or pleasure) it comes to fruition. But karma can be made to "ripen" and vanish prematurely through the practice of certain austerities, and this is the aim of ascetic discipline.

Major Developments

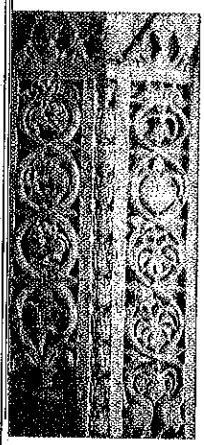
As a tiny, heterodox minority within the vast Indian mosaic, Jainas have always been vulnerable to assimilation. How they have managed to differentiate themselves, expand, and thrive when other world-renouncing traditions have not remains a curiosity. Paradoxically, the success of "other-worldly" Jainism likely owes much to its "this-worldly" know-how. The skills required to forge alliances with ruling elites and make inroads into established economic structures were key to its survival in the medieval period (fifth through seventeenth centuries). The Jaina tradition developed those skills early on, in the first two centuries of its existence, when it enjoyed the patronage of the kshatriya rulers.

In the final centuries before the beginning of the Common Era, the fate of all the *shramana* groups, including the Buddhists as well as the Jainas, depended on their ability to secure royal patronage. The socio-political "alliance" between the kshatriyas and the various *shramanas* was rooted in a shared ideological opposition to brahminic orthodoxy. The fact that Mahavira came from a kshatriya clan was a sign of the kshatriyas' ascent. The alliance was mutually beneficial: the *shramanas* prospered with the economic support of the kshatriyas, while the latter gained in a myriad of ways through the extension of their popular support.

In the fourth century BCE, however, Emperor Ashoka converted to Buddhism and the balance of power shifted. The Jainas slowly retreated from their original centres of power in eastern India (Magadha), towards the more peripheral (at that time) northwestern regions of Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Punjab, as well as into the southern areas of what are now Maharashtra and Karnataka. Nevertheless, the wealth and—more important—the political skills that Jainas had acquired from serving (in legal positions, as advisers, etc.) at the various kshatriya courts gave them a worldly acumen that would serve them well long after their royal support had disappeared.

By the third century BCE, the once unified Jaina *caturvidhyasangha* had begun to separate into the two groups that, centuries later, would become the Svetambaras and Digambaras. The split was reinforced by the geographical repositioning of the Svetambaras in the northwest and the Digambaras in the south. Yet Jainas of both sects managed to prosper and gain positions of importance in their new environments. Although their influence with local elites was always limited, their skills, especially in trade, enabled them to establish secure communities.

Jaina philosophy flourished over the following centuries. Among the *acharyas* who produced important treatises were the Digambaras Umasvati



Sites

Rajasthan, India

Rajasthan is a large state in northwestern India bordering Pakistan. Though it is renowned as the ancient land of the Rajputs, Jainism has also had a presence there for more than 2,000 years and has given Rajasthan the world famous Dilwara temple complex near Mount Abu. Built between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries CE, the temples are stunningly beautiful marble architectural monuments and a major Jain pilgrimage centre. In western Rajasthan is the important Jain pilgrimage site of Ranakpur, home to the exquisite fifteenth-century marble temple dedicated to the first Tirthankara, Adinath.

(the second-century author of the *Tatthvartha Sutra*), his contemporary Kundakunda, and Haribhadra in the seventh century, and the Svetambaras Jinasena in the ninth century and Hemachandra in the twelfth. Together, the philosophical works of the *acharyas* constitute an enormous and celebrated body of sacred literature.

The social organization of the Jaina community retained its "fourfold" character throughout the medieval period, preserving the interdependence of householders and renouncers. Instead of establishing large monasteries, as the Buddhists did, the Jaina ascetics continued to rely directly on householders for sustenance. Rules of ascetic practice placed severe restrictions on personal possessions and comforts. Householders were keenly aware of these rules, and because of their direct involvement in the lives of renouncers, they acted as unofficial enforcers of proper conduct. These factors likely account for the fact that no large Jaina monasteries were ever established. It has been suggested that the Jainas resisted the wave of Hindu devotionalism, and the arrival of Islam, in the twelfth century far more successfully than the Buddhists did, precisely because of their social organization. The Buddhist monasteries also relied on the support of their lay followers, but never to the extent that the Jaina ascetics relied on Jaina householders, who provided **mendicants** with sustenance as often as three times a day. The latter played a central role in the perpetuation of Jaina tradition, and for that reason they may have been less vulnerable than their Buddhist counterparts to the rise of the Hindu *bhakti* movement. Furthermore, whereas the concentration of the Buddhist monks and scriptures in large, wealthy monasteries made them easy targets for marauding armies, the Jainas were dispersed throughout the society and had no property to plunder. Thus the decentralized nature of Jaina groups may have inadvertently contributed to their survival.

Reform

Idol (*murti*) veneration became an established feature of Jainism very early in its history (third century BCE), but the first Jaina temples did not appear until the early medieval period (c. fifth century CE)—an era of widespread temple construction. With time and growing affluence, the temples became the anchors of Jaina religious life, sites not only of devotion but of interaction between householders and the mendicants who gathered there.

Temple building and maintenance continue to be central religious activities for most Jainas. Today, however, the care and management of temples is almost exclusively the responsibility of the laity. The general absence of settled, temple-based communities of mendicants today can be traced to a number of powerful reform movements that arose between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries and effectively reinvigorated the tradition of ascetic discipline among both Svetambara and Digambara Jainas.

The reformers saw a direct correlation between the proliferation of temples and what they considered to be a growing laxity on the part of many Jaina ascetics, who gradually abandoned their itinerant way of life for the relative comfort of a settled life in and around the temples.

The first in the Svetambara tradition to question the wealth and power of the *caityavasis* (temple-dwelling renouncers) was a fifteenth-century lay reformer named Lonkashaha. He also challenged their deviation from the principle of *samyama* (restraint), and criticized idol worship and temple building as contrary not only to the ethos of renunciation but also to the vow of non-violence, given that the construction of idols and temples involved unnecessary violence to living beings. Lonkashaha's uncompromising critique effectively put an end to the institution of the *caityavasis* and eventually gave rise to two sects that remain highly influential among Svetambara Jainas: Sthanakvasis (who oppose temple-based Jainism and reside in halls known as *sthanaks* on their peripatetic travels), and Terapanthis (reformers who oppose the use of *sthanaks* as well as temples).

Major changes took place in the Digambara tradition as well, initiated by the lay poet Banarsidass in the sixteenth century. Like Lonkashaha, Banarsidass criticized what he considered to be the excessive ritualism and unnecessary violence (the use of flowers, for instance) associated with

temple worship. At the same time he denounced a group of quasi-ascetic clerics called the *bhattarakas*. Analogous to the Svetambara *caityavasis* but with greater political clout, the *bhattarakas* served both as guardians of the temples and as intermediaries between the naked ascetics and the ruling elites—a role that, in addition to gaining them power and wealth, made them vulnerable to corruption.

The Digambaras responded to these critiques with sweeping reforms that led to the decline (though not the disappearance) of the *bhattarakas*. The revitalization sparked by the reformers' critiques put both the Svetambara and Digambara orders in positions of significant strength as they entered the modern period.

Practice

The importance that Jainism attaches to practice is one of the tradition's defining features. Correct practice (*samyak caritra*) constitutes one of the "Three Jewels" of Jainism, along with correct intuition (*samyak darshan*) and correct knowledge (*samyak jnana*). Although all three are equally fundamental, correct practice tends to overshadow the others because it is so conspicuous. Jainas are everywhere known by their practices—from their strict avoidance of certain very common foods to the Digambara ascetics' insistence on nudity. Before we look at specific practices, however, it is important to grasp the special significance that the concept of practice has in Jainism, and how it is grounded in Jaina metaphysics.

The Jaina emphasis on practice reflects an understanding of the world and human suffering as *real*—not illusory—and in need of active human intervention. This understanding stands in sharp contrast to that of Vedanta-Hinduism and Buddhism, which essentially see the world and human suffering as products of thought and perception, and therefore focus on changing consciousness as the way to freedom. While Jainas recognize that lack of consciousness plays a key role in the problems of earthly existence, they also believe that those problems are constituted from physical realities that must be dealt with physically through practices such as penance and fasting.

