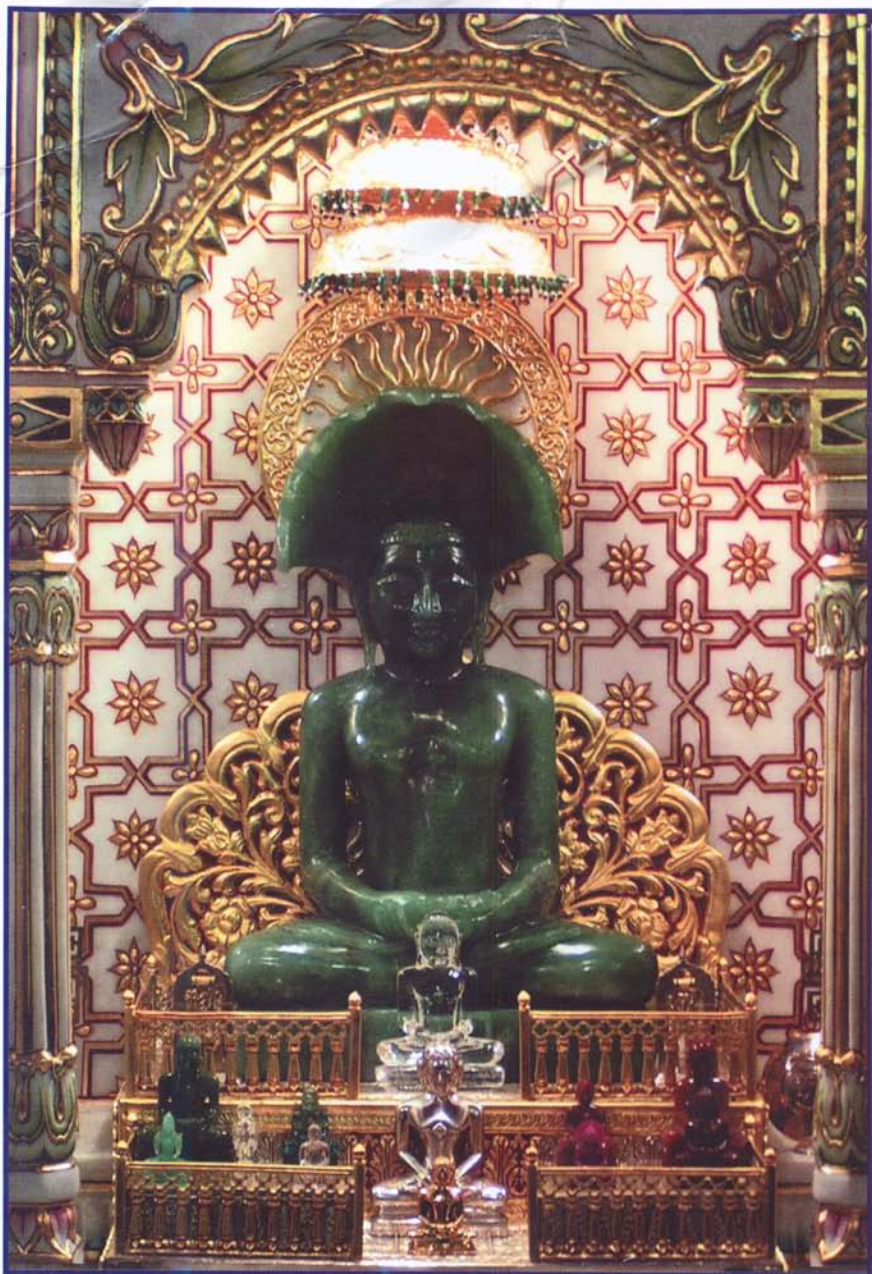


INTRODUCTION TO JAINISM



THIS BOOK

Jainism teaches a simple religious lifestyle of ethics and nonviolence, a path that everyone can follow. It denies a creative God, but confirms that every being is a god in its essence. Over many millennia the same doctrines have been given to humankind by 24 Great Teachers, the last of whom was Mahavira, who lived about 2500 years ago, and said, among other things:

The purpose of living beings is to help one another and

Everything we are is the result of our thoughts.

These statements succinctly express the essence of Jain philosophy. The path depicted in the Jains' teachings is designed to 'improve the soul through right insight, right knowledge and right conduct, so that the inflowing karmas are of the right type, or no more karmas attach themselves to the soul.

Their teachings on karma are very detailed, and distinguish 148 types of karmas with many subdivisions.

'The ultimate aim of the soul's pilgrimage through all the forms in space and time is fully conscious union with the soul's inherent qualities: infinite knowledge, infinite purity and infinite freedom within this universe.'

Jain biology comprises not only plants, animals, humans and minerals, but also invisible intelligent life-forms, which all fulfil their own functions in nature. In the chapter cosmology their relation becomes clear. Unique information and photography are given on Indus script and its interpretation in the last chapter on 'Art and Archaeology'.

(Cover Parshvanath Image Chulgiri, Jaipur)



INTRODUCTION TO JAINISM



A right view of reality, right knowledge
and right conduct form the path to
liberation.

(TS/SS 1.1)

Introduction to Jainism



Rudi Jansma
Sneh Rani Jain



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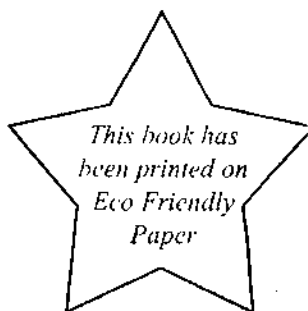
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**INTRODUCTION TO JAINISM/
RUDI JANSMA / SNEH RANI JAIN 2006**

Publisher's Note

Dr. Rudi Jansma is an eminent scholar. His study of Jainism is both extensive and deep. Indeed he has been devoted to this subject for almost two decades. His understanding of this religion found expression in his book *Jainisme - Een introductie* in the Dutch language. In fact this was the first book ever written or published on Jainism in The Netherlands. He has revised and enlarged the original book and translated it into English.

The book is comprehensive and deals with various aspects of Jainism. After an introductory chapter on "Who are the Jains?" he has a chapter on Jain history from the Jains' own point of view. He has also devoted a chapter to "Ahimsā" or nonviolence or non-killing on the passive side, and reverence for life on the positive one. Ahimsā is the heart of Jainism. This concept is applicable to humans as well as all other sentient beings including plant life and the earth. It is to the credit of Jainism that the preservation of all life forms has been dealt with in such minute detail. He has quoted from Ācāranga, the first canon of Jains, comparing a man to a plant. According to this canon, which was composed about 2550 years ago, a plant, like a man, also has consciousness and perception. This is remarkable, as science established this fact hardly a hundred years ago. Indeed this canon contains the first formal and detailed proclamation on the environment, which is beyond comparison. The other feature of

Ahimsā highlighted by him is the practical, active compassion inherent in the fundamental philosophy and ethical practice of Jainism. He also makes a reference to Gandhi as a modern apostle of Ahimsā.

He deals with the delicacies of the Jain doctrine of Karma in chapter four. According to him there is no approach in the world of philosophy that can be compared with the scientific and systematic analysis of Karma in Jainism. He also says that the theory of Karma in Jainism is not tantamount to fatalism. In fact it is a simple theory of sowing and reaping.

Dr. Rudi Jansma is a formal scholar of ecology. His other book, *Global Philosophical and Ecological Concepts*, is a magnum opus on ecology and evolution. It is in print. His extensive knowledge of this subject is reflected in his chapter on “Millennia before Darwins”. In this he states that Jainism has indeed the ingredients for a doctrine of evolution that is more profound than the theory of evolution propounded by Darwin.

In his chapter on “Cosmos” he explains that ecology from a Jain perspective encompasses not only the visible world of living beings, but also large categories of invisible forces and intelligences which play an active role in the overall ecology. He has also devoted a chapter to the fourteen-rung ladder of spiritual evolution or liberation.

In chapter eight, “Seeing a holy life in practice,” the author gives his personal account of his travels to Jain religious sites, and his stay amongst the Jain monks in Central and South India. He was greatly impressed by their commitment and purity of life.

Dr. S. Rani Jain, an erudite scholar and practitioner of Jainism, has written two chapters of this book. One is on “Yoga and meditation.” This chapter gives the theory as well as her personal practice of yoga and meditation. Her chapter on “Art and archeology” gives information about her views on the Indus Valley civilization; she uses the expression “Indus civilization” because the culture was indeed extant in the South of India as well as other parts of the country. She also claims that she can decipher the script of this civilization within the framework of Jainism.

Prakrit Bharati Academy is indebted to both Dr. Rudi Jansma and Dr. Sneh Rani Jain for this excellent exposition of Jainism, particularly for the western audience.

D. R. Mehta
Founder and Chief Patron
Prakrit Bharti Academy, Jaipur

*Right view may surface spontaneously,
or through learning.*

(TS/SS 1.3)

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Knowledge can be empirical: based on authority of those who are enlightened; on intuitive insight and genuine clairvoyance; on intellectual reasoning; and on perfect, pure, illusion-free omniscience.

(cf. TS/SS 1.9)

Preface

The Jains are a small group of people who have hardly spread outside the borders of India. Outside India, few have even heard of them, even in circles of western intellectuals and “New Age” people. Even in the English language very little can be found about them, and then mostly in the form of publications which do not appeal to the general public.¹ The purpose of this book is to make this beautiful religion and philosophy more widely known.

During my research into Jainism, and later, when writing this book, I have been greatly supported by Jains from all levels of society, among them leaders of organizations, educationalists, monks, nuns and lay people. My first encounter with Jainism was when I saw a television documentary by Prof. P.S. Jaini of the University of California in Berkeley, which inspired me to meet Prof. Jaini in person. Other early sources of inspiration were articles in *Sunrise*, the magazine of the Theosophical Society in Pasadena (California). In the initial phases I was especially inspired by Prof. M.D. Vasantharaj of Madras University, who granted me many interviews which were all recorded on audiotape and many others to whom I have been able to speak in and around Madras (now Chennai). In the North of India I owe much to the (Śvetāmbara) Jain philosopher Dr. Sohan Lal Gandhi. We have known each other for quite a few years, but since I took up residence in Jaipur, Rajasthan, where he also lives, he has supported me philosophically as well as practically. And I owe very much to Dr. Sneha Rani Jain from Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, a (Digāmbara) Jain Brahmāchārīnī (“aspirant nun”), whom I did not meet until I had already begun writing this book. She took me on a pilgrimage-cum-archeological research trip to a series of

sacred places in Central and South India. I owe it to her, and therefore indirectly to her guru Śrī Vidhyāsagarji Mahārāja, that I was able to go beyond the field of theory and become intensively acquainted with the life of Jain spiritual people in practice. Thanks to her and her friends I have been able to visit and take photographs in locations to which outsiders are not normally admitted. I mostly have her, and the monks with whom she brought me into contact, to thank for the information, including photos, in this book which can not be found in any existing literature. This applies especially to subjects concerning archeology, art, yoga, and meditation. On these subjects she wrote chapters 7 and 10 for this book. I also wish to thank all those who have read and commented on my English translation of the text originally written in Dutch, notably Dr. S.L. Gandhi, Dr. S.R. Jain, Dr. Kusum Jain of Rajasthan University, Mr. Surendra Bothra of the Prakrit Bharati Academy, and Mr. D.R. Mehta, Founder and Chief Patron of the same institution. Mr. Bothra kindly provided the section "Jainism and environment" in chapter 3 (Ahimsā). And last but not least I thank David Pratt for reading and correcting my English. I am indebted to Mr. Mehta for the publication of this book in English.

The helpfulness and hospitality I received from the Indians were like an inexhaustible ocean.

- Rudi Jansma, Jaipur, 21 March 2006

¹ Very worth reading is, for example: P.S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1979; A thorough and very clear study of Jainism is by Helmuth von Glasenapp: *Jainism, an Indian Religion of Salvation*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi 1999 (German original 1925); *That Which Is Tattvārtha Sūtra; Classical Jain Manual for Understanding the True Nature of Reality*, of Umāsvāti (Tatia, Nathmal, transl.) HarperCollins Publishers, London etc., 1994; Another translation of the *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra*, or its Digambara counterpart, the *Sarvārthasiddhi*, has been published in India by Pūjyapāda Devanandi, Bharatiya Jnanapitha, Delhi, 1989 (4th ed.) For all Jains this is one of the most important texts (sometimes referred to as "the Jain Bible") in which the cosmological, biological and karmic doctrines are given in all their detail. See lists of English literature on the internet, e.g. <http://www.jainworld.com/jainbooks/jainbooks.htm>

INTRODUCTION TO JAINISM

Between death and rebirth, karmic vibration only remains with the soul, due to which all other things (subtle and gross atoms) will be attracted.

(cf. TS 2.26/SS2.25)

1

Who are the Jains?

Parasparopagraho jivanam

The function of living beings is to help each other

Jains are people who adhere to a religion of non-violence, known as Jainism. The word Jain is derived from *Jina*, which means “conqueror.” Conqueror, not in the worldly sense of kings and armies, but in the inner sense of conquering *oneself*, i.e. the animal, emotional, and mental nature of man in so far as these are directed towards the evanescent, the personal, and merit or gain for oneself alone. The temporary things of the world do not belong to the eternal, and therefore the happiness and joy of the world can never be eternal. Moreover, because our thoughts and emotions are often not pure – i.e. not in harmony with what the depths of our soul tries to convey to us repeatedly we create new causes which lead to consequences which our consciousness experiences as unpleasant – because that is the method which ensouled nature applies in order to teach us and correct us. The Jains yearn for simplicity and happiness for each and every living being, and as a result of this they themselves receive an ever larger portion of happiness.

Today they comprise no more than a small section of the Indian population – some 7.5 million people perhaps – and that is almost nothing in a country in which more than a billion souls are currently incarnate. Only a very small

number of them – perhaps some 70,000 – live outside India, mainly in England and the United States. The reason that they have spread so little, even in the countries surrounding India (though in the past they were probably abundant in Kampuchea, Thailand, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries), is their humble and non-violent way of life. Traditionally the Jains used to walk barefoot only, and made no use of vehicles which could do harm to living beings. Nowadays Jains live scattered all over India in villages and cities. Most of them can be found in Rajasthan and Gujarat, where one can also find their most lavishly adorned temples, and in South India.

The Jains are small in number, but they have often occupied, and still occupy respected positions in society. Their degree of literacy (almost 100 %) and higher education is far above average. In a spiritual sense the conquest of the self can be thousands of times greater than that of a huge armed host in the material sense. An army may gain land, force human souls to leave their bodies or destroy their freedom or rightful destiny, but spiritual conquest means ennobling the soul, or rather, to put it in Jain terms, more unlimited shining forth of the noble qualities of the soul. These qualities are first of all unlimited knowledge and wisdom, compassion and love; because these are the true characteristics of man and in fact every living being, which can however be obscured by our own illusions and their pursuit. That a noble soul can be stronger than an army was proven in practice by Mahātmā Gandhi, who, though not himself a Jain exercised great sympathy for the principle of non-violence. Gandhi had for some time (prior his early death at the age of 33) a Jain spiritual mentor, Śrīmad Rajchandra, whom he regarded as one of the three persons in his life who had been instrumental in molding his ideas. Also many others in different cultures followed, though they may never have heard about Jainism, a consistent ethic of inner and outer nonviolence with like results.

All true Jains are vegetarians, and none of them will ever purposely harm a living being. This means that there are quite a few professions they can not practice. Obviously one will not find butchers among Jains. As a result of their ethics most Jains opt for the “clean” professions, such as (honest) trade (textiles, jewels, precious stones), or jobs in the intellectual sectors of society. They may be lawyers, medical practitioners, vets and scientists. Many of the rich ones have founded charitable institutions such as hospitals, animal care centers, centers for the disabled, libraries, educational institutions, and – last but not least – temples for the uplifting of the human soul. Yet it is a misconception that they would not practice agriculture as well as commerce. Even warfare is not alien to Jains. Rishabha himself was a teacher in the use of weaponry, and therefore one may find Jains in high positions in the army. Such was the case for example during the Vijanagar Empire (1366-1565). Before I learned this I was shocked to see fighting Jains carved in the outer temple walls of Halebid in Karnataka. Jains do not fight out of aggression or territorial or economic greed however, but as defenders of religion and the nation. Even within the military they function as peacemakers and those who try to prevent worse violence, rather than acting as propagandists of war. They hold religion and ethics in even higher regard than their own lives – which on earth are only short anyway. Life itself is in reality immortal. Nonviolence is the keynote of Jainism, thousands of years ago as well as now.

Two sects

Jainism split into two main sects¹ more than 2000 years ago on the basis of a difference in interpretation. One group, the Digambaras – literally those “clad with the sky” – were of opinion that, if one wishes to abandon all worldly things, all forms of clothing should be abandoned as well, and that one should also physically adopt a completely detached way of life. In its ultimate consequence this applies only to monks.

Though women can become nuns dressed in a single white sari – and there are many in this sect – each of them will have to wait until karma allows them to incarnate into a male body in order to be able to pursue the path of emancipation to its very end. This seems worse than it is, at least in the eyes of westerners, because the path takes many lifetimes anyway, and even the most tenacious male practitioners can not reach salvation in this dark age. The other sect, calling themselves Śvetāmbaras – those clothed in white robes – are equally serious in their views, but the monks and nuns wear pure white cotton garments. It will be clear that the Digambara monks can never compromise, not even with themselves, as far as possessions and behavior are concerned. But for the Śvetāmbaras social intercourse is much easier. Moreover they believe that women have the same opportunities to reach salvation as men do, and that salvation can be reached even in the present era of spiritual darkness – in contrast to the opinion of the Digambaras. I myself have developed close and very friendly contacts with both sects.

Influence

The Jain system of teaching is by nature scientific and philosophical rather than devotional. The devotion of Jains consists primarily of putting their teachings into practice, i.e. pure ethics, as was the case with the ancient Hindu Rājā Yogis. That is why they have often occupied such high positions in Indian society. Their architecture is among the most refined in India, and is traditionally pure and simple compared to Hindu architecture, because the Jains do not pay homage to a pantheon of deities as the Hindus do, but only show their reverence and gratitude towards their spiritual teachers, the Tīrthamkaras. Later temples, especially those of the Śvetāmbaras, became more and more ornate, and excel in lavish beauty, as we can see for example in Dilwara and Ranakpur in Rajasthan. The Tīrthamkaras have about the same status for Jains as the Buddhas for the Buddhists. The

icons of the Tirthamkaras look much like those of Buddha, but they differ from the latter in that they are usually naked to indicate their complete detachment from material possessions. There are good reasons to suppose that the Jain icons were the models for those of Buddhism, and not the other way round as some may think. Many of the icons of sitting Jinās seem to be of far earlier date than the Buddha himself.

Due their attitude of nonviolence and tolerance for deviating views of others they have through the centuries touched a keynote which resounds even today in all religions of India as well as in politics. Nonviolence though perhaps less explicit, is also one of the principles of Hinduism and Buddhism and of religions that originated outside India, such as Christianity and Islam. It was even part of the religion of the Mexican Aztecs, in so far as they were influenced by their "god who descended from heaven," known as Feathered Serpent. Apparently nonviolence represents a universal principle, which however has time and time again been misunderstood by humanity. What is remarkable is that one of the aspects of karma was known by the Scandinavians as Orlog – a word still in use with the meaning of "war," in the Dutch language for example. The well-known Arabian "Jihad" means in the first place "inner combat," i.e. the battle which leads to conquest of the divine over the animal nature, and of course not what many have made of it: the battle and victory by me – the good one – over the other – the bad one.

As we will see, Jain religion is unbelievably old. Perhaps it is the oldest religion in the world, or has its roots in an even older, universal religion, which through the ages has revealed itself to humankind in innumerable forms.

Jains are not just ethicists. Their ethics and way of life are deeply anchored in a thorough philosophy, and in scientific and biological knowledge. Their system covers, among other things, astronomy, cosmology, mineralogy, biology, chemistry, physics, medicine, and theology – if we may apply these names of comparable disciplines in the modern world.

Modern times

Modern Jains are, like everyone else, confronted with the developments of our modern age, and they reflect deeply on them. In contrast to what we have so often seen elsewhere in the world, where the older generation looks down with severe faces on the splurges of those whose souls are now occupying youthful bodies, with all their modern technological gadgets, many Jains understand that their ethics are universal, and apply as much today as they did in the past or will do in the future. They may tell their children to investigate the experiences the world offers – adding that they should return to their roots as soon as they feel that they are getting entangled or attached to these things. What could be a sounder psychology than this: teaching children the spiritual basics of reincarnation, karma and ethics from the youngest possible age, but leaving them to judge and choose for themselves when they reach the age of discernment? This basis is still missing in the western world, the result being that adolescents have no reference basis and often indulge in life experiences that, unless they possess extraordinary inner strength cause them irreparable damage – psychologically, spiritually and even physically – and often lead to life-long attachments and instability.

Every living being is an expression of the soul essence, and therefore equal in value. One is always trying to bring to birth the best within humans of every level of society, whether rich or poor, male or female, born into a high or low caste, young or old, and to inspire them to be nonviolent, honest and pure. Not with the whip, of course, but by gentle persuasion. The reward or correction in all its details and combinations will come about naturally, either in the form of happiness or suffering, due to the karmic operations of nature.

An example of this age-old approach is found in numerous modern movements, a good example being the

modern Anuvrat (= “atom” or small vow) movement in India (now known as Anuvibha Global Organization), begun in 1949 by the Śvetāmbara monk Āchārya Tulsi, which influences the whole of India. Its basic principles are as simple as they are old: sensitivity for the feelings of others; social harmony, exclusively nonviolent resistance, limited consumption; integrity; the conviction that the means to reach a goal should be pure; fearlessness, objectivity, and truthfulness. Its aim is to teach people to be self-controlled, independent of their caste, color, creed, nationality or language; to establish friendship, unity, peace and ethics as basic values; and to build a nonviolent society. The means to reach these goals are both simple and obvious, and mold a spiritual path which is accessible to everyone who believes in the possibility of developing his or her character: to teach people to have confidence in spiritual, moral and human values; and to inspire them to take specific vows. Because the Indian people have a religious inclination by nature and after thousands of years of experience firmly believe in the existence of an ethical relationship between cause and effect, taking a vow is regarded as something very serious and a vow as unbreakable. A vow therefore does not need to be reinforced by threat of sanctions. Nevertheless large numbers of citizens, including factory workers, government officials and traders have taken such vows. The most important of these as formulated for modern times by Anuvibha, are: 1) I will not kill any innocent mobile creature (for Jains this involves a strictly vegetarian way of life); I will not commit suicide, nor abortion; 2) I will attack no one, nor support aggression; I will try to further the cause of world peace and disarmament; 3) I believe in the oneness of humankind and will not discriminate against anyone; 4) I will practice religious tolerance and avoid creating sectarian conflict; 5) in business affairs and in my behavior in general I will never inflict harm to reach my goals, and I will not resort to deceit; 6) I will lead a life without addictions and abstain from intoxicants such as alcohol, cannabis, heroin, tobacco, etc.; 7)

I will always do everything to prevent environmental pollution, and will not cut down trees or spoil natural resources.

There are also specific focal points for students (e.g. concerning cribbing, use of drugs, and pornography); for teachers, who should pay special attention to the character development of their pupils, and who should set the right example in everything; for businessmen about fair trade; for government officials (e.g. refusing to take bribes); and for election candidates, who are supposed not to gain votes by means of fear or enticement, may not indulge in character assassination of their opponents, and have to shun electoral fraud and dishonest vote counts. The electorate, finally, should not allow itself to be influenced by fear or temptation if and when it occurs.

Everyone will probably agree that thinking about such ideas as well as aspiring to put them into practice could have a great impact on societies in the West and the South. Norms and values need not be enforced, because the Jains as well as the adherents of many other religions are convinced that every living being is an immortal and ever reincarnating soul which is pure by nature and possesses innate noble characteristics. Being a real human being and becoming divine are the same as being oneself – in the deepest sense of the word. To know the self or soul is the primary objective of the Jains. Is that not really the deepest motivation of most of humanity?

Another major aspect of Jainism – both earlier and in modern times, is practical compassion. There are numerous hospitals, animal hospitals and charitable projects initiated and paid for by Jains. Such projects are fuelled by the great Indian mentality of giving – *dāna* – for the benefit of those who are suffering. Millions upon millions of rupees flow smoothly into such projects. One great example is the Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (known simply as *Jaipurfoot*), a voluntary and non-religious society started in 1975 for helping the disabled, particularly the destitute. Its main objective is physical, economic and social rehabilitation

of the physically disabled, enabling them to regain their self-respect and human dignity, and to become normal and useful members of the community. The society produces high-quality but very low-cost artificial limbs etc. for amputees, calipers, modified footwear etc. for polio-affected and other disabled persons, medicine and special shoes for persons suffering from leprosy, hearing aids, and various types of financial and other support for self-employment of the disabled. The quality of the prostheses provided is such that many are able to climb trees, run, cycle or work in the fields after treatment. A typical Indian particularity is that the feet are bare, as millions of Indians often walk barefoot. Of course socks and shoes can be put on if one wishes. All prostheses and other forms of help are provided to patients totally free of charge. In addition scientific and technical research is conducted to bring about further improvements. In this way more than 270,000 limbs, 220,000 calipers, 50,000 tricycles and other items – nearly a million in all – have been produced and given to people who need them. People from all corners of India, most of them living below the poverty line, receive this type of help. Also, after the Afghan war many limbs were taken to Kabul.

These examples represent the psychological and physical aspects of Jainism's positive attitude of compassion. The third aspect is spiritual. However important kindness and care for the incarnated creatures of the world may be, the highest aspect of Jainism is spiritual care for the soul. The heights of spiritual accomplishment can be reached only by one's own effort, and the great teachers have shown the way by their philosophy, ethics and science. Science in its original and real sense is spiritual, a path of meditation, because it investigates objects with a view to deepening our understanding and elevating the soul. Thus the technology derived from scientific knowledge can never be harmful to humankind or the planet. For the purpose of attuning the mind as well as the emotional heart, Jains build and carve – as zealously today as

in past centuries and millennia— temples and statues of Jinas by the thousand. All these are meant to create places that inspire purity and spiritual awareness and uplift and elevate the soul, thus constantly reminding people of the highest purpose of existence. Temples are houses of purity, serenity and happiness – those places that human souls most yearn for. Often temples are also centers of intellectuality, if libraries and study rooms are attached. Special events and festivities in Jainism, which always take place around sacred images and spiritual places, attract hundreds of thousands, sometimes even millions of people from all corners of the country and the world.

Thus Jainism takes care of all aspects of life: the physical, the psychological and the spiritual – which of course are inseparable. It is a religion, science and philosophy attending to the “small” sufferings of today of humans, animals, plants and even minerals up to the great aims of the soul of all beings on its ages-long pilgrimage of learning and experience through the universe until it attains perfection.

2

History and Tirthamkaras

History has no beginning; the future has no end.
My soul has neither the one nor the other.

For a proper understanding of Jainism in its wider context it is essential to have some insight into its history, and especially its age, as well its historic relationship with Buddhism and Hinduism.

The śramana tradition

The tradition of Indian religion can be divided into two main currents. One is based on the Vedas, the universal knowledge concerning cosmos and man, and the actions (rituals) humans are supposed to perform to remain in contact with the gods and the powers of nature. There are four Vedas: the Rigveda, the Sāmaveda, the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda, each of which has four parts. Their core consists of hymns to the gods. The various parts also contain prayers, rituals, theology, philosophy and finally the Upanishads – of which there are at least 108 – which contain the deepest and most esoteric conclusion and summary of the Vedas. The Rigveda is the most fundamental Vedic text, and belongs to the oldest published literature in the world. Before the Vedic knowledge was written down it was transmitted orally from teacher to pupil and memorized. It is said that thev

humankind by great sages and seers from the moment humanity began to develop a self-conscious mind – and that is, according to Hindu doctrines, millions of years ago.

The other tradition is the śramana (not to be confused with “shaman”) tradition. A śramana is someone who consciously pursues spiritual aims. To these the Jains and Buddhists, who both deny the authority of the Veda – at least the priestly interpretations and practices of it. Still, both traditions have deeply influenced and fertilized each other, and have partly achieved a synthesis, and they usually respect each other. The Vedas were brought by the Aryans, who are said to have come from the Northern part of ancient India – which stretched beyond the Himalayas – but the śramana tradition already existed in regions more to the South, which included present-day India.

The Hindus, on the other hand, do recognize the authority of the Vedas, but a number of fundamental concepts have been integrated which originally seem to stem from the śramana tradition. The concept of karma is one of them. In the Veda this term is used mainly in relation to ritual actions which are supposed to bring about certain effects, but not in the sense the concept of karma is used today: a universal “law” of cause and effect, on which the greater part of the ethics of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and modern Theosophy are based. Concepts such as “enlightenment” (*moksha*) and “renouncing of worldly affairs” (*sunnyāsa*) also stem mainly from this tradition. Jainism, as said, belongs to the śramanistic mindstream. Again and again humanity has been taught by the Jinās – those who have conquered their passions and illusions and have acquired perfect knowledge and insight, and are no longer bound through karma to the cycle of existence. Some of them, who have built up the right karmas, again preached the dharma, the spiritual doctrine, code of conduct and cosmic law. They were moved by compassion for suffering humankind with the purpose of saving as many living beings from the mire of suffering as possible – or to put it more correctly: to teach them how to

liberate themselves. Because each individual must accomplish that for himself. There is no god or savior who can do it for us; we can only do it through our own effort. Beings have the inherent power to liberate themselves, however big the karmic obstacles may be, with one exception.² These extraordinary teachers, who show much similarity with the Buddhas of Buddhism, are called Tirthamkaras (from tirtha = passageway; sacred place (at the edge of a water) + kri = to do) in Jainism. It is interesting that one of the titles to which Buddha agreed during his life was "Tathāgata," which means "he who has gone thus," usually rendered as "he who has entered and crossed the water or river, left earthly existence behind and reached the other shore" – the symbol of liberation and spiritual life.

Cycles and teachers

Like Buddhism, Hinduism and modern Theosophy, Jainism teaches that history runs in progressive cycles: the same situation ever returns, but beings that go through these cycles have gone further in their development than last time.³ The cycles have, like circles, a "top" where we "abided" millions of years ago, where we will return after millions of years and where life consists of pure joy and unconcern. Along the downward half of the circle, which has been divided into six phases⁴ of more or less happy existence, we first entered a period which was less joyful, but hardly knew suffering – until suffering and darkness were born, found balance, and existence finally became dominated by darkness and suffering. At the lowest point of the cycle darkness and misery will rule alone. This is because the soul makes its necessary pilgrimage through the most spiritual as well as the most coarsely material zones of the universe's constitution to gain experience in all subdivisions of the manifested universe.

As we sink deeper and deeper into coarse matter, our insight into the spiritual nature of things becomes more unclear and fainter, and we start doing things which –

according to karmic law – cause us more and more suffering and deeper ignorance. At the moment there is still a little bit of joy, but the real misery of this cycle still lies ahead of us according to Jainism. This darkest period, which will last 21,000 years, is however no more than the blink of an eye within the cycle as a whole, which lasts millions of years at least. There is always a possibility of choosing the path towards self-liberation, so that one is no longer subject to the sufferings of this cycle at all. When we have reached the deepest point, the upward cycle – or serpent as they call it – begins, until we finally live again in a world of great bliss. That we will not get stuck in darkness and ignorance forever is due to the fact that many as yet ungerminated karmic seeds of a more positive nature which have been sown by us in the past will also come into bloom. But if we have not managed to liberate ourselves before the joyful end of the cycle, the whole sequence of events starts all over again, according to the Jains.

Though we can only pursue our path individually and by our own effort, humankind has always been assisted throughout history, and this assistance has always had a close association with the phase in which the cycle finds itself. In the first psychological half of the downward cycle, no Tirthamkaras had yet been born on earth. The first Tirthamkara, known as the original Lord, Ādinātha, whose name was Rishabha, came just before the midpoint the downward half-cycle, when joy and suffering were almost in balance. A total of 24 Tirthamkaras were to appear, as is the case in every downward half-cycle (as well as in the upward half-cycle). All of them taught the same spiritual doctrine, but they were also children of their time who played a role of major importance and gave an impulse to human culture. The last of the 24 Tirthamkaras in our downward half-cycle was Mahāvīra, a historic personality living about 2500 years ago, and who was a senior contemporary of Buddha. In the meantime we have entered a period which is so dark from a spiritual point of view that the Tirthamkaras and Buddhas can

no longer live in a physical body among men. The Tīrthamkaras now abide in a world of perfect accomplishment⁵ as siddhas, pure souls. Theosophy and Buddhism teach that the Buddhas in this dark period can only continue their compassionate work for humanity indirectly, until the next Buddha appears among humankind sometime in the future. The Buddhist Lankāvātara Sūtra also mentions 24 Buddhas. At other places 35 are mentioned. Modern theosophical literature says that the 24 Buddhas are the same as the 24 Tīrthamkaras, and that the other eleven belong to an earlier cycle.

About the first Tīrthamkara, and about the last three, literature has a great deal to say, including that of the Hindus and Buddhist, which venerates them as great individuals and describes about their historic influence – which proves that they were recognized by the entire human family in those days. I will say more about these four Tīrthamkaras later in this chapter.

Before the first Tīrthamkara, Rishabha, who was the son of the Manu called Nabhirāja, lived on earth, humankind had already gone through millions of years of development. The Tīrthamkaras taught the people how to choose the spiritual path by their own effort, but before that time this was not yet possible. Humankind was spiritual and happy, but rather like a child. Early humankind knew no worries and the people then living did not have to work. Nature provided food for them just as it does for animals, and there were trees which produced fruits for them to eat. People were living in the enviable situation of being at all aware of the enormous world with all its complexities and natural forces. So in many respects they must have lived like happy animals – but still they were humans who, just like children, are apt to develop all that grown-ups will manifest later in life. Their self-consciousness and understanding had already been awakened, but they still had to learn how to handle it.

Compassion in human evolution

Fortunately nature is and has always been compassionate. It assists its souls during their long pilgrimage of, and it was and is part of cyclic destiny that they will develop into fully fledged godlike humans. For that purpose they were taught by sages and teachers who were far ahead of average humanity. Civilization has evolved slowly but surely for millions of years. In each stage of human development people of superior knowledge and intelligence are born, who teach average humankind on every stage of cultural evolution, and help them to shape a stable, varied and goal-oriented social structure and culture. In fact they represent the blossom of collective humanity of that period. Such helpers were the “Einsteins” of their time and in a sense far ahead in their development compared to even the greatest scholars and personalities of our days, because we ourselves still belong, though millions of years later on average, to that same evolving humankind. These Kulankaras,⁶ as they are called in the Jain scriptures, appeared at moments of crucial importance, and were the beacons along the pilgrim’s path of humanity. It was the Kulankaras who built society. On the basis of the materials available we may sketch the following picture of the history of humankind on earth:

Primitive humanity still understood little about nature *mentally*, but they could perceive nature’s phenomena, and they had to become aware that they had a meaning – for things not understood can give rise to fear. Fear can only be destroyed by knowledge and understanding, and this is what the Kulankaras provided. The first Kulankara taught them that the sun and the moon were natural phenomena of which there was no reason to fear. The second Kulankara taught that planets as well – of the existence of which humanity have apparently become aware even that long ago – belong to the normal things of nature; and that there was no need to fear them or pray to them. Subsequent Kulankaras made sure that wild animals – once they had come into existence – were

limited to particular habitats, and thus were less threatening to people. Later, people were inspired to live in separate communities, each of which had their own boundaries, but which co-existed peacefully. Perhaps this is how the tribal form of society was born, succeeding more nomadic periods. In the next stage smaller units were formed, notably families, and regulated attention and care for children were developed. A Kulankara appeared who taught the people to take care of their children. Humanity was told how to build ships and navigate on rivers, and to make and use household utensils. Later still the people were instructed to avoid incest and told that it would be better to marry outside one's own family. Until then it was customary for brothers and sisters to form couples.

The last and seventh or fourteenth Kulankara⁷ of this downward half-cycle was Nabhirāja, who taught how to distinguish between different kinds of fruits – healthy ones and poisonous ones. Does this mean that the people knew the difference instinctively until then? It was also he who instructed us how to make clay pots.

Nabhirāja must have been an extraordinary and influential personality. He was an example of spiritual wealth and beauty. He was an inspirer and supporter of artistic development. He was the “grandson” of Pratiśruti, who was also the first Manu,⁸ from the essence of which all other Manus sprang. Manus are those who open and close evolutionary cycles. Nabhirāja was (even though there had been a number of Manus in between) the son of the son of the original Manu who initiated collective humanity, which means that he represents the human development of a minor cycle within a larger cycle. Because he was the last one of a series of seven (or fourteen), he was also the one who closed a larger cycle, it seems.⁹ After this preceding phase of human evolution the Tirthamkaras could appear on the scene and do their work. People had already learned to work for themselves, physically as well as mentally; the earth had become a “work planet.”¹⁰ From then on, humans could not

only take care of themselves, physically as well as mentally, but also made the choice to pursue “good works,” which means purposely undertaking spiritual works and making an effort to liberate themselves from illusions.

The worldly Rishabha

Nabhirāja married Queen Marudevī, and they had a beautiful son who was as strong as a bull, and therefore they gave him the name of Rishabha. He had descended into his mother’s womb at an auspicious astrological time. He was also born under the same constellation. All important events in his life took place when the moon was in the same zodiacal sign.

This splendid baby was destined to become the first Tirthamkara of our great cycle.¹¹ Before he was born, his mother – just like the mother of the other Tirthamkaras and the Buddha, and as also reported from other cultures around the world – had a number of noble, excellent, blessed, promising and happy Great Dreams,¹² fourteen or sixteen in total.¹³ First she dreamt of a strong bull – and that is also the meaning of the name Rishabha;¹⁴ and then of an elephant, a lion, a lotus pond, and a divine vehicle (vimāna), of smokeless fire, etc. Of course all these dreams have a meaning. Apart from the dream types of Freud, Jung and Adler etc., which are the products of suppressed desires or are of an archetypal nature – Indian literature also distinguishes the prophetic dream, and the true dream. In addition, twenty Great Dreams are described in Indian literature,¹⁵ which are related to divine matters. To this class belong the dreams of Queen Marudevī and those of the physical mothers of other divine incarnations.

Rishabha consciously entered a physical womb with compassion and, due to the merit he had earned in earlier lives, incarnated to help humankind and all living beings. Out of compassion he even took birth without causing pain to mother. Before and after their birth they are compassionate by nature. Jain literature mentions that the divinity Indra knows when a powerful soul is coming to human life six months

before such a soul enters into the womb of his mother-to-be. Nature and the environment change and become of extremely pleasant character. No poverty and no unhappiness prevail, and their birth brings fulfillment all around the region. They themselves are born in families where all worldly things have reached their highest fulfillment, i.e. in royal families. For the time being all suffering of the surrounding people disappears. Before he incarnated on earth he had lived 33 cons in a heavenly realm as a celestial being of very high nature. The birth of Tirthamkaras is surrounded by miraculous events. The positions in time to which the Jains assign their Tirthamkaras are expressed in astronomical numbers of sometimes quadrillions of years, which no doubt have a hidden meaning. But in any case, Rishabha lived more than 6½ million years ago. This seems at first glance absurd from a western point of view, but if we take into account that the teachings given here describe the entire development of human culture and cultural history of our own human race from its early youth, that figure appears is so very strange. The dominant scientific opinion in the West is that humans have been a species distinct from their physically nearest relatives for a few million years.

The subsequent Tirthamkaras lived later of course, but succeeded each other ever more rapidly. The space between the 23rd and 24th was only 250 years. The 22nd lived more than 5000 years ago, and the 20th almost 870,000 years (according to the Hindu timescale of yugas).

Rishabha married two beautiful girls; one gave him 98 or 100 sons¹⁶ and one daughter, the other one son and one daughter. His oldest son was Bharata, who later, when Rishabha withdrew from the world to lead a spiritual life, succeeded him as king. The actual name of the country which in the West we call India is *Bhārata* -- as we can see on every postage stamp and banknote - the land of the great lineage that was initiated by Bharata, son of Rishabha.

Rishabha lived at a time of transition. Old traditions were already fading away and new values had not yet been

established.¹⁷ The nomadic way of life had largely ceased to exist, but the family structure and a balanced social structure had not yet been fully established. The population slowly increased in numbers, and food and material resources which nature provided were running short. This resulted in an increasing desire to acquire and possess things, and with that the phenomenon we call crime was born. Therefore it became necessary to formulate social and political codes of conduct, and this resulted in a penal code. The Kulankara Nabhirāja had already introduced the state form and Rishabha was, at the people's request, crowned as the first king. The capital of his kingdom is said to have been situated at Ayodhyā. Rishabha formulated a penal code for the wellbeing of his people. This was the beginning of legislation and jurisprudence. He initiated a fourfold system of punishment. The first effort to bring someone back to the right path was: to shout loudly at the wrongdoer: "Ha! Ma! Dhik!"; the second was limitation of freedom of movement; the third was imprisonment, and finally mental torture by outcasting or ignoring them. There was no physical torture. All this was only meant to induce criminals to make the choice to henceforth lead the right way of life. Capital punishment of course does not fit within this frame. The intention was to make a person to see the light, first by persuasion, and then possibly by means of pressure or punishment. These laws were introduced out of love and compassion for all beings. If these are absent, such laws – as we know too well from past and present practices – can lead to terrible escalations. A head without a heart brings only misery. Ideally any law enforcement should be in strict harmony with the workings of karma. Finally, in the event of larger-scale conflict the authorities were allowed to sow discord among the enemy. According to some, this scheme was only implemented under the reign of Bharata.

The next great task for Rishabha was to organize food supply, shelter and protection for the people. He therefore

introduced agriculture, armed defense, and the use of fire to prepare food.

Education

He paid much attention to education. He introduced the institution of teaching and taught seventy-two arts to men and sixty-four to women. The first art was writing, the most important one was number theory and calculation, and the last art was that of the knowledge of omens. He also introduced a hundred professional skills and five professions. The main classification of the arts and sciences was: 1. the use of weapons; 2. writing; 3. agriculture; 4. education; 5. trade; and 6. art and architecture. In addition he taught certain specialties to his children. He taught economics to Bharata, astrology to Bāhubali, and to the others he taught social sciences, the art of dancing, esthetics, mathematics and alphabetic script – and this is said to have been the first alphabet in history. In terms of social status and legal rights men and women were equal.

It seems shocking that this greatest advocate of nonviolence and compassionate love of all ages actually brought the art of weaponry to humankind, though only for defensive, not offensive purposes. Would the world not have been served better by the completely pacifistic ideal of weaponlessness? Jains may say that all the worldly teaching of Rishabha were given by him before he became a monk, and that as a monk he had to suffer all the karmas of the first part of his life. But it must also be true that the psychology of humanity had already reached a point on the downward cycle where separateness, jealousy and enmity played a role, and that in that context warfare became unavoidable. This shows parallels with the description Plato gives of the ideal state, in which people occupy themselves with grilling acorns and live a life of contentment. But as soon as people start to want more than they need, scarcity emerges, along with, the necessity of agriculture, of territorial borders and therefore territorial

defense. Rishabha too was of necessity a servant of the cyclic law of nature.

Rishabha was the first to describe the caste system, according to Jainism. Like Plato many millennia later, he already categorized human beings into groups or castes on the basis of their natural tendencies and skills. Kings, like himself, defenders of the country and protectors were called warriors (kshatra-dharis, i.e. umbrella-bearers,¹⁸ kshatriyas) – inner as well as outer warriors fighting for the victory of the true and the just were meant. Then there was the commercial sector, and that of the artisans and laborers.¹⁹ This division into castes was descriptive and was not determined by birth. That happened when the system became deformed, and this is how it is even practiced today in Hinduism – with so much misery as a result. Rishabha wanted an efficient division of labor based on the capabilities and accomplishments of the people, as this would lead to economic prosperity. He himself taught the use of weapons and the art of war. He was a real kshatriya. He traveled in person to all corners of his kingdom and encouraged the people to engage in trade and commercial activities, and thus the caste of traders, vaisyas, was established. He taught that everyone should devote himself to his or her task according to the qualities of his nature and in service to others. All these people together formed the caste of kśudras, now known as śudras. There was no superiority of one caste over the other. All were equal before the law and for society. According to the Jains the Brahmin cast was only established later.

Thus king Rishabha initiated changes in every field, and made sure that the people were living intelligent and happy lives. He was the first king of the hoary past and was a guide and source of inspiration for his people. He ruled in a just and charitable manner, never felt any evil in his heart for anyone, but, on the contrary, was motivated only by true love and compassion for all. According to the sources we have today, his age was an age of enlightenment, in which humanity was taught arts and sciences for the first time in

history – and the benefits have been reaped by everyone on this earth, of all cultures and in all times, including our own. Rishabha led a just and stable government for a long period. Until today the professions he initiated have remained the permitted professions for Jains until today: that of the military, of writing, of the agriculturist, tradesman and artisan.

The spiritual Rishabha

But other things were waiting for him. Until then he had occupied himself with the material and moral well-being of humankind. But by nature he was spiritually inclined, and in his character he had always shown himself to be but little attached to worldly matters. His next assignment, due to his accumulated Tirthamkara karma, was to work for the spiritual perfection of humankind. But to be able to fulfill his task, he himself had to undergo the most thorough spiritual training by withdrawing from the world and practicing ascetism, so that the unstained and omniscient²⁰ nature of his soul could finally express itself to its full, unlimited extent.

The story goes that, as had been the case with so many in history, something had to happen in the life to wake him up. In the Buddhist tradition the eyes of Prince Siddhārtha were opened to the needs of the world by his direct encounter with old age, disease and death, and Gandhi would probably never had become the liberator of his people if the South African authorities hadn't thrown him ignominiously off a train for of not having a white skin. A similar event was to happen to King Rishabha.

One spring day many courtiers and citizens were attending court.. They were watching a performance by an excellent female dancer. Her name was Nilānjala, the "Blue-eyed Beauty." The public was completely obsessed with her. Rishabha, too, was completely absorbed in watching the performance. Suddenly, in the middle of her dance activity the dancer collapsed, and her body disappeared from the stage. But immediately she was replaced by another dancer so that

the public didn't even notice what had happened, and the dance continued without interruption. But by his clairvoyant knowledge Rishabha saw through the trick, and suddenly became fully aware of the transitoriness of daily life. He understood the meaninglessness of the world and all its bustle. From then on he strongly desired to realize the reality of the spirit instead of being absorbed again and again in the unreal, transient, worldly life.

He decided to divest himself of all earthly things. He gave his kingdom to his oldest son Bharata and to his other sons, and decided to live the life of a śramana. Like all later Tirthamkaras and also Prince Siddhārtha, he renounced all his jewels and other possessions as well as his head of hair. He sat down under an Aśoka tree and took the vow of complete renunciation of the world; and the same was done by 4000 followers. The hardships which befell them from that moment on were so heavy that only Rishabha himself was able to persevere. After a short period of ascetic practice and meditation the followers had all given up. Many of them began their own school, in which they emphasized a more moderate approach rather than the path of extreme ascetism. Thus 363 religions were born – and these are, it is said, all the religions the world has known since that time.

We could perhaps regard this as a formalized overestimation of themselves by the Jains, who want to see themselves as the origin as everything, and all other religious and philosophical currents as derivatives which have only sprouted from the failures of Rishabha's followers. In that case such a doctrine would only promote separateness, arrogance and conflict. The deeper meaning is that there once existed (and still exists – because we still live in the atmosphere of Rishabha's influence) – a universal or esoteric religion-philosophy-science, which, according to the character and phase of evolution of the various peoples on earth has been translated into exoteric systems on order to continually reach out a helping hand to humanity and promote its cultural self-development, until humankind is ready to stand face to

face with the ultimate, unveiled reality. That is why Rishabha and Manu embody ideas which, for all wise people of whatever name all over the earth, represent the original source of inspiration and highest example. One of Rishabha's followers was his grandson Marichi, who then "failed," but who after many rebirths in the eons to follow was finally born as Mahāvīra, who became the 24th Tīrthamkara – now only some 25 centuries ago.