We have already described the Jaina view of the eternal soul (*jiva*) and matter (*ajiva*) as enmeshed in a labyrinthine web that will never be untangled without concrete action. Because our entrapment is real in a physical sense—not just an illusory state that can be dispelled through clearer thinking—our enlightenment hinges as much on our practice as it does on our worldview. Good intentions, for Jainas, can never be enough; action must always be the foremost consideration. It is for this reason that renouncers follow an ascetic discipline designed to heighten their awareness of how they move their bodies in and through space—how they walk, sit, lie down, speak, hold items, collect alms, sleep, go to the toilet, etc. It is no exaggeration to say that the focus on practice is a defining feature of the Jaina path.

The elaborate edifice of Jaina practice aims to purify the soul of the *pudgala* that clings to it. By shedding obstructive karma, the soul becomes free to manifest its true nature, radiant and powerful. Practices are of two types: defensive and offensive. In the process known as *samvara*, defensive strategies, such as inculcating detachment and mindfulness, are used to impede the accumulation of new karma, while *nirjara* (purging) uses practices such as fasting, meditation, and various forms of physical discipline to "burn off" old karma.

The hallmarks of Jaina practice—ascetic discipline, dietary restrictions, fasting, ***samayika*** (state of equanimity), ***pratikramana*** (repentance of sins), *sallekhana* (fast to death), even Jina puja (worship of the Jinas)—are undertaken, by both renouncers and householders, with the aim of purification through the dual processes of *samvara* and *nirjara*. The main difference between the paths of the renouncer and the householder lies in the degree of purification they permit; the renouncer's life is structured by a series of vows (***mahavratas***) that make it nearly impossible for new karma to develop.

Because renouncers are largely shielded from the risk of accumulating new karma, they can

devote their time to whittling away the karmic load they carry. Householders, immersed as they are in worldly activities—working, raising families, preparing food—are awash in karmic influences. Nevertheless, they can limit the influx of negative karma (*paap*) through lay practices (***anuvratas***) such as fasting or limiting possessions, travel, cosmetics, and so on; many women in particular undertake these moderate exercises in restraint. What marks such activities as characteristically Jaina is that they all involve disengagement from the world. Even devotional activities (Jina puja, for example) that outwardly resemble Hindu forms of worship are interpreted by Jainas as practices that foster worldly detachment.

Ideally, the lives of Jainas, whether renouncers or householders, are governed by a series of vows (*mahavratas* and *anuvratas* respectively) that limit worldly engagement, discipline the body, and help the soul develop the tools it will need for its eventual liberation. Thus Jainism is unequivocally a *shramana* or renouncer tradition, even though the vast majority of Jainas at any given time have always been householders enthusiastically, and successfully, involved in worldly pursuits.

Jainism is a *shramana* tradition because its defining framework is thoroughly ascetic in character. It creates and moulds religious identity by asking the faithful to accept increasingly restrictive boundaries. The main difference between the *mahavratas* of the mendicants and the *anuvratas* of the householders is the degree to which the vows restrict worldly engagement.

Ascetic Practice

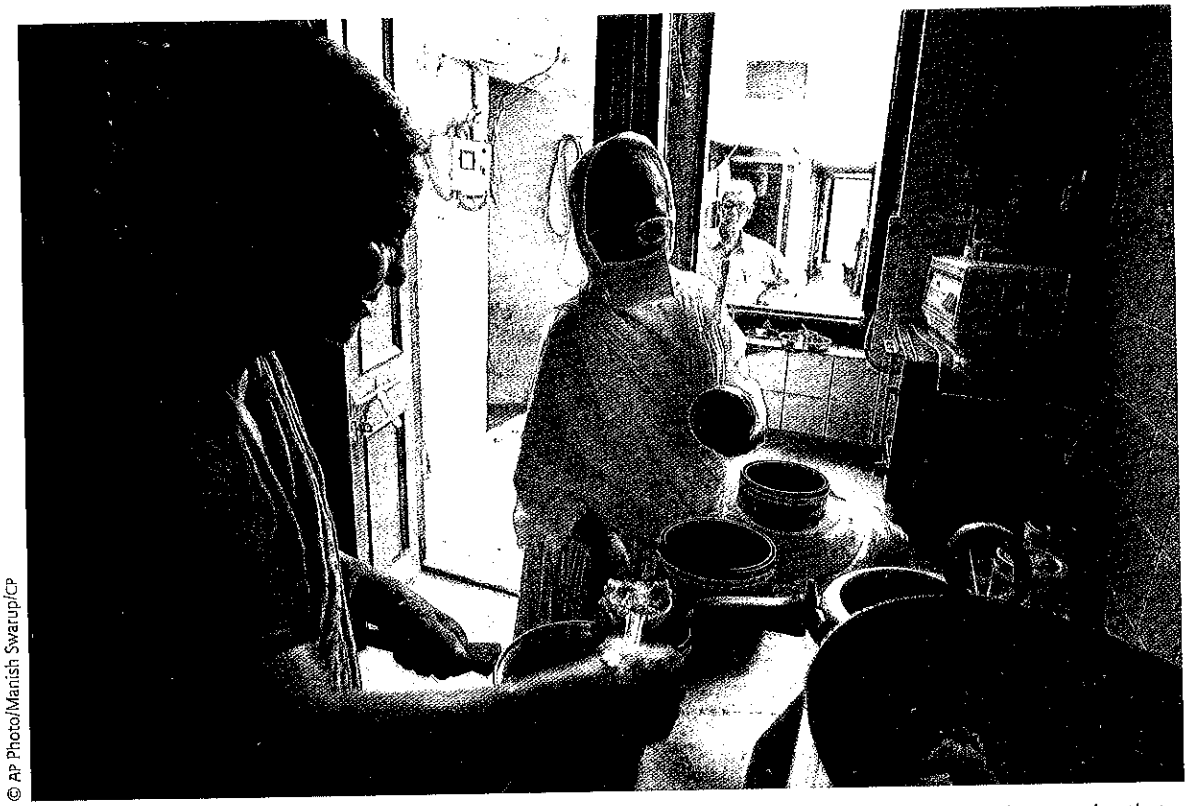
The *mahavratas* are five "great vows" accepted by everyone who takes up the life of a Jaina ascetic (*muni* or *sadhvi*): *ahimsa* (non-harm), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), and *aparigraha* (non-possession/non-attachment). It is said that Mahavira established celibacy as a separate vow, independent of the fourth vow of non-attachment under which it had been incorporated during the time of Parsavanath.

Although the discourse of renunciation refers often to the poetic image of the solitary wanderer, initiation into the renouncer path is very much a collective endeavour. Aspiring ascetics must first seek and receive permission from their families (or spouses), as well as from the leader of a mendicant order.

In addition, the ascetic orders impose certain restrictions themselves. Neither sect accepts individuals who are physically, emotionally, or mentally fragile. The renouncer path was not designed as a refuge for those on the margins of conventional society; it is an arduous path suitable only for the courageous, committed, and stalwart. It is for this reason that the Digambara sect continues to claim that women's physical and emotional natures make them unsuitable for the ascetic life. The female body's "femaleness"—determined as it is by karma—is seen as too great an impediment, making the already challenging life of mendicancy impossible. In other words, the renouncer path is to be undertaken only by those who have both the spiritual desire and the physical fortitude for a life of denial.

By drawing the self back from worldly concerns, the vows create the conditions in which its true vitality and force can be unveiled. The first vow (*ahimsa*) is the weightiest of the five; Jainas commonly say that it effectively encompasses all the others. In effect, *ahimsa* forbids all involvement with the world and ensures that no action is undertaken spontaneously, without restraint. Because the vow of *ahimsa* is total and unconditional in its application, renouncers must be concerned to cause no harm—through speech, action, or thought—even to "one-sensed" beings (invisible air-bodied beings, water, fire, earth) as well as plants, insects, animals, and fellow human beings. Avoiding harm to human beings and animals is easy compared to avoiding harm to water and air and other minute forms of life (all of which are equally endowed with an eternal soul); this is a monumental challenge and is the main reason behind the Jaina insistence on correct practice.

Munis and *sadhvis* are not permitted to prepare their own food, since even harvesting plants



A Jaina woman in New Delhi gives food to a nun. Such women are very conscious of the strict dietary rules that govern the renouncers' lives, and take care to ensure that all offerings have been rendered *ajiv* (without life).

or boiling water inevitably causes harm to living beings. Thus the ascetics depend entirely on the generosity of householders, and even so they must be vigilant to maintain their vow of *ahimsa*. They are permitted only a small portion of the householder's "leftovers"; they cannot accept food that has been prepared expressly for them, as this would implicate them in whatever violence that preparation entailed; and the food and water they receive in their alms bowls must already have been cooked, boiled, or peeled (in the case of fruits) to ensure that it is *ajiv* (without life).

It is critical to understand the rationale underpinning these practices. The path of renunciation is open to all, irrespective of caste, gender, or social position. But it is extremely demanding, and Jainas know that very few will ever be able to undertake it. The overwhelming majority who remain householders therefore accept, implicitly or explicitly, that a certain amount of violence will be a regular part of their lives. For these people, support for the renouncers is both a duty and an honour—with the additional benefit of earning them merit or good karma (*punya*). More important, it sustains a system in which the ideal of living without doing harm remains a genuine possibility for anyone with the requisite strength of character.

The *mahavrata* of *ahimsa* prohibits outright many aspects of the renouncers' former householder lives, and no aspect of embodied existence escapes the framework of restraint: eating, talking, sleeping, walking, defecating, urinating, thinking, even dreaming—all must be disciplined in non-harm. Renouncers must not walk on grass, for to

Document

From the Acaranga Sutra on Good Conduct

He who injures these (earth bodies) does not comprehend and renounce the sinful acts; he who does not injure these, comprehends and renounces the sinful acts. Knowing them, a wise man should not act sinfully towards the earth, nor cause others to act so, nor allow others to act so. He who knows these causes of sin relating to earth, is called a reward-knowing sage. Thus I say (Jacobi 1884: 10–11).

. . . the sage who walks the beaten track (to liberation), regards the world in a different way. "Knowing thus (the nature of) acts in all regards, he does not kill," he controls himself, he is not overbearing.

Comprehending that pleasure (and pain) are individual, advising kindness, he will not engage in any work in the whole world: keeping before him the one (great aim, liberation), and not turning aside, "living humbly, unattached to any creature." The rich in (control) who with a mind endowed with all penetration (recognizes) that a bad deed should not be done, will not go after it. What you acknowledge as righteousness, that you acknowledge as sagedom . . . ; what you acknowledge as sagedom, that you acknowledge as righteousness. It is inconsistent with weak, sinning, sensual, ill-conducted house-inhabiting men. "A sage, acquiring sagedom, should subdue his body." "The heroes who look at everything with indifference, use mean and rough (food, &c.)." Such a man is said to have crossed the flood (of life), to be a sage, to have passed over (the samsara) to be liberated, to have ceased (from acts). Thus I say (Jacobi 1884: 46–7).

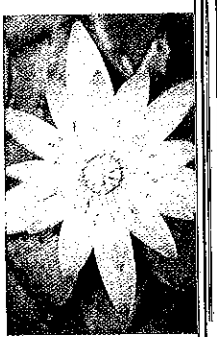
do so would cause it harm; they must look carefully wherever they step to be sure they do not harm anything on the ground; they are forbidden from using electricity and flush toilets (which cause harm to fire-bodied and water-bodied beings respectively); and their minds are subject to continuous self-censure as they try to eliminate anger, jealousy, greed, and desire. Negative or aggressive thoughts are believed to accrue bad karma (*paap*) in much the same way that stepping on an insect would. The restrictions on speech, body, and thought contained within the principle vow of *ahimsa* are potentially limitless.

The subsidiary vows of non-attachment, truthfulness, non-stealing, and celibacy reinforce and enlarge the vow of *ahimsa*. The vows of truthfulness and non-stealing forbid false speech and the use of anything that has not been freely given. *Brahmacharya* is more than a vow of celibacy: it is a vow to renounce all desire. Even dreams of a "carnal"

Focus

The Mahavratas

1. Non-violence (*ahimsa*)
2. Truth (*satya*)
3. Non-stealing (*asteya*)
4. Chastity (*brahmacharya*)
5. Non-possession/non-attachment (*aparigraha*)



nature have the power to attract karma, and therefore require penance. The vow of *aparigraha* entails the renunciation not only of all possessions (home, clothing, money, etc.) but of all attachments, whether to places, people, things—or even dogmatic ideas.

In addition to the *mahavratas*, which specify actions to be avoided, there are six "obligatory actions" that renouncers are required to perform, some of which will be discussed in detail below. In brief, they are equanimity (*samayika*), praise to the Jinas (Jina puja), homage to one's teachers (*vandana*), repentance (*pratikramana*), body-abandonment (*kayotsarga*), and, finally, the more general pledge to renounce all transgressions (*pratyakhyana*).

Taken together, the *mahavratas* and obligatory actions can appear overwhelming. But it is important to bear in mind that the constraints they impose are not seen as barriers to freedom. Rather, they are understood as catalysts to self-realization, the means to the sublime state of unconditional freedom, permanent bliss, and omniscience. Furthermore, each step along the way to self-realization is believed to bring benefits for the community as well as the individual. For Jainas, the renouncers embody a spiritual power that can work miracles—though of course they are not supposed to use their powers for "worldly" purposes.

The path to the very highest levels of self-realization has 14 stages (***gunasthanas***). Householders rarely rise above the fifth step, and must fully renounce worldly life if they wish to go beyond it. Nevertheless, the householder path offers considerable opportunities for spiritual progress as well.

Householder Practice

The *anuvratas* are the "small (or lesser) vows" that govern lay life and are normally taken without any formal ceremony. Modelled on the mendicant's *mahavratas*, they reflect the same aspiration to limit worldly engagement. They are identical in name and number to the *mahavratas*, but are interpreted and applied more leniently.

For instance, the *ahimsa anuvrata* is partial, not total. It prohibits the consumption of certain foods, as well as eating after dark (when injury to insects is more likely). But it does not concern itself with one-sensed beings, accepting that harm to them is unavoidable for householders. The subsidiary vows work in a similar manner: truthfulness and non-stealing are emphasized in much the same way as in the *mahavratas*, but celibacy is redefined to mean chastity in marriage.

Similarly, the *anuvrata* of *aparigraha* does not require householders to live without possessions. Instead, it demands that they scrutinize their psychological attachment to their possessions.

The *anuvratas* are seen as establishing a compromise between worldly existence and spiritual progress. They do not interfere with the householder's ability to lead a "normal" existence. Quite the contrary: Jainas have long been among the wealthiest, most literate, and most accomplished communities in India. And from the Jaina perspective, there is a direct connection between their socio-economic success and their religious vows.

Reflection–Meditation

Whereas the *mahavratas* and *anuvratas* seek to discipline embodied activities, the practice of *samayika* seeks to halt them altogether. *Samayika* is a daily period of 48 minutes reserved for meditation or reflection, during which the practitioner seeks to leave the concerns of body behind and "dwell in the soul." Through the practice of *samayika*, the Jaina seeks a state of equanimity by striving to remain indifferent to attachments and aversions, sufferings and pleasures. In the absence of such ultimately meaningless distractions, the Self can experience and enjoy itself. Jainas believe that the practice of *samayika* offers a foretaste of the joyous state that final release will bring.

Fasting and Dietary Practices

Closely connected in intent with *samayika* is fasting, a practice so widespread among Jainas that it can be considered emblematic of the tradition. The word Jainas use for "fast" is ***upvas*** (literally, "to be near

the soul"); this term underscores their belief that in order to get close to the soul we must get away from the worldly demands of the body and ego. Like the daily practice of *samayika*, fasting facilitates withdrawal from worldly activities so as to focus on the soul. At the same time fasting is considered a highly effective means of eliminating karma.

Jainas are renowned for their fasts, which are legendarily long, frequent, and arduous. Laywomen, in particular, are celebrated for their heroic fasting, which is believed to benefit their families as well as themselves. The entire household gains social prestige from the pious acts that the women perform, and the auspicious karma created by fasting can bring karmic rewards for the family.

Jaina dietary restrictions are the culinary expression of a philosophy of non-attachment that is most forcefully expressed in the practice of *sallekhana*, the ritual fast that brings life to an end.