Buddhas and Tīrthamkaras

There are many similarities between the stories about the Tīrthamkaras and the one about Siddhārtha who became Gautama Buddha. All were born as kshatra dharis (kshatriyas) of the highest order (princes) and they pursued a normal life until they were almost 30 years old, and a number of them married and had children. Then, when the right moment had come, they left their parental environment and withdrew into the forest for ascetic training, reaching ever higher realizations. Finally they sat under a tree and in deep meditation fought their last battle against illusion to arise as an omniscient Jina (conqueror) or Buddha (awakened one) in the early morning, thus achieving the highest enlightenment. Like Gautama Buddha, who lived so many ages later, Rishabha then waited some time before he started teaching. First they had to find pupils of such a high level of realization that they would be able to benefit from their teacher. They introduced or restored and disseminated the dharma (the doctrine). Dharma in Jainism also means "the inherent quality of the soul." So the teachings of Jains and Buddhists show many similarities. But there are differences as well. One of these is the Jain emphasis on asceticism – which in the later stages takes very extreme forms – as a necessary condition to counter all obstructive karmas and to reach liberation and enlightenment. Prince Siddhārtha, too, who was to become the Buddha – who lived in the period when the śramana religion of the 23rd Tīrthamkara, Parśvanāth, Mahāvīra's predecessor,

was widely practiced –first took refuge in the śramana tradition: he abandoned his jewels and his head of hair, and practiced extreme forms of asceticism. He became a disciple of the Jain monk Pihitāsrava,²¹ and meditated and did penance in the forest together with other ascetics. But at a certain moment, when he had lost all the strength of his body and mind, he accepted a little bit of food, and concluded that this extreme asceticism would not bring him the desired result of bodhi (enlightened wisdom). He was no longer accompanied by his fellow ascetics, who now looked upon him as someone who had failed. Eventually he sat down under a bodhi tree and, after three days and nights, reached the highest enlightenment which is possible at present for a human in this cycle. In the beginning the Buddha was doubtful whether he would be able to find any disciples who would be able to understand his teachings. He went to a location in the Deer Park near Varanasi (Sarnath). There, according to the Buddhists, he met five ascetics, and they immediately recognized that he had indeed reached enlightenment and became his first disciples. The Buddhist view seems to conflict with that of the Jains. The Jains say that Gautama has indeed failed by accepting food. Nevertheless a comparable story (symbolically) is told about Rishabha. Long after his followers had given up the path of penance, Rishabha fasted for six months, and then walked daily for six months, and then, after a year of fasting, he entered – at an astrologically very auspicious moment – the city named Hastinapura, where he was received with much respect by a king called Shrenik. He offered Rishabha some sugarcane juice in the right way as it should be given to a monk, and he accepted; and this was the first food Rishabha as a monk took on his six-month long wanderings. After that he accepted it regularly once a day. Even in our time the day on which this happened is regarded as an auspicious day by Jains.

Rishabha continued his meditations and penances until he sat down under a tree. One early morning he achieved union with his highest Self, and the same moment was

liberated of all the karmas which had still been attached to him until then. Now he was an enlightened one, a conqueror of all passions. The *Kalpa Sūtra* – of which only the Śvetāmbara version written in the 5th century AD is now available, but is ascribed to Badrabāhu Svāmī²² who lived in the 4th century BC, before the split between Śvetāmbaras and Digāmbaras – describes Rishabha's life from the moment he renounces the world as follows:

“On reaching the most excellent Aśoka tree, he ordered the palanquin to be placed beneath it. Then he descended from it. Then, with his own hand, he took off his wreaths, fineries and ornaments. Having taken them off, he pulled out his head of hair in four handfuls, and then took food without water only once in three days ... The Arhat²³ Rishabha of Kośāla gave up the care of his body for a thousand years and exposed it to hardships like an unfurled flag. During this period, whenever he encountered whatever hardship, he bore it in all respects, forgiving it, overlooking it, believing it to be no hardship, however severe, either caused by divine wrath, by men, animals or the forces of nature or any other adverse agents. Then Arhat Rishabha became homeless; circumspect in movement, circumspect in words, circumspect in desires ... restrained in mind, restrained in words, restrained in physical activities; guarding his thoughts, guarding his words, guarding his physical activities, guarding his organs of sense, guarding his chastity; without anger, without pride, without attachment, desisted from everything, freed from compulsion; without ego, without possessions, with the tie of worldly bondage cut, free from any stain of worldliness.

“He became liberated by giving up suffering ... unattached like the wind, pure at heart like the water in autumn, clean like a lotus leaf, with sense organs withdrawn like a tortoise, solitary like a rhino's horn, free like the birds ... Arhat Rishabha of Kośāla had no more limitations as to objects, senses, space and time. ... With equal feelings towards excreta and sandalwood, with equal attitude towards

hay, jewels, clay and gold, indifferent to pleasure and pain, free from limitations in this world as well as in the next, without hankering for life or death, destined to overcome mundane life, born to terminate the bondage of karma – thus he spent his time. With supreme knowledge, supreme faith and supreme conduct ... with extreme valor, highest uprightness, dexterity and patience, with utmost caution and utmost satisfaction, with the highest intelligence and highest truth, restraint and penance. Arhat Rishabha spent a thousand years in meditation of the Self on the road to liberation, which was the duly earned outcome of right conduct. Thereon ... near the city of Purimātāla, in a park named Śatakamukha, under the shadow of an excellent Nyagrodha tree, taking food without water [but Digambaras deny this] once in four days ... [at an auspicious lunar conjunction] ... while in meditation, he became the master of omniscient knowledge and faith, infinite, unsurpassed, unobstructed, complete and full. Thus the Arhat Rishabha became the venerable, the victor, omniscient, all-knowing, all-observing; he knew all the categories of gods, men and non-divine beings in all worlds; he knew and saw the conditions of all living beings in all the worlds – where they come from, whither they go, where they stay, when they slip and where they are born; he knew and saw their ideas, the thoughts in their minds, their intake, their doings, their open deeds as well as their secret deeds. Being the most venerable, from whom nothing could be kept secret, he knew and saw in all respects the state of mind, words and deeds, of all living beings in all the worlds” (*Kalpa Sūtra*, verses 210-212).

Once he had reached enlightenment he decided to guide all living beings towards the spiritual path. He gave – as did the Buddha later – a “first sermon,” which was not an actual sermon, but a nonverbal communication which could only be understood by ganadharas (“spiritual intellectuals”), who translated it into understandable language for the others. This event was attended not only by humans, but also by celestial

beings and animals, and the first “sermon” contained the essence of all his teachings. He said: “The aim of life is not indulgence in sense pleasures but self-denial and self-sacrifice for the wellbeing of others and the Self. Life is not for attachment but it is for detachment for the sake of self-realization. Don’t fall a victim to instincts and impulses. But make efforts towards the realization of the Self [full conscious awareness of what you really are]” (Kalghatgi p. 23). According to Digambaras he did not actually “say” anything at all, but in his selflessness he only murmured “OM,” bringing great ease and relaxation to those who attended him and inwardly understood his teaching. This sound could be perceived by humans as well as animals, but could not be exactly understood. Hence, ganadharas (chief disciples) came quickly to listen to him. They asked questions and he answered.

Rishabha founded four orders: that of male śramanas, female śramanis (monks and nuns) and a male and female lay order (śravakās and śravikās respectively).

The eternal religion

The Tirthamkara Rishabha went from place of place proclaiming the eternal religion of nonviolence and nonattachment. He taught the seven fundamental metaphysical-ethical principles (tattvas): 1. living substance, i.e. jīva (soul), 2. non-living substance (matter, pudgala), 3. the influx of karmas, 4. bondage, 5. the stopping of the influx of karmas, 6. the removal of accumulated karmas, and 7. the ultimate goal of existence: moksha/nirvāṇa. He also taught that the universe is eternal, that it was never created, and can never perish.

Here too we see strong similarities with Buddhism. In his very first sermon Buddha taught the essence of all things – the four noble truths: 1. There is suffering (compare: bondage in Jainism); 2. there is a cause of suffering (compare: attraction of karmas); 3. it is possible to remove that cause

(compare: non-attraction and removal of karmas); 4. there is a path which leads to salvation. Both Jainism and Buddhism reject the idea of a creative God in the western sense. There is no "Being" which is above all that exists and which creates the universe; nor, as in Hinduism, a trinity, which creates, supports and destroys the universe. But Jainism and Buddhism recognize numerous heavenly beings. Jainism describes them in detail, and except for those in the higher heavens, who are all equal, as arranged in hierarchical orders, including divinities which are the rulers over and performers of natural forces. Together they *are* the natural forces and intelligentsia of nature. The divine is the core essence of every being wherever it finds itself in the universe, and every being can realize this core and essence, and by purification bring the qualities of the soul to full manifestation.

Rishabha also taught that the whole universe, with the exception of the living soul, consists of indivisible, smallest units (anu, i.e. atoms) and that all existing forms came into existence by combination of atoms. Most contemporary scientists of our days will endorse this idea. This notion, and Rishabha's doctrine that the universe is divided into a dualism of life and not-life, seem to differ from the ideas found in Theosophy and Buddhism. Truth itself, though, is of course universal and is independent of and unstained by any religious or philosophical system. All the real essential meanings of all human verities will ultimately be reconcilable. There is but one Truth, but there are many paradoxes which can only be fully grasped by fully enlightened ones. Buddhism teaches that no separateness exists in the universe – duality will finally prove to be an illusion. Buddhism, like Advaita Hinduism, does not support an ultimate and irreducible duality in the universe. Apparent duality rises from the One showing itself to our mind from its spiritual and material sides, which are relative to each other. Both are infinite. How could there be room for two infinities? Both are the same in essence – how else could these two aspects work together so closely? How could matter attach itself to the Soul if both

cannot recognize each other on the basis of their unique essence, answering to the same laws? My humble intelligence at least is unable to answer these questions satisfactorily. In our day, the spiritual teachings of Theosophy insist that such a thing as “non-living” or “non-life” does not exist. Every atom, every subatomic particle, including those of subtler, (for us and our mechanical instruments) imperceptible phases of matter, every unit of energy, every planet, solar system, galaxy, every entity whatsoever, is alive, and is composed of a core of life, called atom (anu), which means that all are centers of consciousness, atoms of consciousness, one with the All. But there is a difference between “dead” and “non-living.” Even infinitesimal subatomic “particles” are, according to Theosophical teachings, subject to the process of incarnation and excarnation of their souls, which thus always leave behind a dead vehicle.²⁴ Though abstract entities such as space and time, motion and non-motion may be regarded as non-living – as Rishabha and the Jains did and do (even though such abstract entities can only be recognized by the grace of conscious entities) – my personal mind is unable to conceive of lifeless matter which even in its deepest essence differs from life.

“Then, on the exhaustion of his karma ... sitting on the top of Mount Astapada, in the presence of 10,000 monks... in the early part of the day, in meditative posture, he passed away, went beyond the bounds of karma, was uplifted after having left the world, cut asunder the tie of birth-old age-death, and became perfect, enlightened and liberated, the concluder, and the terminator of all misery” (*Kalpa Sūtra* 227).

The other 23 Tīrthamkaras

At fixed times after Rishabha came the other 23 Tīrthamkaras,²⁵ and each has virtually the same life history and tasks. Each of them ended his existence on earth definitely and for ever, and all did so in the same way. All of

them preached and developed the same doctrine in agreement with the needs of humanity in its particular stage of development in their time. They appeared in the fourth phase (of the six) of the downward half-cycle, in which suffering became slowly dominant over joy – whereas Rishabha had come at the end of the third phase. In Hindu terms this period is comparable with the krita or satya yuga of our present cycle of human development. It was followed by ever darker eras, and finally by the present, darkest age known as kali yuga, which began with the death of the Hindu avatar Krishna. This event coincided with the 22nd Tīrthamkara, Arishtanemi (or Lord Nemi(nāth)). Shortly after the last Tīrthamkara, Mahāvīra, a few centuries before the birth of Christ, the fifth phase of the downward cycle began, in which suffering and decadence prevail but which is not yet the darkest phase.

Of the nineteen Tīrthamkaras who came after Rishabha, not much more is generally known than the period in which they lived, and where they were born. But more details can be found in the Jain *Mahāpurāṇa*. All of them have their own specific character, and we will find individual Jains as well as temples devoted to each of them, while in the same temples the others are usually represented by icons as well.

The Indus culture, known to us from archeological finds at Harappa, Mohenjo-daro and elsewhere in present-day Pakistan, scientifically dated as 5 – 7 thousand years before present, may have covered the period from the 21st to the 22nd Tīrthamkara. The name of the Tīrthamkara Arishtanemi (Nemināth) is mentioned in the Rigveda, which might suggest that the Vedas were written after Nemināth, and the Aryans (the noble ones) arrived around that period. But according to Dr. Jyoti Prasad Jain,²⁶ the Vedic Aryans with their Brahmin culture entered the territories of what is now India and Pakistan in the period of the tenth Tīrthamkara, and this culture has since become more and more dominant. At the same time the term “Aryan” in Jainism does not refer to the above-mentioned Brahmin culture, but to *all* people in (at

least the Indian part of) the world who follow religion (in contrast to the mlecchas, who don't follow religion). In that sense an invasion of Aryans from the North would make no sense, and "Aryan" and "Dravid" (originally followers of the śramana (= Jain) tradition) would always have been coexisting concepts, and Aryans and Dravidians were both the original inhabitants of India.

From the 16th Tīrthamkara, Śāntināth, on, Jainism is said to have existed uninterruptedly. Before him the periods in between were so large that religion was forgotten and had to be re-inspired from the beginning. The 20th, Munisuvrata, lived in the days of the Hindu avatara Rāma, i.e. at the end of the tretā yuga, over 870,000 years ago according to Hindu calculations. In those days Brahmanism and Jainism approached each other, it is said. This of course would not harmonize with the idea that the Vedic Aryans only entered India after the 21st Tīrthamkara. The Hindus have their famous epic about Rāma, the *Rāmāyana*, but the Jains have a less-known version of the epic, which they claim is the original one, on the basis of which the author (Valmiki) built the famous Hindu epic.

The 21st Tīrthamkara was Nami, and he is said to have influenced the writing of the Upanishads within the Vedic tradition. The 22nd Tīrthamkara was Nemi(nāth), as said. He was a cousin of Krishna, and thus lived just before the beginning of the kali yuga or dark age in which we live at present according to the Hindus, a little over 5100 years ago. It is said that Krishna had great respect for his cousin and his emphasis on non-violence, vegetarianism and opposition to animal sacrifice. Krishna once asked his cousin why he himself always failed to renounce the world as Nemi did. Nemi answered that this was not Krishna's task at that time – but that in the future, during the next upward half-cycle, he would be one of the Tīrthamkaras. Nemi is highly regarded in both Hindu and Jain scriptures.

The last but one Tīrthamkara of our downward half-cycle was Parśvanāth. He was born in 877 BC in Varanasi and

left the world to enter nirvana in 777 BC. He is always depicted with a hood formed by a seven (or more) headed serpent.²⁷ He tried to purify asceticism from illegitimate practices such as self-torture. He acquired many followers, and his religion remained very influential during subsequent centuries. As said, Prince Siddhārtha, who later became the Buddha, was also strongly inspired and influenced by Parśvanāth's tradition. For six years the future Buddha followed severe traditional śramanic ascetic practices in the forest. The last and most generally known Tīrthamkara was Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, said to have been born on March 30, 599 BC. He was an elder contemporary of Buddha, and they both lived in the same region of Bihar. There are no indications that they ever met personally, but in the Buddhist canon Mahāvīra is repeatedly mentioned, being referred to as Nirgrantha or Niggantha (= nude sage) Nātaputta. Much more is known about Mahāvīra, including his personal life, than of the earlier Tīrthamkaras. He has been a source of inspiration for 26 centuries, and will probably remain one for many to come, for Jains as well as others.²⁸ This book is about his teachings and those of his predecessors.

3

Ahimsā

Ahimsā Paramo Dharmah
Nonviolence is the highest religion

Non-violence, ahimsā, is the central doctrine of Jainism. Jainism is therefore sometimes called the nonviolence religion or culture. Nonviolence also plays an important role in Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and other religions. However with none of them has this principle been given such a central position as in Jainism, especially in the practice of religion. All actions Jains do are directed towards avoiding harm to other living beings. This includes physical violence, but also verbal violence, and – most important of all mental violence because that is where the cause of all misery is born. This has enormous consequences for daily life, for society and for our worldview. Through the millennia Jains have put emphasis on this principle and have thereby influenced the whole world. And they are still doing so. Basically human nature is kind, considerate and compassionate, as we can see in children and most grown-ups, and also in our anatomy and physiology, but too often we follow our beastly nature, and then become a thousand times worse than any animal can ever be.

Throughout human history this teaching of nonviolence as the first principle has covered humankind with a protective shield. Everywhere in the world there were and

are individuals and groups who carry the principle of nonviolence in their hearts, because they feel that this is what the world needs most, and lacks most. Vegetarianism, too, is supported by numerous individuals in every country. Later interpretations of Hinduism, but not the original Hinduism of the Vedas, prescribed ritual animal sacrifices, but thanks to Jainism, Buddhism and Christianity such things occur only rarely today, except in Islam, certain Hindu sects and some tribal religions. Animal sacrifices did and do occur over the entire globe. Some cultures even took to large-scale human sacrifice. And – so they thought – by commission of the gods! But this is compassion turned into cruelty – how could any real god ever approve of such action? In Jain cosmology many classes of celestial beings or “gods” are described, and far from all these “gods” are good. They have been humans when incarnate on earth, and may have all the evil or noble qualities of humans. Some of them may be kind and helpful, some highly spiritual, but others may be cruel or purposely misguide people, causing accidents or worse: they may induce ignorant, self-interested worldly people to do evil things while being convinced they are pleasing the real gods or God. For example, the Mayas of Mexico and Guatemala, who in later more decadent phases of their culture performed human sacrifices on an ever larger scale (and even today animal sacrifices sometimes occur), were themselves aware that they had been misled by “second-rate” gods, and they expressed their regret in songs in their sacred book the *Popol Vuh*.

The wish not to harm living beings (including, but in the last place, oneself) is an essential characteristic of the deepest inner being of man. That is why religions which preach this doctrine have always found many sympathizers. No great mental effort is needed to understand how much suffering the human as well as the animal kingdom would have been spared if humans had the discipline to let this noble aspect of their being prevail at each and every opportunity. No wars, no slaughterhouses, no battery cages, terrorism, suppression, social injustice, or capital punishment would

exist any longer once humankind understands and then practice non-violence. It would not mean that humanity would have nothing to learn anymore or would be freed from all despair, or that tigers would suddenly eat grass. But at present we make things much more difficult for ourselves than is necessary. Instead of regarding each other as territorial and personal competitors, people would understand that they are brother pilgrims on the path to truth and unstained happiness, who know that the pilgrimage is long and often hard, but who everywhere and always are on each other's side. For many people this is already the case even in our times. It sounds almost sentimental – “unpractical” – yet this is the only thing of real importance in life, the only true discipline around which life revolves: the practice of brotherhood. The brotherhood of all beings which have consciousness. Rules are not necessary to accomplish this, but listening to one's heart certainly is.

Religions teach that every consciousness reaps what it has sown. From this it follows that “violence one cannot avoid” such as natural disasters, disease and damage inflicted by someone else, can be referred back to oneself – the neglect of this deep impulse from the heart. We should recognize that our repeated existences on earth are but a small part of our total life cycle. Most of our time we spend outside our physical bodies in the hereafter or the “herebefore” either as hellish or as heavenly beings, say the Jains. The so-called hells or heavens are states of consciousness which are the result of our thinking during our stay in physical bodies. As a result of its weakness or attachment the soul is not willing to make choices, and oscillates continuously between high and low, good and bad. In this way a vibration is created through which confusion and ignorance are attracted and attached to the soul, thus making matters still more difficult. If one has the courage to choose the higher – absolute inner nonviolence – the weakness and doubt causing the vibrations disappear. Then God will turn out to be all forgiveness and love, as a Christian might express it. The soul is the only true god

according to Jainism. By living in the soul, every human can become a god.

What makes the Jains especially noteworthy is that they not only preach and talk about non-violence, but also practice it. I happened to come across a small diagram from 1891 – that is, from before the influence of modern times – giving the percentage of prisoners in India as related to religion. The Jains were by far the best: 1 in 6165 citizens. On the other side of the scale, the figures for Jews and Christians were 1 in 481 and 477 respectively. The attitude of the Jains is neither extreme nor extravagant. In fact *they* are the ones who behave “normally.” The social morality of the Jains as well as their doctrine of redemption is interspersed with rules and guidelines which are all derived from this same principle of ahimsā. The five main vows which every Jain is supposed to respect are: to abstain from violence, to abstain from lying (i.e.: violence against truth), to abstain from stealing, to abstain from sexual misconduct, and to be free from worldly attachment. In addition, every Jain is supposed to think and meditate about friendship with all living beings, the happiness it may give when seeing that others have more success than oneself (especially in spiritual matters), compassion for all suffering beings, and tolerance or indifference towards those who behave in an uncivil or negative way towards oneself.

Ahimsā is the opposite of himsā, violence. What is meant by violence is clearly defined in scriptures which the Jains regard as authoritative. To quote just a few:

From the *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra*:

Violence (himsā) is to hurt the prānas (vitalities) through vibration due to the passions, which agitate mind, body or speech (vii: 13).

From the *Purushārthasiddhi-upāya*:

Any injury to the material or conscious vitalities caused by passionate activity of mind, body or speech is certainly called

violence (iv: 43); certainly the non-appearance of attachment and other passions is ahimsā (iv: 44).

From the *Āchārāṅga Sūtra*:

Violence is a great impediment to spiritual awakening, and someone who indulges in doing harm to living beings will not get enlightenment; harming other beings is always harmful and injurious to oneself – it is the main cause of someone's non-enlightenment (i.1.2).

From the *Sūtrakṛitāṅga Sūtra*:

Knowing that all evils and sorrows arise from injury to living beings, and that it leads to unending enmity and is the root cause of great fear, a wise man who has become awakened should refrain from all sinful activities (i.10.21).

From the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*:

Seeing that everything that happens to somebody affects him personally, one should be friendly towards all beings; being completely free from fear and hatred, one should never injure any living being (6.6).

From the *Daśavaikālika Sūtra*:

All living creatures desire to live. Nobody wishes to die. And hence it is that the Jain monks avoid the terrible sin of injury to living beings.

The most forceful statement is found in the *Jñānārṇava*:

Violence alone is the gateway to the miserable state, it is also the ocean of sin; it is itself a terrible hell and is surely the densest darkness (8.19); and:

If a person is accustomed to commit injury, than all his virtues like selflessness, greatness, desirelessness, penance, liberality or munificence are worthless (viii:20).

Active compassion

Anukampā, compassion or grace, as it is defined in the *Digambara Sūdhā Sagar Hindi-English Jain Dictionary*,²⁹ means "If anyone is moved at the sight of the hungry and the miserable offers relief to him, out of pity, then such behavior of that person is love or charity." Nevertheless, compassion can, and has been, interpreted in two different aspects: the passive and the active. It has sometimes been said by outsiders, and even by some sects within Jainism, that ahimsā, non-violence, and anukampā, compassion, are to be interpreted in a passive way only. Such people will not take initiatives to help those who are suffering; they will not actively lend a helping hand to those in need. If this is practiced by common people, including monks and ascetics, it seems to point to a dogmatic interpretation (perhaps born of hidden arrogance) of the highest aspect of compassion, but without really understanding the teaching. Only when one has *really* acquired the wisdom of the Great Souls is *genuine* judgment possible. The teaching is this: Though the omniscient liberated souls are filled with compassion, they are not moved by it. Though they see the suffering of all beings, they have done the only thing which is appropriate: to preach the universal doctrines of self-liberation and karma, which includes the path of shedding of karmas with the aim of reaching ultimate freedom. As this doctrine is given to everyone, the choice is also for everyone. Great saints and monks continuously remind the people of this path. Interfering with the karma of someone who deviates from the innate harmony of his own nature is like numbing his own hand before he puts it in the fire: he will never learn that fire is hot and dangerous, because he lacks the pain which nature has given to sentient beings to teach and warn them. The highest ascetics would no doubt apply this interpretation of compassion and nonviolence *to themselves*, and when in particular cases, they judge it the best, to others.