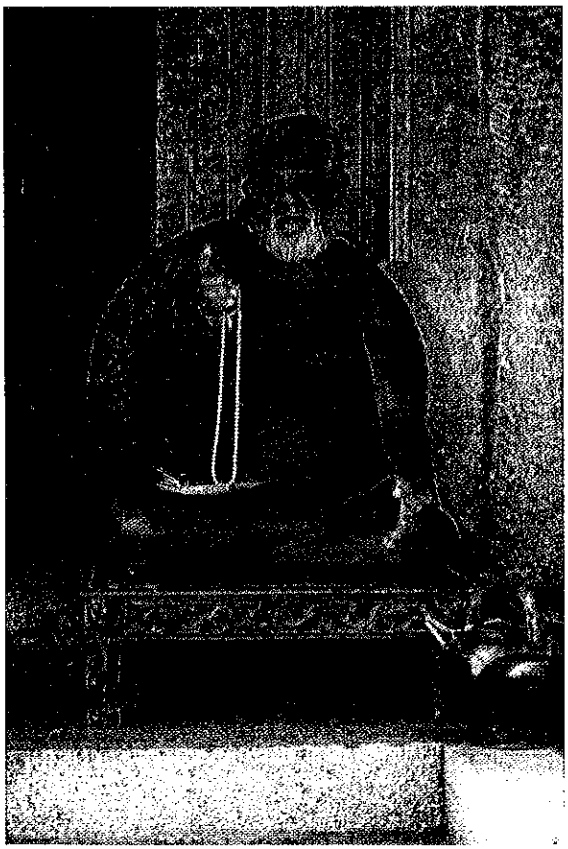
The Fast to Death

Jainas boast that whereas other traditions celebrate birth, they celebrate death. This statement is a powerful reminder that they trace their origins to the *shramana* tradition in which the highest goal was to escape embodied existence. A death that is "celebrated" is one that has been accepted voluntarily and with equanimity, indicating total detachment from the body and the world. We recall that the root of "Jainism" is the Sanskrit word *Jina*—the "one who has conquered" his ego, greed, and attachment to the world, even his body.

For Jainas the ideal death is voluntary, achieved through the ritual fast called *sallekhana*. Although *sallekhana* is not the universal practice, it is not uncommon even among householders. It is seen as a fitting and highly auspicious conclusion to a life dedicated to self-discipline and detachment. To be able to "discard the body" without pain or fear, and greet death with calmness and equanimity, is to reap the ultimate reward of a life lived in accordance with Jaina principles.

In addition, *sallekhana* is believed to be highly advantageous for the soul as it journeys forward. A dispassionate death results in a powerful expulsion of *paap* (bad karma) while attracting the *punya* (good karma) required to ensure a good rebirth either in a heavenly realm or in a spiritually advanced human state. Jainas believe that at the moment of physical death, the karma-saturated soul will be instantaneously propelled into a new incarnation, determined by its karma. (A soul free of all karma, instead of being reborn, would ascend to the realm of liberation, ***siddha loka***; but that is not possible in the current time cycle.)

If the Jaina ideal is detachment, a progressive withdrawal from life during life, then *sallekhana* becomes its logical conclusion. The title of an essay on the subject by James Laidlaw captures this idea beautifully: "A Life Worth Leaving" (2005). For



Digambara mendicant in prayer, fingering *mala* beads.

Jainas, *sallekhana* is the natural culmination of a life dedicated to the discipline of detachment from the world; it is the ultimate embodiment of Jaina values, paradoxically achieved through a kind of disembodiment. Whether or not they choose *sallekhana*, Jainas endeavour to accept the inevitability of death with self-control and serene detachment.

Jaina Astrology

Jaina astrology has received relatively little scholarly attention, but it is a subject of great interest in the community itself. The complex and unique ways in which Jainas use astrological charts is beyond the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the practice points to an aspect of Jainism that is easily overlooked, namely its recognition of the role that external forces play in the process of self-realization. We have seen that Jainas eschew any notion of a creator god, and—with no hope of divine assistance—emphasize self-reliance along the path to liberation. Under these circumstances it is essential to make use of all possible means. Astrology, as it turns out, is one means, especially useful for the insight it offers into the manipulation of karma for both spiritual and worldly benefit.

The Jaina interest in astrology is noteworthy for at least two reasons. First, it sheds light on the Jaina understanding of karma/*pudgala* as something with positive as well as negative aspects. Second, to the extent that astrology is a proactive art that seeks to pre-empt misfortune and take advantage of opportunity, it reminds us that Jaina renunciation is not a matter of flight from the world but rather of a resolute fight to overcome it.

Jina Worship

The objects of Jaina worship are the 24 perfected beings known as the Jinas. Temples are constructed to house icons of them, pilgrimages are made to places associated with them, and they are worshipped daily in prayer. Although four of the Jinas are especially revered (Mahavira, Parsavanath, Neminath, Rsabha), all receive regular devotions.

The main Jaina festivals celebrate events in the lives of the Jinas, as do the exquisite Jaina miniature paintings, while Jaina sculpture is devoted almost exclusively to portraits of the Jinas in meditation. Even among the Sthanakvasis and Terapanthis, who reject image worship, the Jinas are ubiquitous in narrative and prayer. Clearly, then, to be a Jaina is to be a worshipper of the Jinas.

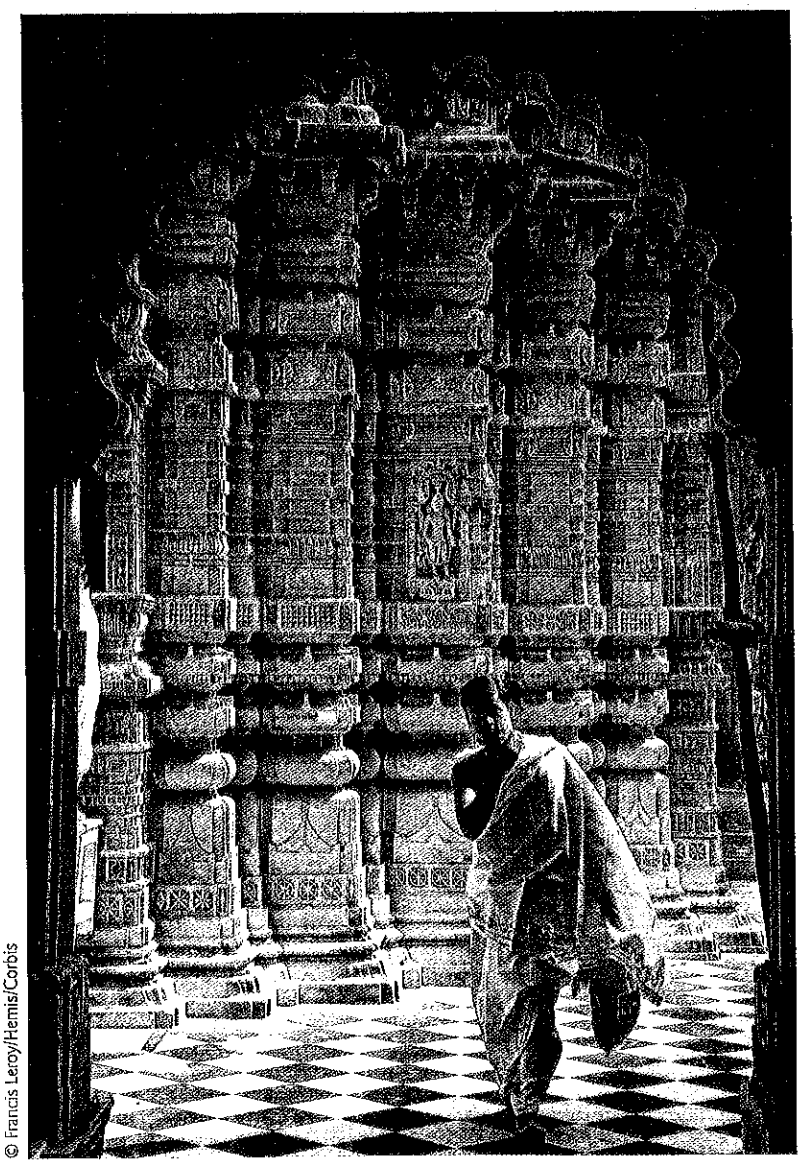
And yet the Jinas are profoundly absent. Having perfected themselves, they are indifferent to their worshippers, whose transient worldly concerns are literally "beneath them." The existence of a lively, emotional cult of devotion within a tradition centred on dispassionate renunciation of all attachments may seem paradoxical, but Jainas insist that the real purpose of devotion is self-transformation through surrender to the ideal that the Jina embodies.

The central prayer in Jainism, called the ***Namokar Mantra***, suggests how the devotional cult operates. The first part begins by proclaiming homage to the Jinas ("Namo Arihantanum"), then to all liberated beings ("Namo Siddhanum"), to *acharyas*, ("Namo Ayariyanam"), to religious leaders ("Namo Uwajayahanum"), and finally to all renouncers everywhere ("Namo loe savva sahunam"). The second part consists of the statement "This five-fold mantra destroys all sins and is the most powerful of all auspicious mantras." The words of the Namokar Mantra simply indicate praise, not supplication. The beings most revered (Jinas and *Siddhas*) are incapable of response, as they are in a state of liberation and therefore outside the world of give and take. Jains insist that they recite the mantra as a way of inculcating in themselves the ideals of detachment and non-violence that the praiseworthy represent. Nevertheless, they do not treat the recitation of the mantra as a purely symbolic gesture; instead they readily acknowledge its power to effect transformation. It is widely held that its sincere recitation can be extremely effective both as an apotropaic or protective mantra, as well as one that leads to the inflow of good merit. It is commonly recited before the start of an undertaking, whether a pilgrimage, a sermon, a ritual, school exam, or business endeavour. The Namokar Mantra is the supreme mantra

Sites

Palitana, Gujarat

Palitana in the western state of Gujarat, is famous for the magnificent complex of nearly 900 marble temples on Shatrunjaya hill. Constructed over hundreds of years, beginning in the late tenth century, the complex remains a major pilgrimage centre.



A lay Jaina worshipping at Palitana adopts the attire of an ascetic for the duration of the *puja*.

Table 4.1 The Ṇamōkāra Mantra

Ṇamō arihantāṇaṁ	I bow to the arihants (Jinas).
Ṇamō siddhāṇaṁ	I bow to the siddhas (liberated souls).
Ṇamō āyariyāṇaṁ	I bow to the acharyas (mendicant leaders).
Ṇamō uvajjhāyāṇaṁ	I bow to the mendicant teachers.
Ṇamō lōē savva sāhūṇaṁ	I bow to all mendicants everywhere.
Ēsōpaṁcaṇamōkkārō, savvapāvappaṇāsaṇō Maṅgalā ṇaṁ ca savvēsiṁ, paḍamama havaī maṅgalaṁ	This five-fold mantra destroys all sins and obstacles and of all auspicious mantras, is the first and foremost one.

within Jainism, equally revered among Svetambara and Digambara Jainas. Like so many prayers the world over, it is also often put to music and collectively chanted. But it can also be recited privately and silently, at any time of the day.

Terapanthis and Sthanakvasis are uncomfortable with the quasi-miraculous language of the latter section of the mantra (beginning with "This five-fold mantra . . .") and therefore omit it. But most Jainas consider it an integral part of the prayer.

Document

The Sakra Stava (Hymn of Indra)

"Sakra" is an alternative name for the god Indra. This hymn, in which the god praises the Jinas, is recited by observant Jainas.

[Indra, the god of the celestial one, spoke thus]:

"My obeisance to my Lords, the Arhats, the prime ones, the Tirthankaras, the enlightened ones, the best of men, the lions among men, the exalted elephants among men, lotus among men.

Transcending the world they rule the world, think of the well-being of the world.

Illuminating all, they dispel fear, bestow vision, show the path, give shelter, life, enlightenment.

Obeisance to the bestowers of *dharma*, the teachers of *dharma*, the leaders of *dharma*, the charioteers of *dharma*, the monarchs of the four regions of *dharma*,

To them, who have uncovered the veil and have found unerring knowledge and vision, the islands in the ocean, the shelter, the goal, the support.

Obeisance to the Jinas—the victors—who have reached the goal and who help others reach it.

The enlightened ones, the free ones, who bestow freedom, the Jinas victorious over fear, who have known all and can reveal all, who have reached that supreme state which is unimpeded, eternal, cosmic and beatific, which is beyond disease and destruction, where the cycle of birth ceases; the goal, the fulfillment,

My obeisance to the *Sramana Bhagvan Mahavira*

The initiator, the ultimate Tirthankara, who has come to fulfill the promise of earlier Tirthankaras.

I bow to him who is there—in Devananda's womb from here—my place in heaven.

May he take cognizance of me."

With these words, Indra paid his homage to *Sramana Bhagvan Mahavira* and, facing east, resumed his seat on the throne (*Kalpa Sutra* 2; Lath 1984: 29–33).

Puja assists the devotee in two ways, helping him or her along the path of self-realization and at the same time bringing "worldly" benefits. The beneficent power of good karma (*punya*), earned through devotional practice, makes a reciprocal relationship with a god unnecessary (see Cort 2001). It's important to add here that even though the Jaina devotional cult operates within its own non-theistic framework, Jainas also venerate gods and goddesses who are believed to reside in heavenly realms. These divinities (e.g., Padmavati, the female guardian deity of Parsavanath, or the Hindu god Ganesha) *are* capable of interceding on behalf of their followers. Jainas worship and pray to them for assistance in worldly matters, but not for assistance along the path of liberation.

Expressive Dimensions

The Jaina community is rich in cultural expression, with celebrated temples, festivals, art, and literature, as well as active philanthropy. How can a tradition dedicated to renunciation have such a robust culture? Before we look at the most significant examples of Jaina cultural expression, it's worth considering how it is that Jainas have such a solid presence in the world, despite their ethos of withdrawal from mundane temporal concerns.

Although Jainas maintain that the path to freedom is one of restraint and withdrawal, this is not a forcefully normative message: from the Jaina perspective it simply reflects a sober assessment of the way the world works. To be a "good" Jaina does not require adoption of a mendicant's life, though this is unequivocally the ideal. The tradition accommodates varying degrees of renunciation, and overtly recognizes human shortcomings in this regard.

Each living being is a bundle of karmic proclivities that compel us to engage with the external world. Only human beings are capable of taming these proclivities; yet very few of us even recognize their presence, let alone seek to eradicate them. Jainas use the epithet "Maharaja" ("Great King" or "Great Ruler") for those who try (the renouncers). The best that most of us can aim for is to control our inclinations by living our lives in a framework of *samyak darshan* ("correct faith"). To lead the life of a disciplined householder is perfectly respectable, as long as it is done in the context of *samyak darshan.*

What ignites the spark of spiritual awareness depends on the individual. For some it may be a powerful artistic experience; for others it may be a philosophical tract, or participation in a public festival. Therefore all cultural expressions that inculcate *samyak darshan* are valued. Building a temple, creating a work of art, taking part in a festival—all help to bring a community together in celebration of shared Jaina values. The tenth-century Digambara *acharya* Nemicandra praised "the great monks and *acharyas* who have established the celebration of festivals . . . due to which even the downtrodden and condemned people become religious" (cited in Jain 2008).

Music, art, temple architecture, festivals, and rituals are all vehicles for celebration of the tradition. Their ultimate purpose, writes Shugan C. Jain, is to "take followers away from worldly pleasures and bring them back to the path of spiritual purification" (2008).

Festivals

The Jaina ritual calendar revolves around three major festivals, with many minor ones in between. The three are Divali, which coincides with the start of the New Year in November–December; **Mahavira Jayanti** in spring; and, most important, Paryushana/Daslakshana, in August–September.

Although it is common to think of Divali as a Hindu or even pan-Indian festival of light, many Jainas believe it began as a Jaina commemoration of the *moksha* of Mahavira. For Jainas, the "light" that Divali celebrates is the light of omniscience. While Hindus celebrate the defeat of the evil King Ravana and the establishment of social and cosmic order with the return of Lord Rama, Jainas commemorate their Lord's transcendence of society and the cosmos altogether.

A devotee offers flowers at the Adinath Temple in Ranakpur, Rajasthan.

Even so, Jaina celebrations of Divali do not differ markedly from those of their Hindu neighbours. For example, because Divali coincides with the new year, the Hindu goddess of wealth, Sri Lakshmi, is enthusiastically worshipped by all. And because the festival marks the start of a new financial year, members of the business community (of which Jainas constitute an important segment) are especially fervent in showing their appreciation of the goddess. Of course, the ascetics are never too far away to remind the Jainas that the greatest wealth is *moksha* itself.

Mahavira Jayanti is a joyous festival held in the month of *caitra* (March–April). Celebrating the birth of Lord Mahavira, it is an occasion for great pageantry, with shops, streets, and temples all sumptuously decorated. Jainas enthusiastically undertake pilgrimages, listen to sermons, sing devotional hymns, and take part in pujas as well as ritual re-enactments of the wondrous events associated with Mahavira's birth. Ritual actors in heavenly costume play the roles of the adoring gods and goddesses, who descend from the heavens to pay the baby homage and carry him to the mythical Mount Meru, where he is ceremoniously given his first bath and his name.