For the well-being of the confused creatures in the world that most of us are, the layman will follow his natural feeling and emotion of active compassion. The greatest saints, including Mahāvīra himself, have proclaimed the necessity of active compassion, and this is what made Jains (together with Mahayana Buddhists) the greatest practical benefactors in the world. In Christianity the core teaching is also love, compassion and helpfulness for one's neighbor, and they practice it worldwide and on a large scale; but the first and highest meaning of compassion seems almost completely lost among them. The result is that in the modern world the "right to suffer" for those who choose that as their noble individual path, is almost denied.

Both aspects of compassion are clearly explained by Lord Mahāvīra himself, 2550 years ago, when he defines ahimsā thus:

"The saint with true vision conceives compassion for all the world, in east and west and south and north, and so, knowing the Sacred Lore, he will preach and spread and proclaim it, among those who strive, and those who don't, among all those who are willing to hear him ... He should do no injury to himself or anyone else ... A great sage becomes a refuge for injured creatures like an island which the waters can not overwhelm."

- *Sūtra* (1.6.5)

In the authoritative *Tattvārtha Sūtra* we find: "One should cultivate the feelings of fraternity toward all beings, pleasantness towards the proficient, compassion toward the destitute and equanimity toward the disrespectful disbelievers." Of course the destitute will not feel warmth in their heart when passive compassion is practiced on them: they will feel left alone, desperate and disappointed, and they may as a reaction only harden their character, causing even unpleasant karma for themselves (*TS* 7.6).

And elsewhere: “Be ready to help and provide refuge to the destitute and helpless.”

- *Sthānānga Sūtra*, Ch. VIII

And perhaps the clearest statement supporting active compassion is found in a dialogue between Mahāvīra himself and his main disciple, Gandhara Gautama, in the *Avaśyaka Sūtra*:

Bhagavan! Who is to be commended, the one who serves you or the one who serves the ailing and distressed?

Gautama! He who serves the ailing and distressed is to be commended.

Bhagavan! Why is this so?

Gautama! He who serves the ailing and the distressed, serves me. He who serves me serves the ailing and the distressed. This is the pith and substance of the doctrine of the arhats. Therefore, O Gautama! I say: He who serves the ailing and the distressed, serves and worships me. ... Therefore, one who serves is to be commended.

- *Avaśyaka Sūtra*, leaves 661-662

A book, available in Hindi only written by K.L. Lodha, called *Sakarātmak Ahimsā: Shāstriya aur Charitrik Aadhar*³⁰, is entirely dedicated to this topic of the meaning of practical compassion in authoritative Jain literature, both Śvetāmbara and Digāmbara. The following quotes are taken from this book:

A person when moved by seeing a thirsty, hungry or distressed being acts with sympathy towards him; this is his compassion.

- *Panchāstikāya* by Kundakundāchārya (137)

Compassion is the intrinsic nature of soul (living being), therefore there is an inherent contradiction in accepting it to have been caused by karma.

- *Dhavalā Tika* by Vīrasena (13/362)

Dharma (religious duty) is that which has been refined by compassion.

Bodha Pahuda by Kundakundāchārya (25)

We have thus seen that the idea that Jainism is negative and passive is completely erroneous, and that the opposite is more than clear if we observe the daily practice of the Jain community.

Jainism and environment

by Surendra Bothra*

Jainism is especially significant in our modern industrialized times for a better understanding of our proper place, attitude and function within the totality of our natural environment. Amazingly all we have to do is to refer to a book written more than 2000 year ago, known as the *Āchārāṅga Sūtra*, on which Surendra Bothra wrote the following article:

Āchārāṅga: The first book on the environment

The simple meaning of environment is “external conditions or surroundings.” With our careless interference and exploitation we have changed everything around us to an extent that our natural surroundings are no longer natural. They are polluted, spoiled and degenerated. In the process we ignored even the vital fact that our actions may one day endanger our own existence.

* This section (pp. 48 – 69) was written by Surendra Bothra, Jaipur, India, and is used with his kind permission. Most of the text was recently published in *Jain Spirit* (Colchester, UK), issue 25, 2006, and all the material will be used in a forthcoming book by S. Bothra.

More precisely, according to the dictionary, environment is defined as “the surrounding conditions, influences or forces that influence or modify the whole complex of climatic, edaphic (soil related) and biotic factors that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival” (*Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*).

The highly evolved human race has been adding various new and potent factors to this already complex system. Social, religious, political, and economic are prominent among these. Although all these factors evolve according to the physical environment of a specific group, they in turn influence and change the physical environment with ever increasing interference in the natural conditions. These changes can be both constructive and destructive.

When we look into the history of the human race we find that in the beginning each and every way of living or life style was intimately connected with and influenced by the environment, knowingly or unknowingly. That man has been driven by greed since the very beginning cannot be denied. Even primitive societies had groups who plundered the available resources and damaged their surroundings. However, the combined efforts even of all such groups around the world were almost insignificant. Even in those times there were people who were sensitive to the harm they could do to nature and the harm that nature could do to them in turn.

Human life continues to exist under the diverse and divergent influences of innumerable forces and variables of nature, society and circumstances. The same is true for every form of life and that is its natural destiny or fate. As long as we are not wise enough to think, analyze and understand the complexities of nature we remain unaware of these conflicting forces. This is because they are generally in a dynamic balance. Our awareness is triggered only when this multidimensional dynamic balance is slightly disturbed for a certain period. Man has been working hard to fully understand this balanced state since he first opened his eyes.

With the scientific and technological advancements, the consequent population explosion and industrial development man's ambition of conquering nature turned into megalomania. In the recent past the exploitation of natural resources has increased exponentially. In the process man completely forgot that environment is intrinsically and incontrovertibly connected with everything organic. Even the minutest change in environment influences all life-systems. And the influence of careless activities is mostly harmful.

All this has disturbed the ecological balance to the extent that the changes started affecting the life of humans. We have been jolted awake to the need of drastic measures to curb the ongoing degradation. Serious and widespread studies in this field were commenced. However, in spite of the continued and wide-ranging research, when it comes to application, this field is yet to attain the required maturity and sincerity.

The present state is that in spite of all pointed and general efforts made for the last fifty years, we have failed to put noticeable brakes on the continuing environmental degradation. It is high time some radical thinking, deliberations and actions emerged on the ever darkening horizons.

It would appear that religion has hardly anything to do with such physical and technical things like environment and ecology. That is because the dividing lines drawn between different disciplines for convenience of management have turned into barriers. We generally miss the fact that in the overall picture of things everything is connected and related to every other thing.

In some schools of thought stray efforts were made to understand, evolve and establish a life style intimately connected with nature in a mutually sustainable way. In all probability Jains have of old made maximum efforts in this direction. Their efforts even culminated in designing an environment-based style of life that is rational and scientific.

Ironically, with the passage of time the ritualistic leanings took over and we forgot the ecological importance of the life style we followed.

The Jain sages had an acutely sensitive and penetrating insight into the world of the living. They designed the ahimsā way of life with a very wide and liberal perspective of life. The popular Jain aphorism – “parasparopagraho jīvanam” (all living things are mutually supportive) – encompasses the symbiotic phenomenon of creation and sustenance existing in nature at all levels. [e.g. Bacteria extract nutrition from our intestines and at the same time they help us digest our food. A bee extracts nectar from flowers and at the same time pollinates them for their procreation.]

Had we made a little effort, had we shaken off our traditional conceit and dogma, and sincerely pondered over the problem, we could have provided humanity with solutions to many of the environmental problems. Tree worship and the concept of the wish-fulfilling tree (kalpavriksha) are common to almost all Indian religions. But to believe in life and consciousness in plants and beyond in both visible and invisible life forms, and to nurture fraternity and compassion for all life forms, macroscopic as well as microscopic, seems to be a unique contribution of the Jain religion.

The prevention of abuse of the ecosystem is an intrinsic part of the ahimsā way of life. It is designed to eliminate the sources of disturbance to the ecology at individual as well as social levels in a pragmatic way. If we look at the Jain code of conduct, both for ascetics and laity, we find that it prohibits individuals and society from harming the natural habitat. In fact, it goes a step beyond. By nurturing the natural functioning of the habitat through sentiments of ahimsā and universal fraternity it helps restore any damage and disturbance caused to the ecological balance.

I would go so far as to say that protection of the environment is the foundation on which the edifice of the Jain way of life has been raised. It was so intimately assimilated in

our life that it became our second nature. Today the separate identity of that environmental foundation appears to have been lost. Time took its toll. In the form of ritualistic cults, we were left with mere skeletal remains of the true philosophy of life.

I would like to give an example here. Care in disposal of waste has been included in the five cares (called samitis) which form the essential part of the first and primary Jain vow of ahimsā. We never tried to assess why so much importance was given to such a routine activity. Even today it has not been elaborated beyond its ritual and traditional spiritual role. We now know that one of the prime causes of environmental degradation is careless release of polluting waste into the atmosphere. This includes normal as well as industrial waste.

Forget about what we failed to do. Should we not think of elaborating such pointers and extending the scope of their application from individual to social, national and international levels?

Anyway, all is not lost, even today if we remove the dust of ostentatious rituals we can find practical solutions to the problems. But it is easier said than done. Serious and sincere efforts will have to be made because that remote life style and its philosophy will have to be reshaped to suit the changed conditions. It will have to be presented in the form and language modern society can understand and easily follow.

Accepting life in plants, abstention from destroying any life form, giving importance to discipline and self-restraint at individual and social levels, pursuing pacification of animosity and aggression, and nurturing universal fraternity and compassion are some of the inherent attributes of the Jain way of life that make it environment friendly. Now that the Jain way of life has been contaminated and environmental degradation has acquired awesome dimensions, it has become pertinent to see and examine every facet of Jain religion in the context of environment.

I would like to present here the inherent affinity Jain tenets have with ecology with the help of what this tradition has acquired and inherited in the form scriptures. Many of these sources are still available and waiting to be utilized for improving the health of the ecology of this planet. But we failed to take steps in that direction, why?

It seems that at some point of time the system of studying the old texts with the freedom of exploring other than the assigned themes and meanings broke down. A larger majority of available texts were branded as religious and spiritual. That appears to be the reason for exclusively religious, ritualistic and sectarian commentaries by the later traditional scholars and thinkers. It is time that the cocoon of obscure and ritualistic traditional interpretations is shattered, and the ancient texts are examined from different angles and that an attempt is made to explore new meanings and interpretations. In all probability this would open up new dimensions of information and knowledge.

In this context the first sermon of Bhagavan Mahāvīra, written down as the *Āchārāṅga Sūtra*, is very significant. It is the first of the eleven extent *Anga Sūtras* (the primary canons or the main corpus of the Jain canonical texts. These consist of twelve treatises, eleven of which are extent – at least according to the Śvetāmbara tradition, though not according to the Digambaras, who maintain that the original texts were destroyed even in Mahāvīra's days).

The traditional interpretation of the *Āchārāṅga Sūtra* or for that matter any other Jain scripture is directed at the spiritual realm. This is of course extremely valuable. But traditionalists came to maintain and emphasize that this is the only interpretation and there is no scope for any other viewpoint. But such an absolutist attitude is against the Jain doctrine of *anekāntavāda*, which teaches the lawfulness and necessity of multiple viewpoints.

If we look at the *Āchārāṅga Sūtra* from the standpoint of the environment we will find that it abounds in information in relation to the environment. In fact it would not be

exaggerating to say that the *Āchārāṅga Sūtra* is the oldest, thorough, scientific and pointed endeavor by Jain thinkers at evolving an environment-friendly way of life after understanding the importance of all facets of the environment.

The *Āchārāṅga* starts with a discussion about movement (*gati*) or direction of movement of life. It says – “I have heard, O long-lived one (Jambu Svāmi), Bhagavan (Mahāvīra Svāmi) says thus – ‘Some beings in this world are not aware of this - whether I have come from the eastern direction, or I have come from the southern direction, or I have come from the western direction, or I have come from the northern direction, or I have come from the direction above (zenith), or I have come from the direction below (nadir), or I have come from some an intermediate cardinal point or another directions (between these points)’” (*Āchārāṅga* 1.1).

The traditional doctrinal interpretation of the term *gati* (realm of nature within the universe) is related to the concept of rebirth. Let us now look at it in the context of the physical world and day-to-day life. The direction of movement of a thing or a living being plays a vital role in the protection or destruction of the environment and ecology. As we know, the environment is a setup of innumerable complex systems made up of near infinite numbers of living organisms, things and forces which are always in an all-pervading dynamic balance. A change in natural functioning of just one of the infinite constituents of one of the innumerable systems disturbs this balance.

In such a situation man, endowed with the unique capacity to think, imagine and translate his thoughts into action, has an added responsibility. His conduct and actions can be damaging not only to himself but also to this dynamic balance if he is ignorant of the natural functioning of the things around him.

The *Āchārāṅga* then advises us to be aware of violent actions and mentions reasons for this: “In the world (being a source of violence) all these sinful activities that are causes of

inflow of karmas (karma-samarāmbhas) are worth knowing and abandoning” (*Āchārāṅga* 1.1.5).

“About this the Bhagavan has prescribed (preached or propagated) parijñāna (awareness or knowledge):

(People indulge in violence mainly due to the following reasons:)

- i) In order to protect his life (everyone loves life, therefore he makes use of wealth, medicine, and other things).
- ii) In order to gain praise and fame (he makes efforts to win competitions like wrestling).
- iii) In order to gain status and prestige (he accumulates wealth and power).
- iv) In order to gain respect and veneration (he participates in war and other such violent contests).
- v) Birth (he indulges in festivities to celebrate the day of his child’s or own birth).
- vi) Death (he indulges in various rites and rituals connected with death).
- vii) Inspired by the desire of liberation (he indulges in religious rituals like animal sacrifice).
- viii) In order to be free of sorrows (he indulges in various violent experiments to vanquish ailments, terror, and torments)” (*Āchārāṅga* 1.1.7).

The target of the said activities is the world of the living. In the Jain view this includes a large part of what westerners know as matter. Jains have defined matter as ajīva (non-living). [As will be discussed in chapter 6, the detailed definition of the taxonomy of living organisms is a vast discipline in itself.] For the theme under consideration it would suffice to understand that beyond the visible gross world there exists a minute and subtle world that influences us and is influenced by us. Therefore, every action that harms

this world of micro and macro life and matter is violence and worth curbing. In every life form there is autonomous and reactive movement. The sentient beings have an additional movement, the volitional movement. When we are careful in movement, we are essentially careful in thought.

After emphatically establishing that ignorance, or unawareness of all our subtle motives and movements in the karmic space, greatly determines the actions of a being, the *Āchārāṅga* talks of types of actions which should be curbed. Classifying such actions as himsa (violence) the Sūtra opposes them. The reason attributed to this is that the consequence of such actions tarnishes the soul by acquiring karmic dust (pudgala) and leads to anguish, distress, agony, sorrow and death during this or future births.

In the elaboration of the area of violence *Āchārāṅga* has enveloped almost all major components of ecology. The description starts with the violence towards earth-bodied (prithivikāya) beings. The traditional definition of earth-bodied beings is "minute organism made of and subsisting on the earth-element." In the same style water-bodied, air-bodied, fire-bodied and plant-bodied beings have been defined before proceeding to the animal world. "Therefore, knowing about the unexpressed sufferings of the earth-bodied [etc.] beings one (the sagacious) should not harm earth bodied beings himself, neither make others do so, nor approve of others doing so" (*Āchārāṅga* 1.2.17).

Āchārāṅga gives the first authenticating statement about life in plants by comparing a plant body with human body: "I say:

This human body is born, so is this plant.

This human body grows, so does this plant.

This human body is conscious, so is this plant.

This human body withers when damaged, so does this plant.

This human body has food intake, so has this plant.

This human body decays, so does this plant.

This human body is not permanent, so is this plant.

This human body gets strong with nutrition and weak without it, so does this plant.

This human body undergoes many changes, so does this plant.

- *Āchārāṅga* 1.5.40

The *Āchārāṅga* concept of violence is far more elaborate and wider in scope compared to the normal or traditional definition of violence. The reason behind prohibiting violence to any component (as defined in *Āchārāṅga*) of the complex life-system on this planet is not easily appreciated. In order to appreciate it we have to understand the most amazingly complex, dynamic and fragile ecological balance existing in nature. We will also have to be aware how a seemingly insignificant but ignorant human action can disturb this balance and cause harm to innumerable living beings, including humans. Human ignorance often lies at the basis of a tree of destruction of an extensive ecologically balanced natural system. The complex balance in nature and its precariousness is ever more surprising while it rests on a multiplicity of seemingly independent constituents.

After defining the object and target of violence, *Āchārāṅga* mentions *śāstra* (weapon) as a means of violence. To hurt or destroy a thing employing a weapon (or tool of violence) is called violence (*himsa*). And this weapon is defined as anything, including our intention, which has attributes contradictory, conflicting or hostile to those of the object against which it is directed. To contaminate earth, water, air and fire with things having such conflicting properties is violence. This is a unique definition of a weapon and appears to be based explicitly on ecological parameters. If put in ecological terms, anything that pollutes and harms earth, water, air, and fire is a weapon and the act of polluting is violence. These four – earth, water, air, and fire – in the state they exist are the basic and essential components of the habitat conducive to life. Even the modern scientists and thinkers who have suffered the consequences of environmental pollution, have not been able to design

environmental protection programs based on such all-enveloping definitions of weapon and violence.

Assigning the category *jīva* (living organism) to the life sustaining components of nature – earth, water, fire and air – is suggestive of the important responsibility of man towards nature. Violence does not simply mean harm to the visible life forms, but the *Āchārāṅga* definition of violence includes destruction of even the remote possibility of evolution of life. If we are earnest about the protection of the environment we will have to popularize such comprehensive and all-enveloping concepts. *Āchārāṅga* has discussed this concept in both spiritual and mundane contexts.

Transgression has been discussed in great detail and given a very wide definition in the ahimsā way of life proposed in *Āchārāṅga*. At micro level it covers minute matter particles. In the biological field it covers all things and activities of the world of the living, micro and macro. At the gross level it covers every thing and process existing in this universe. It is a fundamental principle and can be applied with the necessary variations to every field and at every level within a specific field.

This detailed discussion was later summed up as abstention from *prāṇātipāta* (harming life) (*Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*). When we study the detailed explanation of the term *prāṇātipāta*, it is further confirmed that Jain ahimsā is not just about avoiding harm to living beings. It goes beyond and includes avoiding harm to the environment and ecology conducive to generation, evolution and sustenance of life.

Jainism defines *prāṇa* as force that makes one live (life-force). It is of two kinds – *dravya prāṇa* (physical life-force) and *bhava prāṇa* (mental or spiritual life force).

Dravya prāṇa (physical life-force) - force which provides signs of life and absence of which means death; also, force that sustains the union of soul and body. It manifests ten ways – five sense organs, three powers, *manas*, *vach*, *kāya*, mind, speech and body, respiration and life-span. All beings are endowed with one or more of these life-forces. The

capacities of the five indriyas (sense organs), three balas (strengths – mental, vocal, and physical), respiration and life-span are the ten prānas. Of these ten prānas, one-sensed beings possess four (life-span, respiration, physical strength, one sense, i.e. that of touch), two-sensed beings have six (add the sense organ of taste and vocal strength), three-sensed beings have seven (further add sense organ of smell), four sensed beings have eight (further add sense organ of seeing), five-sensed non-sentient beings have nine (further add sense organ of hearing) and sentient five-sensed beings have all ten (further add mental strength). Atipāta means violation. Thus prānātipāta includes violation of any or all of these ten prānas or life forces. Jains try to damage as few as possible prānas in their food habits. That is why the consumption of plants is considered a lesser sin than eating the flesh of animals.

Bhava prāna (mental or spiritual life force) – the bhava prānas are basically attributes of the soul manifesting through the body or otherwise. They are four – knowledge, perception, conduct and potency (vīrya). Every being has these spiritual forces in variable quantity, not in terms of numbers as in the case of physical prānas, but in terms of intensity or degree. In general the dormant one-sensed beings (nigodas, “microorganisms”) have the minimum intensity of knowledge etc. and other one-sensed beings have a little more, and so on. Violence is not just physical harming but also harming on the mental level. Also it is not just harm to others, but harm to oneself as well (*Brihatsangrahniratna*, Hindi translation, p. 232).

In conclusion *Āchārāṅga* states – “He who has properly understood the violence related to six life forms is a pariñāta-karma muni (a discerning sage or an ascetic who with a discerning attitude abandons violence)” (*Āchārāṅga* 1.7.56).

After proscribing violence starts the detailed discussion of the disciplined life-style designed to avoid such violent and anti-environment activities. When we resolve not to harm two or more sensed living beings we will avoid

cruelty towards the full range of animals that are tortured and killed, not just for food and medicine, but also for producing things of comfort and beautification. When we resolve not to harm one-sensed living organisms we will avoid careless exploitation of the material resources available in nature.

The life-style proposed here is completely and intimately connected with mutually sustainable interaction with nature and environment. This is what conservation ethics is all about. This unique way of living shows the path of spiritual as well as mundane development that avoids disturbing the fragile dynamic balance of the ecology of this planet.

Āchārāṅga establishes ahimsā as a universal and eternal truth. Ahimsā as elaborated in *Āchārāṅga* does not stop at philanthropy. It proposes universal fraternity for all life-forms and extends to matter. It is a fundamental principle applicable to all facets of life and all dimensions of the physical world. It is not just about feelings; it is also about the balance in the physical universe. Anything conducive to balance is ahimsā.

These are some examples selected from the first chapter of *Āchārāṅga*. Although the book was written more than two millennia ago by Jain thinkers, if the whole book is studied from an ecological point of view it appears as if it has been written by modern environmentalists on the basis of profound study and with great care. The need of the hour is that rising above the traditional bias, modern Jain thinkers and scholars conduct unbiased and multidimensional research on this and other scriptures. This would indeed be a beneficial and important contribution towards the beatitude of mankind, or indeed, the entire world of the living.

Respect and understanding

Mahāvīra said that “as long as one holds on to one of the many aspects of a thing while at the same time rejecting or ignoring other aspects, one can never reach the truth.”

Therefore it is essential to fully understand the ānta doctrine as characterized by the concept of syāt. The word *anekānta* can be translated as “many aspects.” Truth shows itself to the observer in many aspects. Only the one who has reached complete insight can see the truth as a whole. No one on earth has this power of insight in its fullness, and it may be that two people with the same measure of intelligence and dedication look at the same truth from different angles, so that two opinions appear incompatible. The ethical consequence of the teaching is that one can fundamentally never accuse someone of having the wrong view, while claiming to have the right view oneself. Both views may appear to be correct in the final analysis, though only partly. Two opinions may seem incompatible, but in reality there may only be a paradox: when one has acquired deeper insight one may see that both are legitimate approaches to the same truth, or that both standpoints represent only limited views of the truth.

An example from modern science is that light and other electromagnetic radiation can be regarded as consisting of particles as well as waves: the truth of both views can be proven on the basis of the theoretical behavior which either particles or waves are expected to show according to our experiences on the macrophysical level. Solving such problems may finally lead to a deeper view – and paradoxes on another level. A simple example which one can find with the Jains as well as Buddhists and Sufis is that of the blind men and the elephant. One man touches the trunk, another a tusk, a third an ear, or the elephant’s tail, etc. They start to quarrel about what an elephant really is because their views differ completely. Then a sighted passerby says that all of them are right, and that all of them are wrong. In comparison to an omni-clairvoyant and omniscient Jina all of us are blind.

The word *syāt* means “from one point of view,” Thus *anekānta* is the doctrine about how truth presents itself to us, and *syādvāda* (a *t* becomes *d* before a *v*) is the doctrine which teaches that we can approach the truth from different angles. These two doctrines are accompanied by a third, called

nayavāda, the theory concerning partial knowledge. Even though there may be different views, none of which represents the whole truth, each of them contains a nucleus of truth. Therefore it is always useful to try to understand the other, because his or her story too contains a core of truth, and thus adds one other angle of approach. To try to fight each other with words (and eventually with weapons) to prove that one is right is a form of violence which is contrary to this philosophy.

All these different approaches used by ordinary people are the result of the workings of their minds. The human mind in its present stage of evolution is by nature divisive because it is unable to grasp the whole. But once we see that this mental activity can never lead us beyond its natural limitations we will understand that we should seek the higher path: the path of renunciation of all illusions or "partial truths," and direct one's meditation exclusively to that which is beyond. This may take lifetimes, but once we have made the first step, deaths and rebirths cannot hamper us from reaching our goal. We will never again be satisfied with less.

These three approaches to Truth provide refined guidelines on how to work with the human mind within its natural limitations. They form a sound philosophy of cognition. They also give rise to tolerance and are very beneficial when applied in the fields of science, politics and in daily social intercourse.

Nevertheless the philosophy can also be criticized, because it seems to allow tolerance and respect even for opinions that are completely wrong, or even consciously malicious. In a court of justice, for example, one could never come to a satisfactory conclusion, because no human judge is omniscient. And we see that even the most honest and morally sound efforts to do justice or to build theories in science can later appear to have produced completely wrong results (e.g. the view that the earth is flat). Only karma itself is a completely just operation of the cosmos. Only Truth itself is the right opinion. Therefore Jainism has designed criteria for

truth to assist non-omniscient beings such as ourselves. The criteria themselves derive from what is taught to humankind by the omniscients. As given by Helmuth von Glasenapp:³¹

Truth:

1. emanated from the omniscient masters,
2. was never refuted in disputations, because it is irrefutable,
3. cannot be changed or attained by any type of knowledge, be it indirect or direct, by any sort of perception, influence or tradition,
4. explains all things sufficiently according to their true nature,
5. promotes beings of all types, from gods down to plants and elementary beings morally and does good to them,
6. is so powerful that it is able to destroy everything that is false.

Each of these criteria can be criticized: How do we know whether a teacher is omniscient? What should we do if supposedly omniscient teachers of various traditions (outside the field of Jainism) seem to contradict each other? Because, as limited beings, we can not ourselves judge the genuineness of a teacher (e.g. whether Mahāvīra is right, or Gautama Buddha, or both or neither of them). If we opt for our own beloved tradition, the choice is emotional rather than cognitive – which has, at least from a western point of view, no epistemological value.

Scriptural truth comes from outside ourselves and is only a reflection of Truth by means of words which already have an established meaning in the (naturally limited) mind of the reader, and thus scriptures have no more authority than what the reader is able to understand of their meaning. Words are isolated definitions of isolated perceptions and thoughts, which thus philosophically do not harmonize with Oneness and non-separateness – concepts which form the core of many

thought systems, such as the Buddhist. So isolated perceptions are in themselves axiomatically wrong.

If a truth can not be refuted, it may be merely because it lacks the criteria for falsification as defined by Popper. If a theory or view can not be falsified now, it may still be falsified in the future. If it has the power to destroy all false ideas up to now, will it always have this power? We could only come to a final conclusion at the end of the future – and the end of the future will never occur according to Jainism. What if the ideas we regard as most fundamental or even axiomatic themselves appear to change, or to be a limited aspect of a still deeper truth? Modern scientific findings often *seem* to falsify the Jain or other religious teachings (e.g. in the Jain cosmography the earth is described as flat). But this falsification has limited value, because we do not know the intention and the full depth of cosmography: is it a scheme for esoteric teaching, not to be taken as a straightforward description of material truth? Was the designer of cosmography merely a dreamer or a fantastic visionary, or was he someone who really *knew* and designed the best possible picture to convey truth, to help us in our meditation, but engraving essential truths in our being, bringing us closer to our real being and the being of the universe in a step by step effort to guide humankind in its evolution?

The most interesting of the above criteria is the fifth: saying that truth promotes beings of all types morally and does good to them. This is an axiomatic statement: it implies that the true and the good (i.e. doing good to beings) are inseparable – as in Plato. Though this criterion is metaphysical and improvable from a western point of view, it is the one to make us the happiest. It gives a heart to Truth, as it were. How important this is for the world: the truth is not a thing to fear, to avoid, but gives humanity hope and happiness!

It seems that none of the above criteria alone or together can bring us to omniscience and salvation. They can sharpen our mind against mistakes and thus protect us. They

give us confidence, comfort and happiness. They support our mundane culture in the best possible way.

But, if even the best part of our mind cannot help us to reach *absolute* knowledge and liberation from illusion, should we conclude that no real knowledge is possible for humans, unless fully enlightened, or even that our universe as we perceive and interpret it is possibly nothing but a mental error? This is quite a frustrating thought. If this would be the meaning of the Jain doctrine in this regard, the world would be complete chaos. But we see that it is not. It would be if our human mind were the only aspect of us. Must we go *beyond* the mind? Or can the mind have a link with the omniscient soul, or receive a 'ray' from it?

It seems to me that even the normal (not fully enlightened) human mind can be guided by deeper glimpses or hints of Truth, which create a direct link with the soul. This can be enhanced by ever greater experience and by meditation. Those who are pure, unbiased and unselfish enough, and know how to listen to their silent "voice" within will be guided by such rays or "gifts" from the soul. Thus, higher intuition can be developed. The opinion of such a person should then be highly valued. This, of course, is how our society is built: we have experts and great leaders in every field, and society is structured hierarchically, which means guided by the *hiēros*, the holy (though in our dark era "hierarchies" are often upside down: who shouts loudest or has the most power is "right").

A major paradox with which the world as a whole is struggling involves this very philosophy of *ahimsā* and *anekānta*: if the other party is unwilling to behave non-violently, what should we do? On the personal level we can offer "the other cheek" to our opponent, and forgive him again and again his evil-doing to ourselves. This is the real practice of *ahimsā*. But on a broader level the question becomes different: should we talk or fight with terrorists? Should we tolerate the large-scale industrial destroyers of the

environment and respect their point of view? Should we regard them as unavoidable agents of karma, fulfilling the unpleasant duty of destroying the old so that something new can be born and grow? As to terrorists, as long as he or she is impersonally serving an ideal other than rendering service to some private psychological frustration, this man or woman too is thinking that he or she is doing the best he or she can for his or her people, religion, ethics, or whatever conviction it may be (blinded as they may be by ignorance concerning the real meaning of religion and service), and we should try to understand the core of their motivation, and the cause which aroused their feelings and the feelings of those they represent. When two people or groups of people such as nations or religious brotherhoods are connected in an unpleasant relationship, both are part of the problem, both have their ignorance, especially about the others real inner intentions – for which they are often willing to sacrifice all comforts and possessions, their family and even their lives. Both may think they serve the universal good of divine intention or justice. Both may even be driven by compassion – though probably not enough wisdom. A terrorist for the one may be a hero for the other; a chosen president or other national leader may be a devil for those who suffer on the other side. Talking and serious willingness to listen and understand the other's viewpoint may turn the worst enemies into the best friends, recognizing each other as brothers serving the same cause of higher human dignity and destiny. So the *anekānta* doctrine, if implemented, can avoid tremendous amounts of fear, misunderstanding, and social, material and physical suffering and violence among the human community (and even the animal and other communities – which are usually forgotten during conflicts).

Still, however many “other cheeks” we may present, however much we talk and try to understand, some will always remain enemies because of their psychology. In such cases, let the parties battle, with words and psychological confrontation, on as small a scale as possible – at best on the

personal level – and let as few as possible be actively involved. The real judge is karma alone. Let their karmic debt be as small as possible. The two sons of the first king Rishabha, named Bharata and Bāhubali, had a conflict in which the power over the whole world was at stake. Both had strong armies. But they decided that they didn't want to inflict suffering on thousands of their subjects, and fought personally until victory (after which they became friends).

As to “tolerating” destructive forces instigated by selfishness: if we ourselves and our chosen governments did not have the same selfish attitudes or indifference, humankind would naturally design laws which would make such behavior impossible. Even those who destroy without concern will in the end admit the righteousness of such laws, and submit to them, even though it may take generations for this outlook to become the norm. Even criminals feed only on the thoughts we all nurtured, and therefore even the most decent man or woman is partly responsible for what is happening in the world. Not so long ago, in the nineteenth century, protests against slavery were ridiculed. Nowadays we regard slavery as something utterly inhuman and contemptible. Will not the same be said about our present behavior towards the environment and our cruelty towards animals in a century or two from now? Let us sow the seeds for the centuries to come.

There are as many viewpoints as there are thinkers, but none of them is entirely perfect. Thus the world exhibits a richness of philosophies, all of which are the result of deep human reflection. But because no matter-bound, limited soul can perceive the universe in its entirety, all these thinkers remain under the influence of their personal context. This does not mean, of course, that no viewpoint may contain more truth than another viewpoint, or that no opinion could be entirely wrong. If we were to lose sight of that, we might adopt an attitude of lazy tolerance, and thus approval of any viewpoint – without any point of reference to universal truth or ethics. Jains are not postmodernists. There is a final truth concerning

and including all, and it can and will be known. Jains have often been staunch participants in disputes, but with the only objective of coming closer to real understanding and of defending the deepest truths they can grasp. But feelings of respect and tolerance always remain present in their hearts, because they are aware that they also do not know and see everything – but at one point in the future they will reach omni-clairvoyance and unstained omniscience, and so will each person's opponent.

4

Karma

Introduction

All that we are is the result of our thinking
Mahāvīra, ca. 500 BC

Karma is the universal law of cause and effect. That law applies to all regions and levels of the cosmos, the material as well as the conscious and spiritual side of nature. In fact, all laws of physics and chemistry are part of that universal law of karma as well. Experts in these fields, just like ourselves in so many things of daily life, know many of these lawful regularities of nature from their own experience and we blindly rely on them. Nobody expects that you get cauliflower by cooking squash or that by mixing soda and hydrochloric acid you get sugar. Only salt and carbon dioxide gas will be produced. By sowing wheat no one can get peas.

But karma embraces much more than this. The Sanskrit word karma literally means “work” and work can only be done by conscious creatures. Every action is preceded by an impulse of the mind or feelings and emotions, and it requires the energy of will power. Thus, karma always originates in the soul of a living being, i.e. that part of a living being that is conscious, that perceives, that can make choices – and that consciousness may be very limited by our standards, or very large. Even a one-celled organism has it.

Minerals, water, air, fire and invisible beings also have a soul, a consciousness, according to Jainism. This means that every creature has a measure of responsibility for itself, and consequently the energy of their conscious activities creates bondage to karma. For every single creature the biblical saying "as one sows so shall one reap" applies. The Bible has summarized the doctrine of karma in this one line. "Do as you would be done by others" (even without thinking of any result for oneself) and "give as you would want to receive" are the popular sayings, which actually mean nothing else than to practice karma. However, the result may not show itself quickly – perhaps karma will not into fruition until a future embodiment. Karma is like a seed and its flower, where the seed is an act of consciousness. Some seeds lay in wait for years or centuries to germinate. Others germinate immediately and grow and bloom. Still others germinate, but the sapling remains small until the environmental circumstances are suitable for its growth. Then it may grow and bloom very quickly and unexpectedly. According to Jainism bad karmas manifest themselves first, thus testing the stamina and tolerance of a person. Thereafter good results come. Karmic results may present themselves to us in various ways, as we can easily recognize in daily life. Some karmas manifest almost unnoticed in the beginning, and then slowly increase to their highest effect level, thus bringing more and more joy or trouble, as the case may be. Then suddenly it comes to an end. We may experience periods of increasing luck in our lives which we can not explain, but that period seems to be over at once, and we can not explain that either. But it is one of the ways in which karma manifests. Another possibility is that a particular karmic effect suddenly appears in full bloom, as is the case in an accident, but after the accident recovery takes place slowly, until finally the karma is completely exhausted. A third possibility is that it grows slowly to its highest manifestation and then slowly subsides. Many diseases run this course. Also important is that one seed may bring forth many other seeds, which will each have its own way, but are

still linked with you. Imagine that you say something on television that is not true; at once you deceive perhaps millions of people, and they will in their turn, in their confidence and honesty perhaps, act on what you have said. You are karmically responsible and the result will turn on you in the form perhaps of unpleasant circumstances or even in an unpleasant rebirth due to the deceit you have committed. Therefore Jains take great care in what they say and do.

As we will show further on in this chapter, Jains have elaborated the concept of karma in greater detail than any other thought system on earth.

Compassion?

Why does karma exist at all? Those who want to believe in an almighty, all-good creative God have great difficulty explaining why He did omit the creation of the causes of suffering. But even if we, like the Jains and the Buddhists, do not believe in a creative God at all, it remains a difficult question why a universe which shows so much love and compassion and beauty – we all carry these feelings in our own heart – shelters suffering. Every religion gives a central place to love and compassion. These are divine faculties. Allah is called the All-Merciful. The Tibetans pray to Chenrezig, the Compassionate Being who is the essence of all celestial Buddhas. The god of the Mayas, called the Plumed Serpent, taught his people compassion as a counterforce against religious bloodshed. We could list many other examples from sacred literature and popular beliefs. The Jains regard karma as “dust” that is attracted, which partly obscures the body-bound soul as soon as it “vibrates,” i.e. every time it has a thought, feeling or emotion. But the essence of the soul is purity and compassion. How can obscuring thoughts ever arise from such a soul? “Karma is both merciful and just. Mercy and (universal) justice are only opposite poles of a single whole; and mercy without justice is not possible in the operations of karma,” says modern theosophical literature.

But what is justice? The law of karma means that no event can take place without a cause, and that unharmonious causes lead to unpleasant results. But is it a punishment? Certainly punishments designed by human beings, either out of pure revenge or as the formalized justice of our legal system, can hardly be regarded as divine. All religions teach compassion and forgivingness, but our legal system in many cases remains unresponsive, unless the hardships inflicted on those convicted are meant to better their inner being, to promote inner growth so they may reach a stage where they will never commit the crime again – not out of fear of legal punishment, but from awakened insight. Such is the way divine justice works: it always seeks the best for the soul, the part of us which does not perish at death but continues to grow incarnation after incarnation, each time facing the effects of previous causes.

Though karma often does not appear merciful to us, it is the most compassionate and effective way to restore balance and teach the soul. Disease is one of the strongest motivations to begin asking questions about the deeper meaning of life. In our suffering we can sometimes experience that there exist deeper layers of happiness than what we thus far had called “happy.” However painful to the individual, karma is the greatest aid in clearing the way for the self-directed evolution which leads to the open spaces of freedom, and finally makes of man a god. Man has made mistakes because he has not always followed the highest voice within him, thus causing suffering to others and to himself. But he has never been left without sufficient light to show the way: there is the voice of conscience; there are the results of right and wrong action as lessons for the future; there is mind to interpret these, and free will to choose.

Karma is too often emphasized as something “bad,” but even when unpleasant circumstances occur, we owe the fact that we are still happy and healthy in many other respects to karma as well. Despite misfortune, we may simultaneously

have much good fortune which is the fruit of what we ourselves have sown as well.

Good circumstances will automatically appear when one succeeds in expressing the essential noble qualities of the soul in thought and in action. No more than that is needed. The Jain teachings point the way to how one can finally *completely* get rid of all karmas. But does that mean that we also have to abandon sowing pleasant karmas and avoid a happy future? Can't we throw away evil and the irritations of life and keep the good and pleasant things? Jainism as well as Buddhism teaches us that what we usually call happiness is in fact but a form of suffering. Because all happiness is fragile, transient – at some point it will end. Moreover such happiness is never experienced without a tinge of sorrow, without fear – even if such feelings may temporarily be pushed into the background. A drug addict who has just taken his fix can feel very happy, ecstatic even, but someone who looks at it from the outside feels pity for him, seeing that his happiness is in fact deep suffering, shadowed with tensions.

Real happiness or bliss knows no opposite. It is a universal state of purity and omniscience – maybe even forgetfulness about the existence of suffering. Viewed from that level, all worldly joy is nothing but deep suffering. Mystics speak about this state as “something” that *can not* be expressed in words, that transcends all worlds of good and bad, joy and dismay. In deep spiritual affection to a guru or even a statue, a devotee may feel or be deeply absorbed in some of that divine happiness. It is of an entirely different nature than mundane, personal love.

There is no revengeful God or Devil in heaven, hell, or wherever who rises above the karmic law, and makes us suffer according to his will. There may be, as taught by Jainism, many entities in the invisible worlds than inflict pain and suffering on humans and others, and there are also those who are helpful, or which can warn against danger even before it is visible to the human eye, but they can not act outside the karmic framework. Nor is there a forgiving God

who takes the sins we have committed away from us, precisely because even our faults and failures will, even though we have to face their painful consequences, eventually result in what is best for us as a living soul. Such ideas about godhead are utterly contradictory of the Jain teachings. The wisest attitude and the best thing we can do for our soul is to evoke within ourselves a feeling of gratitude and accept whatever our karma presents to us with equanimity and well-grounded hope. "Bless the karmic stimulus; be not afraid of it. Look to the essential divinity within. Remember that everything that happens is transient, and that you can learn from everything, and in learning you will grow – grow great, and from greatness pass into a larger sphere of greatness" says a modern theosophical writer.³²

Is karma unavoidable?

If you know that you have done something that was not right, it may be an additional psychological burden to know that you will have to face the consequences. Even if we regret, if we are absolutely sure we will never make the same mistake again, even if we go to our temples and churches to pray – what we have sown we ourselves will have to reap.

This is a harsh teaching. But is it true? It takes courage to accept that we have a lot to answer for that never can be reversed. Billions of people believe in forgiveness from heaven, in indulgence from their churches or their gods, and around the world we find people praying to their God or gods to make life run smoothly. Is karma just as absolute as "fate," with the only difference that the former is just and the latter arbitrary (at least in the modern view)? Should, for example, Muslims continue to believe that the terrible earthquakes, all their victims of war, and their daily humiliation by those who belong to other cultures, are the result of the Mercy of Allah, Who at the same time seems to pay no attention at all to their prayers?

Personally I tend to think that if there is a God or gods that care for us, they do not have to be begged for help. They know better what we need than our brain-minds. They may without our knowing do much more for us than we think, and due to their wisdom and compassion they do more good than we could suppose, but they help in the evolution of our souls, not the fulfillment of our personal wishes.

As I see it, several approaches are possible to this problem. What has been sown, has been sown. That applies to good things as well as bad things. But we do not complain about the results of the first category. If in some miraculous way I could be freed from the karma of a particular sin or crime, the suffering that has been undergone by others as a result of my action has already happened, and can never be undone. Even if the victim, or "God" will forgive us our deeds, what has been done, has been done. The mental, physical and emotional forces that were evoked and strengthened by my actions – both within myself and within my victim, will continue to have a link with me and will manifest their fruits one day.

Courageous people who have entered "the Path" want justice only, because in the highest philosophical sense karma and justice are identical. Therefore it is a precept for a Jain, Buddhist, Christian, Theosophical or any other religious disciple to accept all the karmic fruits one receives dauntlessly and fearlessly, however challenging they may be.

Yet we see that Jain and Buddhist monks are constantly involved in efforts to purge the karma they have attracted. Through their purity and purifications karmas can return their grip. You won't invite thieves if you have nothing to steal. Though what has been sown can not be undone, a plant can grow in many ways. If you give it more water and fertilizer it may grow and flower and bear fruit soon – you speed up the ripening of karma. Religious vows may work as "fertilizer" on our karmic seeds or saplings. Alternatively a plant can be trimmed and numerous small stems instead of one firm trunk may grow. The nature of a particular karma

can not be destroyed, but its energy can be redirected. If one does not interfere with a disease – as is the practice of the Jain monks – the particular karma will exhaust itself. This is the way of nature. But not all of us are advanced disciples on the spiritual path. If we have a problem, we seek help. If we are ill, we go to a doctor. A bad doctor suppresses the outer manifestation of the disease and therewith obstructs karma. He seems to help, but in fact he does the opposite. Reasoning or meditating away a disease is even worse, because that compels karma to seek another way out, and in such a way that our human “wisdom” has no more grip. But is there no forgiveness whatsoever for us “common” people in our compassionate universe? Forgiving is mentioned in many sacred scriptures as a divine quality, and we are told that we should practice forgiveness in even the most difficult circumstances. Christianity especially emphasizes this attitude, but the teaching is found everywhere. If we really could forgive there would be no wars in the world, no setting of scores in criminal circles, no hatred and envy between people at work or at home. But God or the gods themselves let us perish in our karmic mire!?

Karma can not be destroyed, but it *is* possible to create a counterbalance. Good deeds may “interfere” with bad karma in such a way that the result becomes diluted or more neutral. Of course there is a difference between a thief continuing to steal, or deciding to stop and become an altruistic benefactor. The suffering he has created to others must of course bear its fruits, but the circumstances in which this takes place are also karmic. This also explains why very good people sometimes face “unmerited” setbacks. A particular karma ripens, but in the meantime that person has builds a character that has more stamina to bear and handle the difficulties. Monks specialize in doing, thinking and feeling good things only. But they can suddenly be hit by disaster, a payment for an old karmic bill from nobody knows how long ago, but they regard it as a blessing.

A good doctor – if we decide to call for his help – does not try to banish our just reward, but guides a disease in such a way that it can fully express itself without killing the patient. Nature herself offers us countless remedies in the form of herbs, minerals, sun, water, air and light. Muslims told me that according to their belief there is no disease to which there is no cure – one merely has to find the remedy. We are attached to life and to our duties. Certainly it would bring no inflow of good karma if, for the sake of our own spiritual progress, we chose death rather than accept medical help, because if we make this choice consciously, we are completely inattentive to all those who are benefited by our present existence. We would cause them unnecessary suffering.

To quote a theosophical writer:³³ “Nature is full of beauty – spiritual splendor is the essence of every manifestation – so may we not use the means she offers to lighten our burden and soften our pain? Should we not allow her to be our teacher and helper? Practical compassion is all around us, but we ourselves are responsible for our mental and emotional attitudes. We ourselves must practice compassion to all to become equal to our teachers. We will attain what we ardently strive for. The innate potentialities of the universe are before us, but only he whose note chimes with that of the over-mastering law – the law of compassion – can hold his victories!”

A wise person will accept his full burden, but perhaps not everything at once. He may choose to spread, and carry as much as he can at the most suitable (though not necessarily the easiest) moments. For a spiritually advanced monk or disciple things may be a little different. I once asked a monk, “If you were suddenly in a position to kill a ‘Hitler,’ a person who brings great suffering to millions of others, would you do so?” He answered, “No, because I have made a vow not to kill any creature in any circumstance.” He added, “But you could do that, because you are not bound by a vow.” I was shocked.

This seemed to me the acme of spiritual selfishness. Rather have six million Jews killed in gas chambers than accept some delay on one's own spiritual path! Is that compassion!? According to Jains it is. What it is all about is that there are different levels of viewing the world. There comes a moment when one sees beyond the boundaries between life and death (and not only theoretically), and sees that the path of the soul is far more essential and everlasting than that of physical existence; when one really *knows* the purpose of existence, of the soul clothed in several invisible garments, and understands that karma takes place not only on earth, but also in the "hereafter." The practice of compassion then becomes something that entirely transcends what we in the world call compassion. But for me as a "common" man I think the best thing I can do is to train myself in "common" compassion.

Karmic fruits can be harvested in various ways. If they taste sweet we may get attached to them, and perhaps wander from the spiritual path. If they are sour, we can struggle on through our faith, protesting either loudly or silently. But once we have become indifferent to illusions – of course karmas are also illusions – we no longer suffer. If we are not attached to money, why then suffer if something is stolen from us? If our mind is focused on higher thinking and meditation, we perceive physical pain, but do not suffer psychologically. The monks said to me that if you meditate on the fact that in reality you are not your body (but in essence a free soul) your physical suffering becomes a futility and no obstacle whatsoever, but on the contrary helps you to strengthen your character and to master your spiritual energies. If we use the forces of our soul, our sins are "forgiven," i.e. automatically weakened. Compassion, karma and forgiveness are three aspects of the same truth.