The most important of all Jaina festivals, however, is Paryushana/Daslakshana (the Svetambara and Digambara names for the festival, respectively). This festival is celebrated at the end of the summer rainy season—a four-month period of such lush fecundity that renouncers are forbidden to travel during it, lest they cause unnecessary violence to the innumerable sentient beings that the rains bring to life.

The literal meaning of Paryushana is "abiding together"—a reference to the sustained interaction that takes place between householders and renouncers during the summer. Obliged to stay in one place, the renouncers must seek alms from the same local householders for several months, and the latter take advantage of this daily contact to seek the renouncers' advice on spiritual and worldly issues of all kinds. Paryushana comes at a time of transition in the annual calendar, marking the end of the rains and the resumption of the renouncers' peripatetic rounds. It is the climax of a period of heightened religiosity. The end of the eight-day festival, called Samvatsari Pratikraman, is a day of introspection, confession of sins, and fasting. The penultimate day is celebrated as the Day of Forgiveness (Kshamavani), when Jainas seek to wipe the slate clean with one another and with the world itself by asking and offering forgiveness for all, and by reciting the prayer *Micchami Dukkadam*:

> We forgive all living beings
> We seek pardon from all living beings
> We are friendly towards all living beings,
> And we seek enmity with none.

Almost all Jaina cultural expressions (art, ritual, iconography) are tied in one way or another to the Five Auspicious Events (*Panch Kalyanaka*) in the lives of the Jinas: conception, birth, renunciation, omniscience, and *moksha*. These five paradigmatic events are universally celebrated and powerfully inform the Jaina religious imagination. They are vividly represented in sculptures and miniature paintings, re-enacted in theatre and ritual, and devotedly described in narrative—most famously in the ancient *Kalpa Sutra* text. They are also closely associated with pilgrimages, since every *tirtha* (site of devotion) is linked with one or more of them.

The centrality of the Jinas in the cultural expressions of Jainism—in its rituals and iconography, and as an ethical archetype—is overwhelming. Ultimately, however, Jainism insists that the Jinas are irrelevant: self-realization is not dependent on them, and since the Jinas have by definition passed out of this world into a state of liberation, any connection they might have had with life in this world is radically absent. Clearly, the Jina is not central to Jaina metaphysics in the way that God is central in theistic traditions. Nevertheless, the Jina is the bedrock on which the Jaina imagination has developed and around which Jaina devotional life revolves.

Jainas Among Others

Because Jainas have never made up more than a small proportion of the communities they live in, a capacity for effective interaction with non-Jainas has been essential. Jainas themselves credit their adaptive success to their commitment to *ahimsa*: non-violence in thought, speech, and deed makes for easy friendship. Another factor encouraging broad-mindedness and compromise is the doctrine of *anekantavada*: literally meaning "not one-sided," it teaches that all human truth claims are partial and context-bound, and that intolerance is the product of confusing partiality with truth.

Of course Jainism is not a relativist epistemology. It unequivocally affirms the existence of Truth, as well as its ultimate attainability, but argues that among those who have not reached enlightenment, no one can claim more than partial understanding. This perspective may very well foster—as Jainas claim it does—a general attitude of tolerance towards difference.

We have seen how Jainism's ethical principles—the restrictions it places on dietary practices, livelihoods, and so on—serve as "fences" to keep the violence of worldly life at bay. Socially, however, Jainism has never erected fences to ensure religious purity. To insist on exclusion would likely have doomed a community so small and vulnerable. Instead, Jainas seek the closest possible integration with their neighbours, adopting local languages and customs while safeguarding their fundamental practices and beliefs.

According to Padmanabh Jaini, a prominent scholar of Jainism and Buddhism, the Jaina *acharyas* were prescient when they recommended "cautious integration" with neighbouring peoples and practices. Well aware of the risk of assimilation into Hindu culture, they also recognized the necessity of forging close social and economic ties with non-Jainas.

Perhaps because of its individualist ontology, emphasizing the solitary nature of the soul, Jainism is not inclined to question the "authenticity" of its followers. So, for instance, Jainas rarely debate who is and who is not a "true" Jaina. This is not necessarily the case with the question of "true" Jaina practices, however. The absorption of Hindu influences into Jainism (e.g., theistic elements, ritual practices) has gone on for a long time, and for most Jainas it has not been a cause for anxiety. This situation may be changing somewhat today. In the current climate of religious revival, as the symbolic boundaries between traditions are hardening, these issues appear to be taking on increasing significance.

Women

Renunciation—Jainism's most (perhaps only) truly venerated path—has been available to Jaina women and men alike. And since the time of Mahavira, the majority of those who have responded to its call have been women. This is highly unusual in the

Nuns descend the steps of the major Jaina temple complex and pilgrimage site of Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat.

South Asian context, where asceticism has been, and remains, forcefully associated with maleness.

Women played a central role in Jaina asceticism from the beginning, embodying its most venerable ideals. In so doing, they repudiated the "feminine" obligations of wife- and motherhood. Nuns' writings became part of the philosophical tradition, and their roles were recognized in the narrative literature. Furthermore, most rules of ascetic discipline were applied to nuns in much the same way as they were to monks.

Nevertheless, women at no time came near a position of equality with men. Although women scholar-ascetics are known, they are few in number. Furthermore, religious narratives often contain ambivalent messages, extolling women for their piety and chastity, but condemning them as capricious and sexually predatory. While women were permitted to renounce marriage and motherhood for spiritual advancement, those belonging to the Digambara tradition are still not allowed to take the full vows of ascetic initiation. Furthermore, Digambaras hold that *moksha* is not achievable from within a female body. Svetambaras part company with the Digambara sect here, permitting women full entry into mendicancy and not considering the female body to be an obstacle to liberation. Yet even in the Svetambara sect, nuns are not equal in status to monks, and senior nuns are expected to demonstrate their ritually subordinate status through gestures of deference to junior monks.

Nonetheless, the numerical strength of nuns—a phenomenon that has endured from the time of Mahavira—may to some extent have offset the ideological bias in favour of monks. In the contemporary period, it means that nuns are a regular presence in Jain communities, serving as role models and teachers, and they are able to operate with

considerable autonomy. For instance, within the Terapanthi Svetambara order, the *pramukha* (female leader) has near-absolute control over the order of nuns. Although she remains formally subject to the ultimate authority of the *acharya* (male leader), she effectively governs nearly 600 nuns.

Despite the numbers, vigour, and symbolic importance of Jaina nuns, they constitute a tiny portion of the overall Jaina population. The vast majority of Jaina women (and men) choose a far more "worldly" life that includes family, career, and community. Monks and nuns may be the religious heroes of Jainism, but they are utterly dependent on lay women and men for their existence. In defining itself as a four-fold community, Jainism explicitly acknowledges this dependence, and hence the religious importance of the laity. Renouncers could not set themselves apart from the violence of worldly existence if it were not for the householders who shield them from it. Lay Jainas willingly act as buffers between renouncers and the world, enabling the heroic endeavours of the ascetics to bear fruit and in the process creating good karma for themselves. Importantly, it is mainly women who daily provide the necessities of life to mendicants of both sexes. This role is so significant that the entire Jaina infrastructure can be said to rest upon it.

It is only through the efforts of laywomen that the institution of mendicancy exists: they are the ones who grow or purchase the fruits and vegetables, who perform whatever preparation is necessary to make them acceptable as food (i.e., without life), and who follow the detailed rules that govern the offering. The sustenance they provide is the foundation that makes everything else possible: the tradition, the knowledge, the teachings, the experience, the living role models, and the ascetic ideal itself.

Recent Developments

Jainism—like many of the world's religious traditions—has been undergoing a profound revitalization over the last century. This renewal is expressing itself in many ways: a growth in Jaina educational institutions, the wide dissemination of Jaina publications (including sacred texts), the emergence of nationwide Jaina organizations, a rise in the numbers of mendicants, a revival of naked mendicancy in the Digambara sect, the birth of a strong and vocal diaspora Jainism, and the development of a more muscular political identity. All these changes have had the effect of creating a Jainism that is both more visible and more self-conscious, and whose followers are increasingly concerned to define what is (and what isn't) "correct" Jaina belief and practice.