Karmic matter: pudgala

According to Jainism the whole cosmos is built of substance. Two types of substance are distinguished: living and non-

living. This can roughly be compared with the western division of nature into organic and inorganic, but the boundaries are very different in Jainism. Non-living, i.e. soulless nature, is divided into space, time, extension, movement, rest, and matter (*pudgala*). Most western scientists will agree that matter is non-conscious and non-living, but this idea deviates from most other great systems of thought. Matter, say the Jains, consists of atoms that have the property of being either rough or smooth, which combine into molecules, which are geometrical arrangements of atoms. This also is in agreement with modern chemistry. But what is important is that Jainism distinguishes several grades of matter: besides the physical matter of which our bodies and the perceptible things around us are composed, there are four other grades, which are the types of matter of which invisible bodies are composed. There is not only a physical body, but also what they call a "fluidic" body³⁴ of which the bodies of celestial and hellish beings are composed, an assimilative body (which can only be projected by saints), a fire or electric body, and a karmic body.³⁵ The last two, the electric and the karmic body, are possessed by all creatures, primitive or highly evolved, and these have always ("from the beginningless past") been connected with the soul. Only liberated, pure souls are "naked" souls, without any garment. They have no more karma. Each of the five types of bodies is built of matter – of molecules – but of an ever more subtle nature. The karmic body is the most subtle and is built of karmic molecules. These are the molecules that are attracted to the soul by the activities of the mind and the emotions and adhere to it. Thus arises *bandha*, karmic bondage between soul and matter. The soul is obscured, masked, as it were, and therefore prevented from shining in its full glory.

We know that the number of molecules of chemistry that exist or could exist is virtually unlimited. Then how many more possibilities might be available for the much subtler karmic chemistry? The Jain doctrine on karma *pudgala* (karmic matter) could give an explanation for the innumerable

types of diseases, setbacks, circumstances, and other fruits of karma we can meet. No two individuals have the same karma, not even identical twins. Every thought, every emotion, and every feeling produces its own soul vibration, its own 'color' as it were, and fits, I suppose that a particular karmic molecular structure fits each of these.

Jainism is unique in Indian thought with this "materialistic" (pudgalic, I should say) view of karma. In the holistic approaches of other systems – as is particularly emphasized in modern Theosophy – every atom in the infinite cosmos contains in principle everything that constitutes the cosmos. If so, it is not possible to think of any phenomenon in the cosmos as devoid of life and consciousness. That also applies to thoughts, feelings, "vibrations" and karmas. That does not imply that all existing things have their own soul – my computer has no soul, life or consciousness of its own. But all units that are actively composed by nature itself, such as molecules, have a jīva, says Theosophy. In this, Jainism differs remarkably from other philosophical systems. The Jain explanation may, however, help us to understand the *mechanism* of karma.

The philosophy of karma

In relation to the jīvic or ensouled, i.e. living, substance, cause and effect are directly related to the moral tendencies of the conscious jīvas. The jīva or soul is in its essential nature eternal and perfect, and is characterized by infinite intelligence, infinite peace, faith and power. Its knowledge is boundless. The soul is by itself formless, but during embodiment or incarnation it takes the form and extension of the body in which it resides. The jīva is indivisible and individual. The soul's characteristic is consciousness (cetanā). Consciousness is of three kinds: 1) consciousness or experience of pure knowledge in its full extent;³⁶ it is found only in the Omniscient, but it begins to be experienced from the 4th spiritual stage of development; 2) consciousness of

experience of action,³⁷ which is experienced by all living beings; 3) experience of fruition of karmas.³⁸ The number of souls remains the same forever - whether they are in any form of embodiment and obscured, or liberated. In the Jain approach the souls always remain individuals, but each soul is in its essence universal, because it has the faculties to know all, and possesses of universal intelligence.

Though our human souls, as well as all others, which reside in the forms of elemental, mineral, plant, animal, and human bodies or those of hell-beings and heavenly beings, are perfect by nature, they are obscured in such a way that their full glory is unable to express itself -- like soot on the glass of an oil lamp. This obscuration is due to karma. Therefore the Jain doctrine of karma is intimately connected with the doctrine on liberation of the soul, which means purification from all karmic matter particles. (see Chapter 9.

There are nine fundamental concepts (*padārthas*) involved in the doctrine of karma: *jīva* (soul or life); *ajīva* (non-soul or not-life); virtue, vice; influx or inflow of karmic matter particles;³⁹ stopping it;⁴⁰ bondage;⁴¹ purging of attached karmas;⁴² and, finally, liberation.⁴³ The soul, through vice, causes the inflow of non-ensouled karmic particles and subtle matter which then cause the bondage of the soul. Through virtue or meritorious action the inflow of karmic particles can be stopped and the particles purged, so that the soul is finally liberated. In Jain literature, especially in the *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra*,⁴⁴ these concepts and the types of karma are worked out in minute detail. On this the whole system of Jain ethics and the path towards liberation is built.

The passions⁴⁵ in particular cause the inflow of subtle matter particles from all directions, which then stick to the soul like "dust to an oily cloth," as the Jains say, though no doubt this is a very subtle and precise process. Karmic inflow is caused not only by passions, but also by four other types of thought-activities: delusion,⁴⁶ lack of self-control,⁴⁷ inadvertence,⁴⁸ and activities of body, mind and speech.⁴⁹ Each of these, of course, has its subdivisions. As soon as the

influx of pudgala has taken place there is bandha, bondage of karma to the soul. Its nature, duration, intensity and mass are all reflected in the type of karma that is brought about.

The distinction between bhava karma and dravya karma is of key importance in understanding the Jain teaching on karma. The first refers to the thought activity of the soul, the second to the karmic matter which is attracted due to the action of the soul. The first part can purify itself by study, right thinking, and control of the emotions. The second, once it is there, can only be removed by receiving its result, or can be purged. That is why Jains attach so much value to austerities and ascetic practice. Through the effects of the attachment of dravya karmas, the soul is continuously lured into mental action, which is bhava karma. This again attracts new dravya karma. This may go on endlessly, until one decides to enter the path to liberation. Austerities are meant to purge karmic matter. Virtues in the ordinary sense attract punya or meritorious karma. Virtue in the higher sense means no attraction of *any* dravya karma. But this can only be accomplished by the most progressed ascetics.

The systematics of karma

No other thought system has elaborated the karma concept as such detail as the Jains. They have done so very systematically, dividing and subdividing and sub-subdividing karma into hundreds of types. Each subdivision can be used as a focus for meditation and for reflection against the background of the real world.

There are specific vibrations of the soul related to its mental and emotional activity, and these vibrations are the channels for the inflow of karmic matter particles for every karma we can experience, as we shall see.

The subdivision of karmas

Karma which may be experienced is divided into two classes:
(1) destructive karmas, which attack and affect the very nature of the soul;

(2) non-destructive karmas, which do not affect the very nature of the soul, but burden it.

These two classes are each divided into in four types.

The four destructive karmas are:

1 knowledge-obscuring karmas, which are subdivided into five kinds:

- a obstructing the function of senses and mind
- b obstructing the ability to use reasoning
- c obstructing the ability of clairvoyance
- d obstructing the ability to be aware of thought-forms of others
- e obstructing the ability of omniscience.

The first two subdivisions of each type represent karmas such as blindness, deafness, mental deficiencies, etc. The latter three show that if we were fully "healthy," clairvoyance, perception of thoughts, and omniscience would be as normal for us as our ability to see and use the other sense perceptions, and to think and reason, according to our merits.

2 Perception-obscuring karmas, which are of four kinds:

- a obstructing perception by means of the eyes
- b obstructing perception by means of other senses
- c obstructing perception preceding clairvoyance
- d obstructing perception associated with omniscience.

- 3 Deluding karmas, of two kinds:
 - a deluding right insight, engendering false views
 - b deluding one's conduct, preventing pure conduct (especially passions, anger, pride, deceit, greed, but also things like fear, disgust, sexual craving (male, female or hermaphrodite)).

- 4 Karmas obstructing or restricting one's energy; and also those generating the vibrations of body, mind and speech. There are five kinds of these karmas, which result in:
 - a obstructing charity
 - b obstructing gain
 - c obstructing enjoyment of consumable things
 - d obstructing enjoyment of non-consumable things
 - e obstructing exercise of one's capacities or power.

The four nondestructive karmas are:

- 1 Feeling-producing karmas, of two kinds: pleasant and unpleasant feelings.

- 2 Name karma; that by which a soul is identified as being a man, animal, heavenly being or hell-being; this karma determines these births and provides the appropriate body, senses, mind, sex and color. To this category we will return in the next chapter, called "Millennia before Darwin."

- 3 Life-span karma, which exactly determines the life time of the present incarnation.

- 4 Family karma, which determines whether the environmental circumstances in which one is born, such as family and caste, are conducive to having a spiritual life or the opposite.

Causes of inflow of karmas

The differences in influx are among other things due to differences in the intensity of the desire or thought-activity one has, and whether an action is done intentionally or unintentionally.

As summed up in the *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra* the inflow of obscuring karmic matter which will obscure our knowledge and perception is caused by depreciation of learned and spiritual people, by concealing knowledge for others, by envy, jealousy, or refusal to impart knowledge out of envy, by obstruction, i.e. hindering the progress of knowledge; by denying – both through body language and speech – the truth proclaimed by someone else, and by refuting or denying what one knows to be true. In other words, the result of doing these things will be that – in a future birth when we have a new body adjusted to those particular karmas which must bear fruit, or even in the present body – we will be mentally or perceptually less than optimal or even disabled.

The inflow of the karmas which are experienced as pain is due to pain itself, to sorrow, to repentance or remorse, to weeping, to depriving other beings or people of vitality, and also due to piteous or pathetic moaning to attract compassion.

The inflow of karmic matter which will result in pleasant experiences is due in the first place to compassion for all living beings, then of compassion for all who have taken vows (such as monks and nuns, who may undergo suffering in maintaining such vows), to charity, to self-control with only slight attachment; to restraint by vows of some but not all passions, equanimous submission to the fruition of karmas, – which means accepting what one gets without complaining or pride, of austerities which are *not* based upon right knowledge (because otherwise no new karma will be attracted at all), to contemplation, forgiveness and contentment.

The inflow of right-belief-deluding karmic matter is caused by defaming omniscient persons, the scriptures, the brotherhood of saints, religion and celestial beings.

The inflow of karmic matter which wrongly influences our right conduct is caused by the intense thought activity aroused by the passions.

The inflow of hellish karma, i.e. that which causes (temporary but perhaps very long-lasting) unpleasant states of consciousness and visions after death, is caused by too much worldly activity and by attachment to too many worldly objects or attachments in general, leading to severe anger and enmity.

The inflow of karmas which bring about subhuman births, i.e. cause the soul to incarnate one or more times as an animal or lower being, is caused by deceit.

The inflow of karmas which bring about rebirth as a human is caused by slight worldly activity, and by attachment to a minimum of worldly objects or only slight attachment in general. A natural humble disposition along with kindness, mercy, compassion and care for all are also causes of birth as a human. I think this applies to most of us.

The inflow of karmas that result in the soul being born as a celestial being is caused by self-control with the least attachment - which is supposed to be found in monks only, by restraint by vows of some but not all passions, found in laymen only, by equanimous acceptance of the fruition of karma, whether pleasant or otherwise, or by austerities not based upon right knowledge. Right belief is also the cause of celestial age karma (only of the heavenly order). Facing death with equanimity while undergoing austerities - known as *sallekhana* - also creates the merit of celestial birth. Remember that celestial existence, like hellish existence, is only temporary, long lasting though it may be. It is still a state caused by illusion and subtle attachments. All beings that are not yet fully liberated take part in the great cycle of rebirth. As beings in hell or heaven we have bodies, but not *physical*

bodies. After that we may again take on a physical body in accordance with other karmas that have to bear fruit.

The inflow of karmas that lead to physical impediments is caused by allowing the workings of the mind, body or speech to be non-straightforward or deceitful, by wrangling, etc.

Good-body-making karma is due to the opposite of the above, and is attracted by anyone who is straightforward in body, mind and speech, who avoids disputes, etc., by those who have right belief, are humble and feel genuine admiration or respect for praiseworthy people etc.

The inflow of Tīrthamkara karma, the karma which leads one to become one of the rare Tīrthamkaras, is caused by meditation on the purity of right belief which is free from doubt, from worldly desire, from repulsion, from superstition, from a tendency to proclaim the faults of others, and such meditation which is directed toward helping oneself or others to remain steady on the path of truth, having tender affection for one's brothers on the path of liberation, and which is being used for propagation of the path of liberation. One should also have reverence for the means to liberation and for those who follow them, and faultlessly observe the five vows and subdue all passions. Right knowledge should be pursued ceaselessly. One should constantly be aware of mundane miseries, sacrifice for others according to one's capacity, practice austerities according to one's capacity, protect and reassure the saints or remove their troubles, serve the meritorious, show devotion to arhats or omniscient lords, to ācāryas or heads of the orders of saints, and to scriptures, and not neglecting one's daily duties.

The inflow of low-family-determining karma is caused by speaking ill of others, by praising oneself, concealing the good qualities of others, and by proclaiming in oneself good qualities which one does not have.

The inflow of high-family-determining karma is caused by the opposite of the above, namely by praising others, denouncing oneself, proclaiming the good qualities of

others and not proclaiming one's own, by an attitude of humility toward one's superiors, and finally by not being proud of one's own achievements or attainments.

The inflow of obstructive karma is caused by disturbing others in charity; by gain, and enjoyment and by misusing one's powers (cf. *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra* VI 6-27).

Karma and reincarnation

When at death the soul departs from the body the information gathered during life in the form of karmas is carried in the karmic body,⁵⁰ which together with the "fire" or rather electric body,⁵¹ accompanies the soul when it leaves the physical body. The connection between these two bodies has always existed and always will exist – an absolute beginning is denied in Jainism – and every soul has these two invisible bodies. There is only modification during incarnation. These bodies do not leave the soul until complete liberation or nirvāna is reached, because then any karmas cease to adhere to the pure soul.

It is the karmic body which determines the nature of the next birth. The next birth takes place exceedingly rapidly according to Jainism, in "less than the winking of an eye." As soon as the soul is freed from the physical body it flies at incredible speed and in a straight line to the destination determined by its accompanying karma. This does not mean that the soul resumes a physical body at once. Depending on karma physical incarnation may take place quickly, or in the near or even very distant future. The jīva may then be reborn in the body of a human or any other living being, including both visible and invisible beings, trees, plants, and animals, depending on the ethical values – good or bad – practiced in the past.

It may seem strange to the reader that the soul of a former human being might be reborn in a plant body or any non-human creature. For example, due to its particular karmas a

soul may be drawn first to embodiment in the soil of the earth and then be transferred by its karma to the sprouting seed of a tree. In the case of the human soul, this seems to refer to the process of transmigration of particular aspects of the soul through various stages between two human existences, rather than to an actual loss of humanness (or “animalness” or “plantness” etc. as the case may be) or other higher qualities.

Modern biology teaches us that “we” first go through a unicellular ovum stage, and then through a sequence of embryological stages which among other things show similarity with a sea urchin, a fish, a then a tailed vertebrate; a newborn child hardly differs from the baby of a great ape as far as its mental capacities are concerned. As a child and adolescent we experiment once again which what humankind has already learned when in its more primitive stages. Our soul is involved in all stages of physical, emotional and mental growth, but is it possible to say when exactly we became “we”? If we – I mean our souls – pre-existed long before our present birth, we do indeed go in progressive sequence through a unicellular and maybe even a mineral stage, and then a plantlike stage and a primitive and evolved animal stage before the soul accomplishes its present human incarnation in full.

In the rich story tradition of the Jains, humans are almost always reborn as humans (after having spent some time in either heaven or hell), though animal incarnations do occur (in the stories) to work out a particular karma, followed by a return to human incarnation after some time. This happened, for example, in one of the former lives of the last Tīrthamkara, Mahāvīra, who incarnated as a lion, and in that situation became convinced of the need to adopt the pious attitude of non-violence.

Whether philosophically correct or not, the popular belief that we human souls may incarnate in any form, and therefore that any life-form may have been a human in the past, gives rise to a universal awareness of brotherhood for all creatures alike. An animal you kill may have been your

human friend somewhere in the past. Would you have killed him then?

What is more important perhaps is that the theory of transmigration of the *jīva* through a variety of bodies in no way contradicts the theory of gradual evolution. It is most probable that a soul which is clothed in a particular vehicle according to its karma produces causes in line with its present state. The next embodiment (on earth) will then be related to the present one, but just a little bit higher, due to the inherent upward drive of the soul, and due to the added experiences. It is however next to unthinkable that great jumps upward would be made at once, simply because a soul in its present stage is unable to create the cause for a much higher karmic result. On the other hand, a great fall is also improbable, because that would mean the complete exhaustion of the karmas which brought us to our present state, as well as counteraction of all the karmas that were brought about in the present state. It is unimaginable that a higher being, such as a human, would at once and perhaps for ever lose all the merits – i.e. all the typical human faculties of sense development and mental and intuitive development – which have brought him to this situation, due to a few vibrations of a lower kind. It is more plausible that relatively small modifications take place from incarnation to incarnation, such as peculiarities of the human character or physical or psychological constitution, or small jumps from species to related species within the animal or plant kingdoms. The general rule would then be: once a human, always a human, at least for a long period of time; and once an animal, or plant, or mineral, always an animal, or plant, or mineral, until the time when the soul creates the cause for embodiment in a higher form. But, according to many Jains, intermediate incarnations may take place in lower realms, as a result of certain actions and attitudes that squander the human life by building up mountains of sins.

5

Millennia before Darwin

An aimless soul, under the impulse of karma
Wandered from birth to birth
In the human kingdom and the animal,
In heaven and in hell
Until it reached the end of its wanderings
- *Mahāpurāna*, parva 174

Thousands of years ago even, the Jains taught about the changes of form in nature, and that life goes from one form into another. They also had a good explanation for these facts. But evolution is much more than change of form. Though Jainism has no explicit doctrine or theory of evolution, its ideas come much closer to the real meaning of evolution than those prevailing in the Western world.

The origin of species

The occidental world is proud of the great scientific and philosophical accomplishments of Darwin (to be honest we should add that Darwin elaborated on and published ideas which were already brooding in the mind of his 18th century grandfather – and who knows how many who remained unknown), who put an end to the rigid belief that God had created all life-forms exactly as they were today, and that therefore no changes in form could have taken place. Fossil

finds showed however that all kinds of organisms had once lived which had a very different outer appearance than those of today, but that many of them had apparently become extinct. It was also discovered that very many organisms had appeared on the scene long after the presumed six or seven days of God's creation. But there was as yet no satisfactory explanation for these observations. Some biologists, notably Lamarck, presumed that properties which were imposed by the environment of an individual organism could be registered and maintained over the generations. If for example a tropical animal species were to be kept in a cold climate for a number of generations, they would naturally develop thicker fur. If the great great grandchildren would then be brought back to the tropics, their children born there would, despite the warmth, have the same thick fur as their parents because in the meantime this had become an acquired property. It would again take several generations to revert to the original situation. But where that property was recorded, and where the acquired information was kept, was not known. This theory was never proven and has now almost been abandoned. Others, like Charles Darwin and Albert Russell Wallace did not believe in this theory even in those days. Instead they assumed that new characteristics of organisms were either already existent in latency, or were newly formed within the living organisms, and could only surface via procreation. In the case of (either sudden or slow) alterations in environmental conditions, progeny of organisms which had surfaced such a new property might suddenly find themselves with a competitive advantage. The new circumstances suddenly made them "stronger" or fitter than their brothers and sisters and more remote family members. Thus they produced progeny that was more successful – seen from an anthropomorphic point of view of the economics of nature – and which carried the new characteristic which had been fixed in their being with them for the generations to follow. In the 21st century we no longer consider the manner in which characteristics are recorded to be at all mysterious: we know

now that all physical characteristics of an organism are represented by a chemical code on a type of molecule known as DNA. Changes to an organism's characteristics are preceded by an alteration of the DNA in the cell's nucleus. But what causes these changes? Most scientists ascribe this to pure chance, but are also aware that there is a steering takes place within the organism itself, by whereby some parts of the DNA code can influence others, for example by either stimulating or repressing changes. The mechanisms of the chemistry which take place within and around the cell nucleus are extremely complex, and it will take time before science has unraveled the whole puzzle.

From a philosophical point of view the Darwinism of the 19th century and the neo-Darwinism of the 20th are not a theory of evolution, but a theory about change in nature. The word *evolution* literally means "to roll out," "to unfold" what is already there in a rolled-up or enfolded state. But Darwinism does not touch on that subject at all. Changes to characteristics are haphazardly by unsteered influences from outside. In fact they are caused by "damage" done to the existing DNA. If the new characteristics provide a competitive advantage, they win out. This is how new races, species and groups of higher order in the biological classification system are said to come into existence. Because in this way ever better characteristics supplant less perfect ones, and the form automatically becomes more perfect. This process has been given the name "evolution" but it really isn't. It is a side effect of changes of form.

Natural sciences of the 19th and 20th centuries had little eye for the intellectual accomplishments of non-occidental cultures, despite the fact that quite a few "Sacred Books of the East" – India, Persia, China – were translated by scholars like H.H. Wilson, F. Hall, K.T. Telang, and a host of workers under supervision of the German scholar Max Müller. If they paid more attention they would have been aware that many cultures the world over had been pondering the question of

evolution from time immemorial. Here we will only pay attention to the views of Jainism about changes of form and evolution in nature.

Outsiders often think that Jainism started with Mahāvīra, who lived some 2575 years ago. The very old scriptures which were in existence in his day – the twelve Angas – were destroyed in that same period by hostile factions. In the following centuries texts were written based on monk's memories and traditions, but these are not exactly the same in the two main sects of Jainism. The most important available scripture, written some centuries after Mahāvīra's passing, known as the *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra*,⁵² contains sufficient information for our purpose. In reality, Jainism is far older, as we have already seen, and it is believed that the teachings given to humankind are essentially the same each time. Thus, from a Jain point of view, the teachings are as old as thinking humanity itself.

Mutations from within

A concept included in the ancient-and-modern teachings of the Jains is that of *parināma*, what literally means “bending” or transformation. Thanks to the observations of the Jains (and others) of the fact that forms in nature are changing continually, humankind already knew this thousands of years before the western world apparently became aware of it. The *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra* says the following about this concept of transformation or modification: It “means the continuation of one's own nature through change; transformation is the continuity of the essential nature of substances and qualities⁵³ through change. Parināma of a substance⁵⁴ is the change in the character of its attributes”⁵⁵ (*Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra* V 41). An example is change of color. The qualities are subject to change, parināma, by adopting new modes and losing old ones. All changes in the physical properties of organisms, as in the western theory of evolution, fall under the term “parināma.” The soul is

regarded in Jainism as a (living) substance, i.e. something that has qualities. Examples of qualities are knowledge, energy, compassion, happiness. The uncountable number of qualities may increase or decrease, but they are always present in many (theoretically, an infinite number of) possible modes. As a logical consequence of the *anekānta* doctrine discussed in chapter 3 – the fundamental proposition of the Jains that truth shows itself in many different facets to the observer as long as he can not see them in their unity at the same moment⁵⁶ (i.e. when he has reached omniscience) – many properties which seemingly exclude each other can exist at the same time. Because of the complexity of the multifaceted aspects, qualities like “singularity and multiplicity,” or “eternal and evanescent,” exist at the same time. In this way all the different kinds and varieties of roses, despite their distinct features, have their innate and relatively everlasting “roseness” in common. Therefore they can together be classified as the rose family (*Rosaceae*). If we look at nature in the context of the scientifically accepted biological system of classification, we can ascend along a hierarchical line within the system of classification, and explain by means of the *anekānta* doctrine why the rose family can be classified together with the buttercup family (*Ranunculaceae*) in one order (the *Rosales*), etc. All living beings or groups of living beings have on their own level of classification a fundamental characteristic due the group’s qualities and their modes.

This of course applies not only to the physical appearance of all creatures, but also to their inner, psychological, mental and spiritual characteristics, and to what a living being feels itself attracted to.

Thus an explanation of the multiformity of nature – both around us and within us – fits within the framework of Jain philosophical thinking. Therefore Jains have no need of a creative god who performs “miracles” to create all life-forms. All beings are nothing but forms of manifestation in which nature presents herself to our eyes and consciousness.

When we approach the changes of form which take place in nature from a Jain-scientific perspective, we conclude that every change has a cause which ensues from the law of karma – the universal law of cause and effect. In Darwinist thinking, too, changes take place as a result of causes. But at present this philosophy does not go beyond the point of localizing this cause within the realm of “chance” – i.e. the (to us) unknown. The Jains on the other hand teach that changes are initiated by the organism itself. The aspect of an organism which brings about these changes they call the soul, or *jīva* – living, conscious substance. Thoughts and the emotional vibrations of the soul are the cause of a complexity of processes moving in the direction of result. On the bodily level causes express themselves in a particular form. It is therefore the inner activity of a living being which determines the form in which it will cloth itself. Thus the changes of form in nature are guided from within, and not by external influences independent of the control of the being which inhabits the body. The soul of a frog has thus had in the foregoing incarnations of its endlessly long past, exactly those vibrations which now give it its frog body and its “frog psychology.” It will feel as a frog feels, and thus produce the corresponding vibrations, but no doubt it will also add something new through the exercises and experiences of its life – until the frog body is no longer suitable to accommodate the soul. The concept of “evolution” in the occidental sense can thus be wholly explained from the choices and preferences of souls. These choices and preferences, even though they are directed without knowledge of the results to which they will lead, cause the psychological, mental as well as physical characteristics of men, animals, plants, minerals, and even invisible beings in all worlds. The outer world around us, the environment, is the result of the totality of the inner life of all living beings. So it is the souls of the individual beings which determine the world of forms, making use of the endless possibility of characteristics and modes that nature offers.

Evolution

Jainism does not have an *explicit* doctrine of evolution, and among Jains themselves it is a point of discussion whether one can speak of an evolution – whether gradual or punctuated – of inner qualities from less developed to more developed forms.

Jains may never have given real attention to this question, and in general many take the attitude that “what you (in the West) think is your business, is of no concern to us; but let us go our own way.” Many regard western scientific theory as something that may be a nice occupation, but is by nature evanescent subject to constant change, and they prefer to focus on the knowledge of all ages. Science is still very far from knowing everything. On the other hand, every individual *spiritual* seeker has to go a long, long way to develop his mind and inner faculties to reach full understanding of the deepest meaning of the spiritual doctrines given to humankind by those who were far ahead of the average. Until that time no human being can claim to know the truth. There may be many truths and insights hidden in the doctrines of Jainism (or any genuine thought system for that matter) whose meaning even Jain scholars or monks have not yet glimpsed.

Some Jains however try to compare their own teachings with the theories of the occident, and I – as a non-Jain – have done the same thing. When studying Jain philosophy there are to my opinion enough clues to defend the view that Jainism has an *implicit* doctrine of evolution, and in such a way that world culture can draw much benefit from it.

The mainstream belief among Jains is that the soul, depending on its vibrations and resultant karma, can haphazardly move up and down and horizontally through all higher and lower forms of existence. Still final liberation from the cycle of joy and suffering can only be reached through the human kingdom – and in this respect Buddhism, Theosophy and Jainism agree. The theosophical system teaches that the soul after many incarnations in the human kingdom – long

after having left behind the animal and lower kingdoms – can awaken step by step to buddhic consciousness and thus can become a Buddha – a fully awakened human being which can choose immediate nirvana or to postpone nirvāna to help others still struggling on the spiritual path.⁵⁷ Full spiritual awakening, enlightenment or liberation can only be accomplished by right thinking and action, such as complete nonviolence and self-purification. During these efforts high yogic powers may develop, such as spiritual clairvoyance, knowledge of the thoughts of others (when the soul has acquired sufficient purity to be unable to misuse its power) the power to see karmic relations between someone's successive incarnations, and, above all, an infinitely spiritual and wise compassion. Finally one reaches what the Jains call *kevalajñāna*, omniscience: the soul reaches for ever its full unlimited blossoming. This is evolution in the true sense. All that our being always contained but could express only partially is than fully unfolded and manifest to the individual consciousness. That essence is our soul – every soul of every form of life – which is immortal and uses one form after the other on its long pilgrimage through nature.

A Jain might say that within this endless oscillation between high and low forms of existence the chance of being born as a human is very small. But in any of these forms of existence we must have had the opportunity to attract those karmas which gave us our present existence as a human! And when we finally become humans, most of us spoil the opportunity. How many of us really choose a spiritual life and, turning away from all lower aspects of our nature, direct ourselves exclusively towards the divine?

Still there are enough indications within the Jain teachings that the real state of affairs differs from the above exoteric opinion. One of the questions which are of interest in this connection is the exhaustion of the number of souls. Souls reach liberation, the highest state of being, never to return to a lower state. If there were no supply from below, one day all souls would have reached liberation – and because there has

been no beginning to existence as the Jains teach, it would be impossible to explain why there are still non-liberated souls in the universe. However they teach also that there is an infinite number of *nigodas* ("microorganisms" in a sense) which find themselves in the lowest state of consciousness. They have one sense only: that of touch or feeling. But how did they reach their present karmic condition? Within the framework of karma theory this is only possible if there is a stage which precedes that of the *nigodas*. Though it is believed that many *nigodas*⁵⁸ can *never* leave their present stage, there is another class which can. So when these graduate to a higher realm, they are "lost" for the *nigoda* realm. At the other end there are souls who reach liberation for ever, so that at least *on the average* evolution is progressive. This average is determined by the totality of the conditions of all individuals. So we can also say that there is an average evolutionary progress for each individual. If however there is an infinite number of *nigodas* and liberation is the absolute end to the pilgrimage of the soul, there must be an infinite number of liberated souls. In between there is a continuously upward moving stream of living beings. Prof. Padmanabh S. Jaini of Berkeley discusses the question of evolution in his article *Karma and the Problem of Rebirth in Jainism* and states among other arguments: "... every soul is said to exist along a virtual continuum of consciousness, from the minimal but ineradicable trace of awareness (*nitya-udghātita-jñāna*) possessed by a *nigoda* to the omniscience of a *siddha* [one who has achieved liberation] ... we have here a model which is both linear and evolutionary in its conception." Every being on earth (and elsewhere) seems to have some instinct for progress in agreement with the direction which the inner being has chosen and in agreement with its previous desires. Despite an endless number of setbacks on a path of trying and failing, this effort to progress always remains a dominant vibration of the soul, as a result of which all souls will ultimately be driven to the human condition, and finally to liberation. Progressive evolution in nature follows as a logical

consequence. Therefore Jain philosophy contains concepts for this. The concept of *bhavyatva* means “the power to reach liberation,” and is an inherent quality of the soul. This quality has always been in the background, waiting for the moment it would be awakened to one’s consciousness. We should always bear in mind the fundamental point that the soul by its own nature is pure, omniscient and all-compassionate, and that it is only the individual consciousness of the karmic vehicle of the soul – i.e. every individual manifestation of consciousness – that differs for every living being and is limited in extent. The experience of suffering which we constantly undergo is the result of deception or darkened clarity – and this we call ignorance. Therefore the soul itself is ready to radiate its undaunted energy for the wellbeing, spiritual progress and liberation of the suffering consciousness. When, thanks to the right karmic conditions, the receptive center of consciousness has reached a state of preparedness, the “light” may suddenly break through and bend the propensities of the consciousness irreversibly in the direction of a spiritual goal, and that is the knowledge of the Soul or Self.

It is however not the case that *bhavyatva*, the power to liberation, takes us by the hand and leads us to salvation. *Bhavyatva* initiates the process and makes the spiritual pilgrim aware that there is a purpose to life, but that one must climb the path towards Truth by one’s own strenuous efforts, by living a life of purity, steadfastness and self-control. The path of spiritual growth involves the unfolding of the qualities of the soul as the karmic obstructions are removed.

Thus, from an evolutionary perspective, we may distinguish two phases: the first phase in which the soul clothes itself in innumerable “garments” (bodies) so that it can undergo experiences in all realms of nature in agreement with the *karman*s it has attracted and embraced. It develops one sense-organ, then two, three, four, five, and a mind, until the point has been reached where the soul becomes receptive to

the influence of bhavyatva. At that moment the second phase begins: that of self-directed evolution.

Still another concept in relation to evolution and the path the disciple has entered is *yathā-pravritti-karana*, which means “beginning cause.” It is the urge which is felt even in the most primitive consciousness to liberate itself from the chains of bondage and karmic obstacles. This quality too belongs to the inherent nature of the soul. In humans this energy acquires a very special meaning: it is this urge, this energy, which a person can choose at the beginning of the path of *self-conscious, self-directed* evolution; it temporarily pushes aside most karmas, and thus brings the consciousness face to face with all individual karmas which obstruct the vision and freedom of the soul. This gives to the aspirant the hope and courage to wage the battle which will lead to victory and Jinahood.

Thus, if we consider these two concepts of bhavyatva and yathāpravrittikarana – i.e. the ever-present inherent power of liberation, and the power to face the inner “enemy” which we are bound to conquer – we may, I think, conclude that there is an inherent doctrine of evolution in Jainism. Thanks to these two qualities of the soul the pilgrimage of the soul moves predominantly in an upward direction. All changes of form – *parināma* – in the vehicles of the soul continuously move in the direction of greater accomplishment, upwards through the realms of nature towards perfection.

The inherent qualities, i.e. knowledge, joy, energy, and compassion of the soul – which by nature is immortal – can never be extinguished. Temporarily they can be obscured by the karmic “molecules” sticking to them, but in the end the aspirant soul, with all its noble qualities, will always conquer and thus the highest goal of evolution will surely be reached by every one of us.

Body determining karma

In western biology plants and animals are classified on the basis of their outer and genetic characteristics. But in Jainism, where the soul is seen as more important than the body, the classification of living beings (as long as they still belong to the non-liberated entities, which of course stand above all karmically determined classifications) is primarily based on the state of the soul within its specific embodiment. The taxonomy of the Jains is based in the first place on the number of sense organs (1 to 5 + mind) which an entity possesses (see chapter 6), because these reflect the karmic condition of the soul. Minerals and plants for example have but one sense, i.e. feeling or touch. The origin of species (including those of the mineral kingdom and invisible beings) is determined exclusively by karma. All entities in the visible and invisible realms and their physical, psychological, mental and environmental conditions have their cause in an action of the soul. What for westerners are mutations and genetic codes would from a Jain point of view, in so far as they have any influence on the condition of the soul, be a result and not an original cause – intermediaries in the process of karma. Real causes are more subtle than physical chemistry, and are made in the consciousness of entities. The relationship between ethical action and thought and their effects has already been discussed in the previous chapter.

Because western biology classifies nature on the basis of physical or sometimes physiological features, it is interesting to discuss here the various kinds of body-determining karma (nāma-karma) and, as a result of this, species-determining karma. There are 93 types of body-determining karma. The first four types of karmic results determine the conditions of existence and the realm of nature (gati) into which the soul is born. These four gatis are the hellish, subhuman, human and celestial realms. All further circumstances which appertain to the physical or fluidic body apply to all these realms, if

relevant (for example “gracious flight through the air” is irrelevant for earthworms, but not for birds, pterodactyls, insects, bats and many celestials). Of course the physical and the fluidic bodies have their own unique features. The fluidic body consists of molecules of the corresponding degree of matter and belongs only to hellish and celestial beings. We don’t have it during our existence on earth – it is not what Anthroposophists, Theosophists and Hindus call the etheric or the astral body or *linga śārīra* etc., because that is the invisible model for the physical body, and each living being on earth has that. In the Jain system the model is included in the karmic and the electric bodies. The soul only takes these two with it when we “die,” i.e. leave – as a soul – either our physical or fluidic body.

The second group determines in which kingdom of nature the soul will embody itself, and also on which biological level of classification. The visible kingdoms include what we call the atomic, the mineral, the unicellular, the vegetable, the various groups of the animal, and the human kingdom. The highest level of classification appertains to the number of senses which came to expression and the power of consciousness to gain experience by means of touch, taste, smell, vision and hearing. From the standpoint of the evolution of the soul, these senses are developed in this sequence only. So an organism with three senses always has the first three, but no vision and hearing. Organisms with only one sense, such as nigodas and plants, always possess touch or feeling, but none of the other senses. Those on earth with only one sense are the minerals, water, fire, air, microorganisms (nigodas) and plants, and those with 2-5 are the lowest up to the highest animals. Humans also have five senses, and mental power, and this we have in common with the highest animals – and also with the celestial and hellish beings which were humans in their last incarnation.

The world of one-sensed organisms transcends our scientific imagination. One droplet of water contains numberless microbes, and such droplets rain all over the earth

including its rivers and oceans. Earth, forests, fields, and also the inside of the bodies of all creatures (except those of the enlightened ones) are packed with nigodas. They may include bacteria, viruses, Rickettsiae, phages, etc. But they occur *everywhere* in loka (see Chapter 6), including all the invisible realms. Apart from the visible world, all space in physically imperceptible worlds and in heavens and hells is full of them. Apart from the nitya-nigodas, all of them as souls will at some point go through all human stages of development and consciousness, through all celestial stages of consciousness, and will finally become enlightened, omniscient, liberated divine souls.

In the Jain classification system it is interesting that minerals and plants are placed in the same category, without any line of division between them. Like the other kingdoms of nature the mineral kingdom has been subdivided into classes which by means of their "bodies" express a wide scale of karmic effects due to conscious activity.

The level of classification of the beings with one sense is defined by the physical element with which they are connected during their embodiment on earth: they either belong to the earth-bodied beings, or to the water, air, fire, or plant-bodied beings. Though the plant and the mineral kingdom are classified together, the highest category of this class comprises the plants only, because they are placed after the four elements, which are always mentioned in the sequence from low to high.

We find another remarkable classification at the transition between animals and humans. Like the highest animals, we humans have five senses and mental power. We stand on one line with dogs, cows, horses, camels, goats, elephants, birds etc. Humans do not occupy a special place in the classification system but we are regarded as the highest within the five-sensed class for our power of reasoning and physical ability to handle work and to organize it. I have had long discussions about this. I remarked that a dog does not seem to occupy himself, as humans do, with philosophy or

cultural expression, or with questions about his (divine) origin, in fact, it does not show much interest beyond its primary physical impulses. But I was told that even a dog can go to a temple and listen attentively, and though he can not express himself verbally, he can still hear the teachings and be touched by them. Would such a thing be possible without a human brain? I would imagine that a dog lack the typical human brain mind thinking! One dog used to lie down near the feet of a guru, and while other dogs outside would make their dogs' noises, this one preferred the feet of the master. It is very important how we behave towards and communicate with our pets or cattle. They are not only interested in the food we put before them, but they are also influenced by our manners of expression and real moral qualities. Above I wrote that the beings who are now in a celestial or hellish state of consciousness have been humans in their most recent incarnation. But in the stories which were told me it appeared that higher animals such as dogs, tigers, elephants and even frogs and snakes, provided they behave in the right way, can after their passing be born as celestial beings. After all, they have all that is needed: five senses and a mind. There are even many animals that choose for their process of dying the same path as the Digambara monks: when their natural end approaches they abandon all eating and even drinking with the intention of dying completely purified. An animal which acts in such a way cannot possibly take birth in a karmically lower realm of existence than where it is now, so after death it will take form in one of the many heavenly abodes. This may not be an official Jain teaching, but many believe it that way. Somebody told me about an actual case when a dog had done so. Many birds also take that path: they stop eating and then die. In the West we would say that this is an unconscious instinctive action, but Jains can believe that this is their conscious noble choice with the purpose of reaching a higher form of birth. Who knows how the inner urge from the soul influences the individual consciousness of an animal, a human, or other organism? I suggest you look deep into the

eyes of your favorite pet, and ask him or her. Even animals can tread the spiritual path, according to Jainism.

Let us return to what we are saying about plants and minerals: the division goes even further than the above-mentioned categories of earth-bodied up to plant-bodied entities. Earth-bodied beings or earth-lives may be expressing the specific karma to manifest in bodies which we know as pure earth, silica pebbles, sand, salt, iron, copper, gold or other metals, and also as precious minerals such as diamond, emerald, sapphire, and so on. The body forms which the water-lives can take are pure water, dew, moisture, white frost, ice, fog, etc. Anyone who has ever silently looked at a dewdrop can understand why Jains say that it has a soul, and one can also see why a raindrop hanging from a leaf has a soul, but of a different character. Fire-lives manifest as, for example, glow, pure fire, flames, rays of light, lightning, or sparks: the spark emitted by the tusks of two fighting elephants show that fire-souls reside in those tusks to suddenly manifest themselves as sparks. The air-bodied entities have the karma to present themselves to us as various types of wind, such as a steady breeze, a whirlwind, a cyclone, a hurricane and many other meteorological phenomena which take place in the air. But some of them we do not usually recognize, such as winds which only occur in the heavens or in the hells, or the final hurricane which will destroy the earth in distant future. So among them there are souls which come to us as rest or silence, beauty, desire, or silent forces, whereas others manifest as violent forces of nature beyond the power of man to control them – unless a person has developed such a strong will that he has become master over the elements, such as the emotional storms within him. The soil, volcanism, earthquakes, the atmosphere, wind, lightning and the behavior of water are ecological factors of major importance. They offer to others the opportunity to experience their environment, and sometimes to work as karmic adjusters. Natural disasters are not haphazard, but have been evoked by the conscious beings involved, and the forces

of nature only perform their tasks in agreement with their natural character. All such beings have the inherent possibility to evolve that which is already within them, and to become a human, a god, or a liberated soul in the distant future.

As already mentioned, five types of bodies exist: the physical, the fluidic, the assimilative (only with ascetics under particular conditions), the electric and the karmic body. The last four are at least as important as the physical body, and are as much determined by karma. It is in reality the karmic body, which is composed of karmic molecules or aggregates of the most subtle type of matter, which determines the forms of the uncountable numbers of living beings that exist on earth and elsewhere. Every desire, every thought, every vibration has left its mark in the karmic body. Every living being is the result of a particular group of desires – which in their turn are the results of earlier desires, and of course the inherent will and intelligence of the soul.

As regards body-determining karma, one category of karmas determines the organs and limbs and their correct growth in relation to their bodily location. So whether for example the brain functions properly as an organ or whether our immune system is in its proper condition is the result of the workings of karma. Physical impediments therefore develop during the fetal stages. Next we go to the molecular level. The Jains distinguish five types of molecules in relation to the five types of bodies. And five types of karma are involved with the mixing of the molecules of the five types of bodies, and how they are intertwined with the soul, and these must cooperate in the right way to form an organic whole. This Jain teaching is a very important idea for modern physiology, because science is still far too little aware of the refined relations between organs, chemistry, the information contained in magnetic and electric fields produced in the organs in the body, the influence of thoughts and feelings on these fields, and the influence these fields have on and undergo from others that

make up the environment. Western science is now becoming aware of such things [Read for example the chapters on the heart in *The Secret Teachings of Plants* by S.H. Buhner].⁵⁹ But what western science has not yet done, is to trace the transfer of the subtler energies from incarnation to incarnation, when a physical body with all its specific characteristics is temporarily nonexistent. Here again, ancient knowledge is a step ahead of modern science.

Further there are karmas which determine the general physiognomy of the body: general perfection, or aberrations in symmetry or proportions. The next category is especially concerned with the six types of joints which occur in animals. In addition there is a category which describes all external features which do not belong to the basic form, structure and physiology of the body. These are the secondary characteristics which can be perceived by the senses (excluding hearing); in other words, how the body feels when touched, or tastes, smells or sees. This is how the colors of the bodies are determined: white, black, blue, red and yellow with their various shades; and also the surface structure of the body: to the touch it may be hot (for example the sun) or cold, soft, rough, hard, or be light or heavy. Tastes can be bitter, sharp, sour, and sweet. There are only two smells: pleasant and foul.

Then there is a category of karmas which is of special importance for invisible beings, and which the *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra* describes as "the ability to maintain (after death) the form of the body in its most recent incarnation during the passage of the soul from one condition of existence towards the next" (i.e. the hellish, subhuman, human or celestial condition). There are karmas which determine whether the body is too heavy to move, or too light to be stable, or whether an organ grows in such a way that it becomes the cause of the body's death. There are also karmas which result in the growth of fatal weapons in the animal kingdom, such as the sting of a scorpion or the poison of a snake.

In addition there is a type of karmas which again shows that many objects which westerners usually regard as inorganic are for the Jains expressions of life. An example is the "radiating heat" an object can possess which is bearable for the owner, but unbearable for others (glowing iron, for example). A separate karma applies to phosphorescence, as seen in fireflies. Then there are karmas in relation to respiration, or connected with gracious or clumsy flight in the air.

According to Jainism a body can be inhabited by more than one soul – a potato for example. Cut a potato into pieces, put them in the ground, and as many potato plants may come up. A mango however has only one. And of course there is a type of karma which determines whether the soul will live life in an immobile (fixed) body, such as that of plants and minerals, or in a mobile body.

The following eight karmas determine whether a body looks attractive or repulsive to others, and whether it brings forth pleasant sounds or unpleasant, harsh sounds (compare a nightingale and a donkey), or whether the body will look beautiful or ugly and is of refined or coarse physiognomy.

Then two types of karma are mentioned which determine whether an individual and its organs will grow into adulthood or whether it will die before it has reached adulthood. These karmas determine whether the soul will appear to be able to bring the features and powers of the body in which it is born to full expression. The actual process of growing towards and into adulthood is the process of transformation of subtle and chemical elements in agreement with the pattern laid out by the karmic molecules, which are drawn to the location where the respective organs are to be formed. For example the molecules which determine the power of inhalation and exhalation transform themselves into the respiratory system. So breathing is not a function of the respiratory system, but it is the other way round: the karmic desire and the energy to breath are the cause of the development of the organs involved in respiration.

The next group determines the stability or instability of the body and its substances, such as bodily fluids, muscular tissue, fat, bone, marrow, veins, digestive juices, blood, etc..

Finally the Sūtra mentions four karmas which determine whether a body will look dull and sluggish, and whether someone will have a good or a bad name as a result. Too often people or even animals are despised because of their physical appearance, whereas he, she or it may have done nothing but good during the present life.

Whether or not we agree with all the details from the viewpoint of modern science is not the most important thing. The modern world with its ever refining measuring techniques will find its own way to describe the interplay between all these energies, fields and states of matter in relation to consciousness and its free choice. In any case it is remarkable – to say the least – that in the days of Aristotle and Archimedes, when occidental science had only just started the Jains, already had a detailed view of the principles of ecology, biology, evolution, physiology, atoms and molecules, and above all, the logic behind them. If the detailed knowledge gained in recent centuries by means of refined instruments is combined with the Jain background, science will become more philosophical, more universal, more ethical, and more holistic. The biological teachings of the Jains include not only the physical, but also the invisible worlds of beings and forces – a field of science which in the west is still associated with superstition and the barely recognized science of parapsychology. Without a vision which includes the *whole* universe with *all* its phenomena, modern man can never reach satisfactory and final solutions.