Twentieth-Century Reform Movements

The roots of these changes can be traced to India's turbulent colonial period (1857–1947), which saw the rise of reform movements seeking to modernize the Jaina tradition and give it a greater national presence alongside its Hindu, Muslim, and Christian counterparts. Reformers worked to move Jainism away from the narrow socio-cultural and spiritual concerns of particular communities of adherents. From the perspective of the reformers, the Jainism of their day was deeply conservative and defensive, under the control of insular mendicants whose obsession with purity limited access to the tradition's scriptures and condemned Jaina teachings to public obscurity. The reformers launched a two-pronged attack: they sought to have Jainism recognized as an essential part of India's national cultural heritage, integrated into its secular educational institutions; and they fought to combat the prejudice against those institutions within their own communities, which feared that secular education would endanger Jaina spiritual goals (Flügel, 2005). Their successes were swift and momentous: within a century Jainas would be among the most educated communities in India (their literacy levels second only to those of the tiny Parsi community); their cultural achievements would be recognized as part of India's national heritage (symbolized by the

issuance of India's first "Jainism stamp" in 1935); and their scriptures would be widely accessible.

Jaina Identity

The decades since Indian independence (1947) have witnessed simultaneous efforts to define more clearly the boundaries of Jaina identity and to gain recognition of Jainism as a world religion with universal appeal. Although these endeavours might seem contradictory—one constrictive and introverted, the other expansive and extroverted—both are fundamental characteristics of Jainism today. Indeed, far from being peculiar to Jainism, the tension between those two poles is characteristic of identity politics in all world religions today.

Relationship with Hinduism

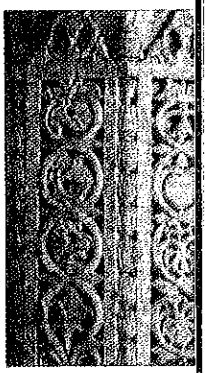
The effort to define Jaina identity took a more political turn in the second half of the twentieth century, focusing on the community's status as an explicit minority, distinct from and vulnerable to the overwhelmingly dominant Hindu majority. This was a new development, and must be seen as part of the trend towards pluralistic identity politics that can be seen in all of the world's religious and cultural traditions today. It is certain that the communities devoted to the teachings of the Jinas over the last 2,600 years have not understood and defined themselves in the same way. Being "a follower of the Jina" may or may not have been a significant marker of identity, and it was almost certainly not predicated on exclusion of non-Jaina ideas and practices. To the contrary, as was mentioned earlier, the Jaina community traditionally followed a strategy of "cautious integration" in its relations with cultural others. In recent decades, this strategy has become anachronistic for a sizeable number of Jainas. In an environment where Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh nationalisms find frequent and flamboyant public expression, Jainism's low-key strategy has been criticized as ineffective, insufficient to safeguard a robust identity. Reform-minded Jainas have gained momentum in their efforts to have Jainism recognized as an independent and historically discrete minority tradition in India. In particular, contemporary reformers demand recognition of fundamental differences between the two traditions: Jainas do not consider the Vedas to be sacred, for instance, nor do they believe in any creator God, and they reject the treatment of Jainism as a sect of Hinduism under Indian law.

On the other hand, the demand for minority status is by no means universally supported by Jainas themselves, and some Jaina organizations have spoken out against it. Stressing the overwhelming social fact of cultural integration (including marriage) between Jainas and Hindus, and the harmonious relations that have existed between the two groups throughout history, they see no reason to upset the status quo. Those who oppose recognition of the Jaina community as an official minority within India do not deny that differences of a theological or religious nature exist between Jainas and Hindus; however, they consider the social, cultural and ideological commonalities to supersede the differences.

Jainism Around the World

Far less divisive for the Jaina community have been contemporary efforts to establish Jainism as a world religion. The coexistence of expansive with constrictive tendencies is not unique to Jainism; it is characteristic of all contemporary traditions, being an expression of modernity itself. To be "modern" is to be simultaneously universal and distinctive; to be globally relevant and utterly singular. Interestingly, one factor that has bolstered both tendencies in Jainism has been the rise of the Jaina diaspora. There are now sizeable Jaina communities in England, the United States, and Canada that are forging their own understanding of what constitutes Jainism. The kind of Jainism that is taking root outside India—removed from the immediate influence of the mendicant tradition—is contributing to significant new developments.

Outside India, for example, the renunciatory ethos becomes harder to sustain, and seemingly

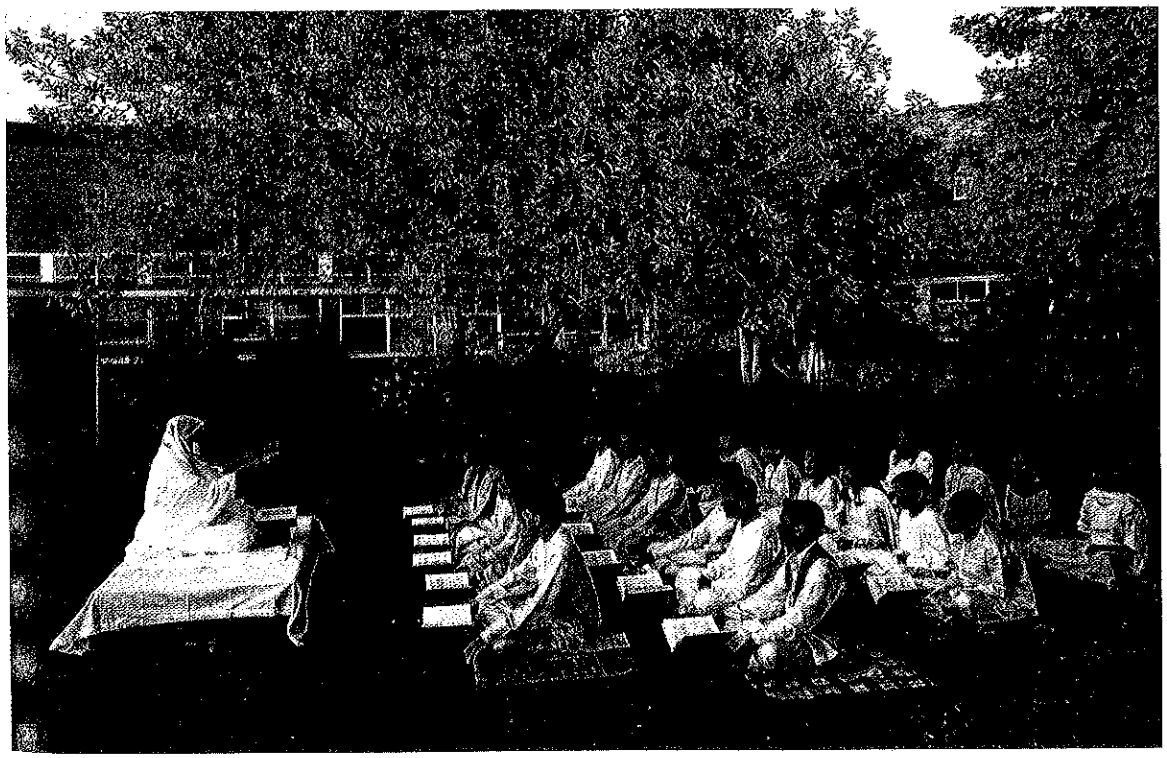


Sites

Jain Centre, Leicester, England

The Jain Centre in Leicester is the first such centre to be established outside India. In 1979, the community bought an old church and transformed it into a temple, importing intricately carved pillars as well as both Svetambara and Digambara Jina *murtis* (statues of the Tirthankaras) from India. The temple serves Jains of all sectarian affiliations.

less important for Jaina religious identity. Although Jainas everywhere retain their philosophical commitment to the *ahimsa* principle, in diaspora communities it is often expressed in the "worldly" terms of animal rights, ecological health, and societal improvement; aspirations to self-purification and world transcendence seem to be less common. A similar shift is occurring with respect to dietary practices, which are no longer inextricably tied to the ideology of renunciation; the connection with



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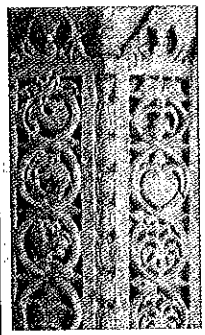
Very few Jain renouncers ever leave India, as most are not permitted to travel by any means other than foot. An exception is the Veerayatan order (established in 1973), which has relaxed many of the traditional rules in order to focus on social work. Here a Veerayatan sadhvi offers religious discourse to lay Jainas in the UK.



Sites

Jain Center of Greater Boston

The Jain Center of Greater Boston describes itself as "primarily a religious social non-profit organization." Established in 1973, it was the first such centre in North America. Eight years later the community inaugurated a temple that now serves more than 300 families.

the *ahimsa* principle remains close, however. What we seem to be witnessing is a redefinition of *ahimsa* and a de-coupling of the previously inseparable relationship between *ahimsa* and renunciation.

Diaspora Jainas are far less inclined to describe Jainism as an ascetic, renunciatory ideology than as one that is progressive, environmentally responsible, egalitarian, non-sectarian, and scientifically avant-garde. In the same way, the cosmological dimensions of Jainism have been eclipsed by its ethical dimensions. This shift marks Jainism's universalizing aspirations; its message of *ahimsa* as globally relevant establishes its credentials as a world religion.

Finally, Jainism's sectarian differences are less salient in the diaspora than in India, partly because the community's small numbers make them largely irrelevant. To identify oneself as "Jaina" is already to identify with a sub-category within the general category of "Indian," so for many (especially those of the second generation) additional identifiers carry little significance. The markers distinguishing the two Jaina sects may remain meaningful within families, but they carry little currency on the cultural or societal level. As a consequence, Jaina identity is increasingly emphasized, and this development in turn may play a role in the arena of identity politics in India.

Summary

This chapter has explored the historical roots of the Jaina path in ancient India, its flourishing over the past three millennia, and its emergence as a global tradition in the twentieth century. Its beginnings as a world-renouncing tradition have informed its social, cultural, and artistic development, so much so that even its tremendous worldly successes (in business and the professions) and its celebratory festivals are not without their renunciatory dimensions. Jainism communicates a message of restraint, detachment, and non-violence in all its expressions.

The Jaina community has undergone dramatic changes since the appearance of Mahavira on the historical scene more than 2,500 years ago, but the centrality of *ahimsa* as the tradition's defining principle has remained constant. Though variously understood, it remains the unquestioned foundation that underpins the many and varied expressions of Jainism that now exist, both in India and outside it. The resilience of Jaina teachings must be credited, at least in part, to their effectiveness; that they are now gaining the attention of many well beyond the borders of the Jaina community is testimony to their enduring relevance.

Sacred Texts

Religion (Sect)	Text(s)	Composition/ Compilation	Compilation/ Revision	Use
Jainism (Svetambara and Digambara)	Purva Agama	Ancient and timeless "universal truths" preached by all the Jinas, from the first (Rsabha) to the last (Mahavira). Communicated to disciples by Jina Mahavira and transmitted orally until the 3rd century BCE, when the verbatim recitation of teachings was no longer possible. Both Svetambara and Digambara accept that all the Purvas were eventually lost.	Reconstructed by monks mainly between the 5th and 11th centuries CE. Commentaries and narratives added by scholar-monks.	Object of study for metaphysics, cosmology, and philosophy
Jainism (Svetambara)	Anga Agama	The 12 Angas were compiled by the principal disciples of Mahavira. Svetambaras believe that the 12th Anga, called the Drstivada, contained the teachings of lost Purvas. All were transmitted orally until the 3rd century BCE (see above).	Reconstructed by monks mainly between the 5th and 11th centuries CE Commentaries and narratives were added by scholar-monks.	Object of study for rules of mendicant conduct, stories of renouncers, karma
Jainism (Svetambara)	Angabahya (believed to contain the lost teachings of the Purva and Anga Agamas)	Compiled and orally transmitted by monks who succeeded the principal disciples of Mahavira. Contained the earliest commentaries on the Purva and Anga.	Reconstructed by monks mainly between the 5th and 11th centuries CE. Commentaries and narratives were added by scholar-monks.	Object of study for specialized topics, story literature etc.
Jainism (Digambara)	Satkhandagama (contains parts of Drstivada canon, said to mnemonically contain the lost teachings of the Purva and Anga Agamas)	Orally transmitted until 2nd century CE, when it was put in writing; the first Jaina scripture to be preserved in written form.	No substantial revisions, though commentaries are common	Object of study for entire canon: metaphysics, cosmology, karma, and philosophy
Jainism (Digambara)	Kasayaprabhrta (text based on Drstivada)	Written by Yati Vrasabha based on compilations of Gunadhara, 1st–2nd century CE	No substantial revisions, though commentaries are common	Studied for philosophy of detachment

Continued

Sacred Texts (Continued)

Religion (Sect)	Text(s)	Composition/ Compilation	Compilation/ Revision	Use
Jainism (Digambara)	Nataktrayi (Samaysara, Pravanasara and Pancastikaya)	Written by Kundakunda between 1st century BCE and 2nd century CE	No substantial revisions, though commentaries are common	Object of study for mysticism, doctrine/ philosophy, and ontology; the most sacred Digambara author and texts
Jainism (Svetambara and Digambara)	Anuyogas ("Expositions")	From 1st century BCE to 6th century CE		Object of study for philosophy, etc.
Jainism (Svetambara and Digambara)	Tatthvartha Sutra	Written by Umasvati in 2nd century CE	Many commentaries were written by Svetambaras between the 2nd and 8th centuries CE, but the process of commenting continues.	Object of study for doctrine, cosmology, ethics, philosophy, etc.
Jainism (Svetambara and Digambara)	Bhaktamara Stotra	Written by Acharya Mantunga in 3rd century CE		Used in devotion
Jainism (Svetambara)	Kalpa Sutra (lives of the Jinas, especially Parshvanath and Mahavira, and doctrine)	3rd century CE		Used in devotion and ritually during Paryushana
Jainism (Digambara)	Adi Purana/Mahapurana	Written by Acharya Jinasena between 6th and 8th centuries CE		Object of study for life stories of Tirthankaras and all Digambara rituals

pratikramana Ritual practice of repentance.

punya Karmic particles of an auspicious nature ("good karma").

renunciation The Jaina ideal: the giving up of all worldly attachments (family, friends, wealth, pride etc.) in order to pursue the path of detachment and non-violence. Though a powerful ideal for all Jains, it is practised fully only by **mendicants**; also referred to as *shramanism*.

Rsabha The first Tirthankara of our current time cycle; also called Adinath.

sallekhana A ritual fast to death undertaken voluntarily, usually in old age or illness.

samayika A desired state of equanimity; ritual practice of meditation.

samsara The endless cycle of rebirth from which Jains seek release.

samyak darshan Right vision, faith, or intuition into the basic truth of the cosmos; spiritual growth depends on the attainment of *samyak darshan*.

shramana A renouncer; one who has given up worldly attachments to pursue spiritual release.

siddha loka Final abode of the liberated *jiva*.

Svetambara One of the two early sectarian nodes within Jainism; mendicants wear simple white robes.

Tatthvartha Sutra An important philosophical text accepted by all Jaina sects, composed by Umasvati in the second century CE.

Tirthankara Literally, "ford-maker"; epithet for the 24 Jinas who, through their teachings, created a ford across the ocean of ***samsara***.

upvas Literally, "to be near the soul"; a term used to denote ritual fasting.

Further Reading

Babb, Lawrence A. 1996. ***Absent Lord: Ascetics and Kings in a Jain Ritual Culture.*** **Berkeley: University of California Press.** A wonderful exploration of the place of worship in Jaina ritual culture.

Banks, Marcus. 1992. ***Organizing Jainism in India and England.*** **Oxford: Clarendon.** An ethnographic study of the historical, sociological, and cultural ties between the Jaina communities of Leicester, England, and Saurashtra, India.

Carrithers, Michael, and Caroline Humphrey, eds. 1991. ***The Assembly of Listeners: Jains in Society.*** **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.** An outstanding edited volume exploring sociological dimensions of the Jaina community by leading scholars in the field.

Cort, John E. 2001. ***Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India.*** **New York and Delhi: Oxford University Press.** A detailed and insightful ethnographic study of the religious lives of contemporary lay Jainas.

Dundas, Paul. 2002. ***The Jains.*** **2nd edn. London: Routledge.** A comprehensive overview of Jainism and an excellent introduction to the subject.

Jaini, Padmanabh S. 1979. ***The Jaina Path of Purification.*** **Berkeley: University of California Press.** The standard general study of Jainism.

Laidlaw, James. 1995. ***Riches and Renunciation: Religion, Economy, and Society among the Jains.*** **Oxford: Oxford University Press.** Explores the place of renunciation in the life of North India's thriving Jaina business community.

Recommended Websites

www.jaindharmonline.com

A portal dedicated to Jainism and Jaina dharma; it contains information and links to news articles.

www.jainstudies.org

The International Summer School for Jain Studies.

www.jainworld.com

Jainism Global Resource Center, USA.

http://pluralism.org/wrgb/traditions/jainism

Resources from Harvard University's Pluralism Project.