6

Cosmos

The soul in its wanderings
is limited to the knowable universe

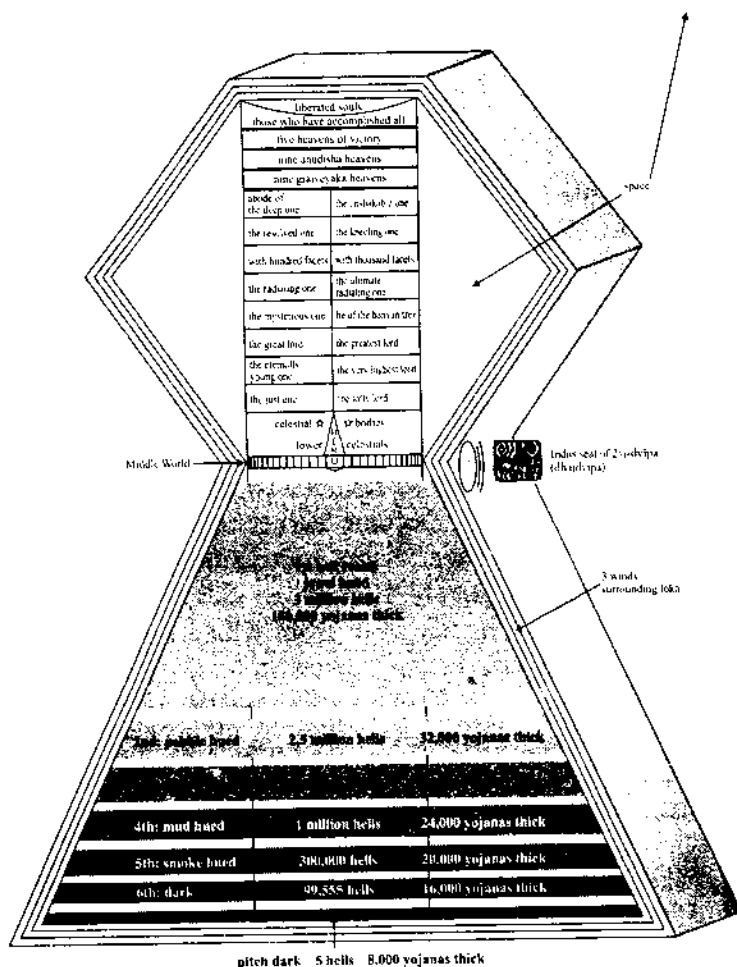
Jainism appears to teach a dualistic cosmology. The cosmos is divided in *loka* and *aloka* – world and not-world, or universe and not-universe. Within *loka* is every form of existence. Outside *loka* is only space (*alokākāśa*), but soul (= life-consciousness), matter, time, movement and opposition to movement do not exist there. Within *loka*, the universe or manifested cosmos comprising all existing things, there is a lower or hellish world, a middle world (*Madhyaloka*) and an upper world where the heavenly or celestial beings live. The lower world consists of seven “earths” (*bhūmi*), which are depicted as a column of horizontal discs with spaces in between, and which become more and more unpleasant in a downward direction. Within these seven “earths” are seven *narakas* or infernal realms, which are further subdivided into a total of 8,400,000 hellish locations.

The Middle World is pictured as a horizontal disc without thickness. On a small part of it we live at this moment. Literature, paintings and relief sculptures depict mountains, rivers, lakes, oceans, islands and continents in detail.

Above the higher world is an upper world which consists of dozens of heavens or paradises. Above the highest heaven, but of course still within *loka*, the universe, is

Siddhaloka – the world of the beings who have entirely shed all karmas and will never return to any lower level of existence within the universe. See Figure 1.⁶⁰

Figure 1 : The Cosmos



Though Jainism expresses its view on the cosmos in a dualistic way, the deeper and original meaning needs not be dualistic: loka is surrounded by – or exists within – aloka. Thus loka is that aspect of the infinite which can *possibly* be

understood. Even the Jinas live within loka, in which they possess omniscience. This does not necessarily imply that there is “nothing” outside, but only that our knowledge, even if omniscient in loka, can not reach there. Why else would the Jain philosophers have created the concept of “aloka”?

What follows is a summary of the teachings of the *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra* on cosmology, interspersed with my own comments.

The lower worlds

The lower worlds as a whole, which together comprise the underworld, have a depth of 7 rajjus⁶¹, i.e. many light-years. The seven bhūmis or earths below Madhyaloka have the shape of seven discs with a space of seven rajju in between them. Each bhūmi is surrounded by three atmospheres: a coarse air atmosphere, a moist atmosphere and a thin air atmosphere, and the whole is surrounded by ākāśa (space). In a downward direction they become darker, and their colors are described as jewel, sugar, sand, mire, smoke, darkness, and pitch darkness respectively. Beneath all these is a hell, the severest of all, called Nigoda Hell, from which no return is possible.⁶² The topmost of the seven bhūmis is 180,000 yojanas⁶³ thick, and the subsequent ones are far thinner; the ratio of the thickness of the seven is 45, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 and 2 times 4000 yojanas. The first consists of three layers of 4, 21, and 20 times 4000 yojanas. In the lowest of these three layers the first hell is situated – that is to say, only in the so-called mobile channel (trasi nadi) which has the form of a vertical column. The second to seventh hells are found in the mobile channels of the second to seventh bhūmis. Between each of these bhūmis is one rajju of space. So the thickness of the bhūmis is negligible compared to the distances in between.

In each of the seven bhūmis are layers in which the hells are located, and from the first to the seventh downward these have 13, 11, 9, 7, 5, 3, and 1 layers, totaling 49. The

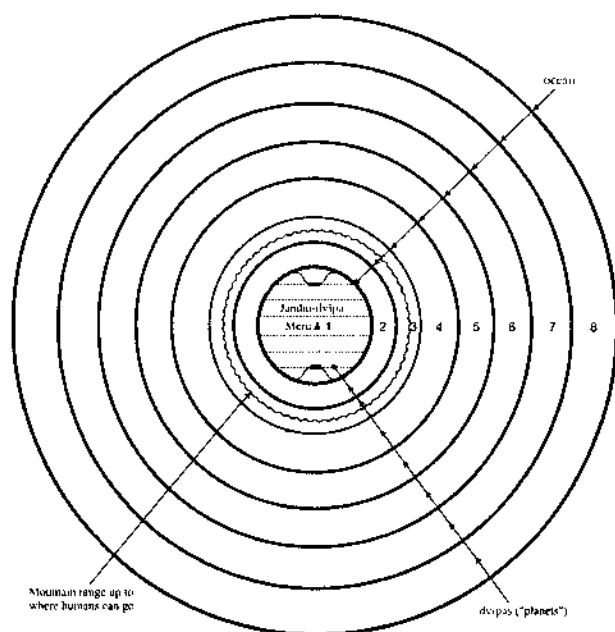
hellish beings, which by definition possessed an independent mental power during their last existence in madhyaloka, “our” world, but misused it, live in enormous cavities within these layers, all of which are located around one central hole for each layer. Altogether the number of these cavities is 8,400,000.

Despite these truly astronomical distances, which even for a celestial god would take at least $3\frac{1}{2}$ years to cross, the soul takes less than the blink of an eye (4 samayas) to cover them, and when arrived at the spot immediately embodies itself. That is because the soul travels the path of the swastika (svāstika). The four bent arms of the swastika symbolize the four gatis or realms where the soul can abide: the human world, or the hellish, heavenly or subhuman (i.e. animal, plant, mineral, etc.) worlds. The core and essence of every being is the center point of the swastika. The soul moves exclusively in a straight line along one of the limbs of the swastika – and a little visualization shows you that it passes three corners at the most, so that it never takes more than four samayas or the blink of an eye for a soul to reach its destination. In crossing from one dimension to another the distances in billions of miles play no role whatsoever. Apparently the fluidic body of a celestial god, which is composed of fluidic matter, even though this matter is more subtle than “our” physical matter, is subject to totally different laws than the substantial, but matterless, soul. This is an interesting idea for elementary particle physicists, field physicists and astronomers (of the coming centuries) who wish to understand the spiritual side of the cosmos in relation to the already known laws of perceptible matter. The soul is not limited by the laws of matter, but by those of the dimensions. However, it is the soul which determines the forms and behavior of matter.

The Middle World

The basic diagram of the Middle World is a flat disc without thickness, consisting of countless ring-shaped dvīpas – “island-continents” or “planets” with oceans in between. See Figure 2:

Figure 2 : The Middle World



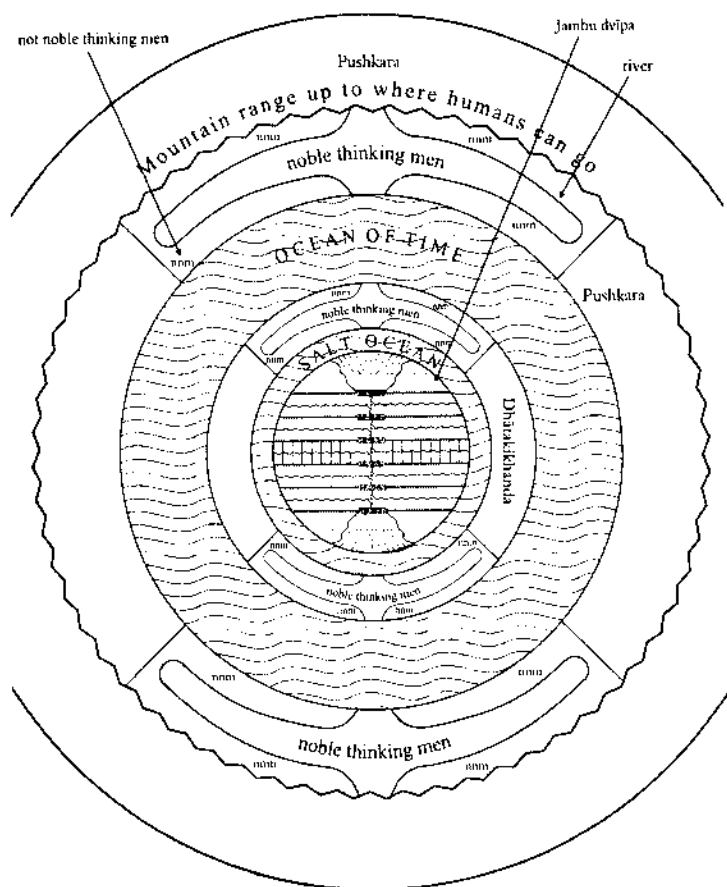
In Jain iconography we find innumerable colorful paintings which depict this doctrine. The inner part of the flat middle world consists of a flat round disc named Jambū Dvīpa. It is surrounded by a saltwater ocean. In that ocean are islands inhabited by strange creatures, whose bodies are a combination of limbs and a head – something outside our present experience. Around that ocean is a ring – invisible to normal eyes – which is the second dvīpa or “planet.” There is then another invisible ocean, a ring of invisible land, etc. The

number of dvīpas is not fixed in literature and iconography, but often about eight are mentioned or shown.⁶⁴

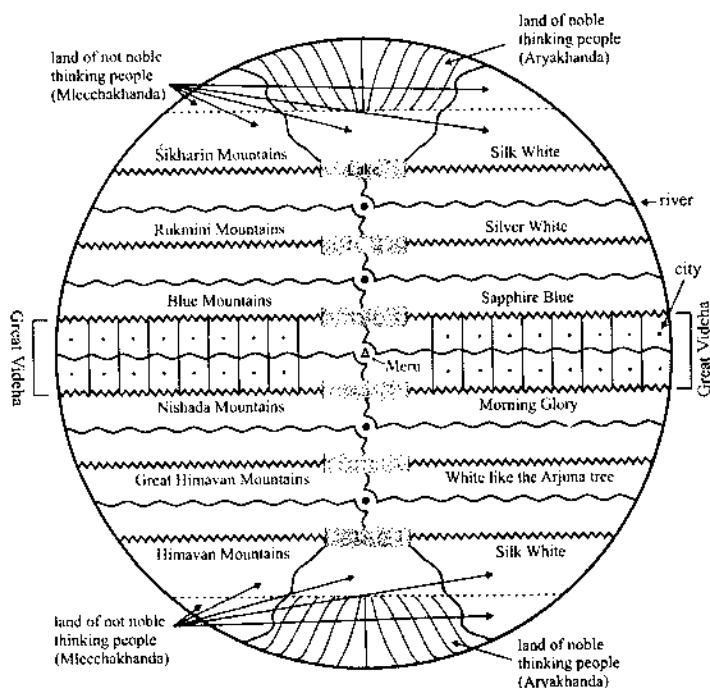
In the middle of the disc, as also in the middle of all the continents or planets, is Mount Meru “as a navel,” as the *Sūtra* says. The dvīpas and the oceans all have names which express something pleasant, such as rose-apple, milk, clarified butter, sugarcane juice, delight, and so on. Only the first ocean, surrounding the central disc or Jambūdvīpa, consists of salt water. Each oceans and dvīpa has twice the diameter of the previous one, i.e. 1, 2, 4 etc. times 100,000 yojanas. In the middle of each dvīpa is a circular mountain range. Jambūdvīpa, the middle planet, on which we live, is named after the Jambū or rose-apple tree which grows to the Northeast of Mount Meru. In that rose-apple tree nests Anādhrita, the protective bird of all the dvīpas. On Mount Meru live innumerable divine beings, and on top of the mountain is a sanctuary.

Jambūdvīpa (see Figure 4), the central disc, must be our physical earth, because we know that it is surrounded by saltwater. On it are seven earthly continents, separated by mountain chains. So, including Meru there are seven mountain ranges. The seven continents are always depicted in a parallel way. On top of each of the parallel mountain chains is a lake. In the middle of each lake is an island in the form of a lotus, and on that island resides a goddess. From each of the lakes flow two rivers: one to

Figure 3 : Dhai dvīpa



the South and one to the North, which soon bend to the East and the West, and finally flow into the surrounding saltwater ocean.

Figure 4 : Jambu-dvīpa

So altogether there are fourteen main rivers, each of which has 14,000 tributaries. The middle continent, in the center of which we find Mount Meru, is called (Great) Vidēha. On the three continents “North” (Uttara) of Vidēha conditions are the same as on the three to the “South,” but in the opposite order.

Around Jambūdvīpa and its salt ocean are the many circular dvīpas, and the first two of these, Dhātākīkhandā and Pushkaravara (Figure 3), are of special interest for humankind. Between Dhātākīkhandā and Pushkaravara is the Kāla Ocean, which means the Ocean of Time. In the middle of the Pushkaravara ring is a mountain range called “the mountain range beyond which humans can not go.”⁶⁵ So we

as humans have two and a half dvīpa at our disposal.⁶⁶ Beyond that no human time division exists. However, animals, plants, microbes, minerals, etc. exist beyond that mountain range as well. Phenomena like lightning, rain, fire, metal ores, lakes, darkness and other astronomical phenomena do not occur there however. Even though we humans on this earth are within this circular mountain range, beyond which we cannot go, no one I know has ever been to Dhātakīkhanda or Pushkaravara, beyond the salt ocean. But, though invisible to our eyes in space and/or time, they are clearly described as bearing humans, animals and other creatures. My conclusion is that, For as long as thinking humans have existed, they have always lived within these 2½ dvīpas; and when our souls were embodied outside the range, we were creatures still without a human mind in a now invisible region.

An intelligent Jain with a full modern academic education (PhD) told me in a discussion about the earth and the cosmos that NASA pictures of the modern earth are very clear and correct, but due to the imperfection of the observations (which only cover visible and matter-related regions) she believed in them only partly. She added that in Jain cosmography (which most westerners probably regard as an absurd superstition) she believed a full 100%. How can a sane person say such things in our modern age? Are those old teachings and drawings perhaps less absurd than they appear to us at first sight? They do not only and in the first place represent physical reality – but of course a metaphysical reality can not be drawn with pen and ink. For those who have no *inner* knowledge about these realities they can only be hinted at, but they can be understood in the right way by those who have evolved through discipline and training an inner “intuitive eye.” Discipline means absolute unbiased discrimination within the metaphysical (and also physical) worlds by the controlled mind. The highest concepts of occult philosophy are beyond any concept of “form” and “color” as these can be understood by us. To me these cosmographic representations are diagrams most probably containing a

wealth of teaching which will but slowly be revealed or reveal itself. Without explanations or (spoken or speechless) hints given by a genuine teacher or guru and increasing inner development of the aspirant these teachings can not be understood. A simple example is perhaps that of the seven continents on Jambūdīvīpa, our earth. In Jain iconography these are always drawn in a parallel manner on a flat disc, and this disc is surrounded by saltwater. Though in modern geography we also recognize parallels and meridians, and seen from the poles the axes of the continents run more or less parallel, the Jain picture has little to do with the actual physical situation. The earth is in reality not flat, and the ocean is not circling around a disc of land. But a round disc may be a diagram (or the artist's imagination) for a globe, which indeed consists of continents which in their totality are surrounded by only one salt water ocean. There exist occult teachings about the seven continents which relate them to stages in the evolution of life, and humans in particular. There are also ancient teachings as well as modern scientific indications that the continents were arranged over the globe completely differently in different geological periods. But, according to immortal occultism, there have always been *seven* continents on earth. So, if we look at the matter from an (occult) geohistorical point of view, a fixed position of the same seven continents is incorrect. So why not depict them in a parallel way as a diagram, so that the diagram contains and can convey much more teaching than a "realistic" picture can ever do? The earth has always been a globe – as the Hindus have already written in the *Sūrya Siddhānta*, a very ancient scripture on astronomy – and surrounded by saltwater as well. People have always been able to sail around the continents over the only and exclusively salt ocean, and over rivers. None of these facts contradicts the Jain view, but much of it is not shown on NASA images. On photographs from space we see only one earth, and we do not see any other globes or discs – though we see ring phenomena around Saturn and other planets in our solar system. We know today that the

earth is surrounded by several magnetic “continents,” and the solar system is full of lively, ever changing phenomena, connecting the planets and especially their poles with the magnetism of the sun and with each other. But of the actual *life* of these spheres, comparable with the human organic magnetic and electric aura, science knows or even suspects nothing as yet.

We do not see a lotus island with a goddess on top of Mount Everest or Mont Blanc. The lotus in general is a symbol of purity, and elevation above the illusions of the physical as well as the astral worlds. Could the ancient teachers have meant that every continent has been provided with its own specific pure and spiritual character, which flows through rivers and rivulets of vitality to and from every individual being which is a part of it, whether sand grains or humans?

Mount Meru and Great Videha

Videha, the central continent of Jambūdvīpa, where we as inhabitants of Arya and Mleccha Khanda never travel, is described in detail in literature with its various mountains, lakes and rivers, its 32 provinces and as many capitals, each with its own king who, after a long existence in one or the four celestial realms of the celestial gods, have descended to earth to reign over their land as great leaders. The people of Videha can – unlike to us in the present dark age of ignorance, deception and misery – reach full liberation, and it is said that every day a number of them do so.

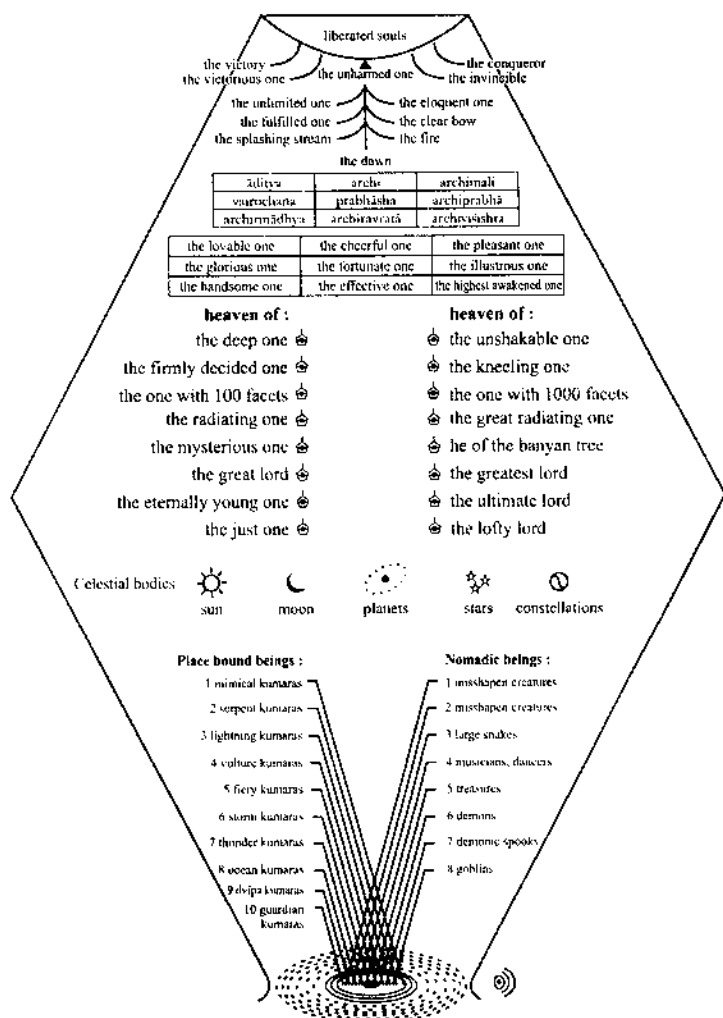
Mount Meru in the center of Videha consists of three cones on top of each other,⁶⁷ and is in total about one million kilometers high. There are three large terraces or mountain plateaus related to the three cones, on which forests grow and divine beings live. On top is a peak of beryllium with a sanctuary. At the foot of the mountain stretch four regions with eight mountains on which the guardians of the four

cardinal directions reside. In these directions there are shrines of the Jinas, divine palaces, and lakes.

It will be clear that nobody has ever seen such a mountain with physical eyes, but that here again a mystical teaching must be hidden.⁶⁸ The Hindus as well, Buddhists, and even the Navahos in Arizona speak of such a mountain. The same applies to the Jambū tree, which – as in other cultures – is a symbol for the spiritual knowledge which one acquires when one has climbed the path towards the top of Meru. The tree is described as consisting of jewels and precious metals only, and the fruits are as big as elephants – and they are immortality; in the tree the protection bird of all the dvīpas has its nest. In the four cardinal directions are the four guardians – which we encounter in some form in mythology all over the world.⁶⁹

The higher worlds

The higher world, like the lower world, measures seven rajjus from top to bottom. As we see in Figure 5 the heavens are arranged in the shape of a column. There are 63 heavens, divided into four groups. In the very highest part, against the “roof” of the universe above the 63 heavens, is a region which “from below” looks like an inverted umbrella: *siddhaloka*, where the fully self-liberated beings abide. Siddhaloka is not a heaven, because it is elevated beyond every imperfect state of existence.

Figure 5 : The Upper Work.

From the Middle World upwards there are respectively 16 (or 12, depending on the literary source) kalpa heavens, 9 graiveyaka, 9 anudiśa and 5 anuttara (= unsurpassable) heavens. The topmost heaven, just below Siddhaloka, is called Sarvārthasiddhi, "perfect in every aspiration." The lowest

group of 16 (or 12) heavens is usually divided into 8 (or 6) horizontal layers of pairs. The lowest two are situated only one hair's breadth above the top of Meru.

The inhabitants of the universe

We have seen that we ourselves, and those who are visible to our eyes, inhabit only an extremely small part of the universe, in the central part – Jambūdvīpa – of the Middle World. Around Jambūdvīpa are the other, related dvīpas or “planets,” which are inhabited and more or less related to the ones we know, but still imperceptible because they differ in density of matter or time period from us. But even then we are speaking only of a thin slice in the “waist” of the universe – almost nothing compared to the whole knowable universe, which stretches many light-years above and below our planet. Jainism teaches that no square millimeter of the universe is uninhabited. The classification and ecology of Jainism include the whole universe. Apart from the liberated souls which live separated from the rest in the topmost section of the universe, all souls are a brotherhood of “pilgrims” which are identical in essence, but which due to their particular karmas go through experiences in various dimensions, and which clothe themselves in an endless variety of forms. At some time every soul passes through every region and every sub-region of the universe. The Tīrthamkara Mahāvīra pronounced some 2500 years ago the constitutional law of spiritual ecology by saying that all forms of life are connected in reciprocal support (“*parasparopagraho jīvanam*”). The whole universe is thus defined as an ecological unit.

The taxonomy of living nature in Jainism is in the first place based on the inner status of unfolding or moral development, and not primarily, as is the case in the West, on outer form. Above and apart from all other beings are the liberated souls, which in past times were bound to existence as we are, but are now freed from all karmas and therefore from all outer attributes. Those which have not yet reached

liberation are classified according to the number of senses which have come to expression. Every form of existence with which the soul may clothes itself is the karmic result of the soul vibrations in previous forms of existence, as discussed in the two previous chapters.

Many beings, such as microorganisms, plants and mineral lives, have only one sense organ, which means that they relate to one universal element, and that is touch or feeling, and thus the ability to suffer. All animals are of higher development, but many of them express only two sense faculties in their present bodies; others have three, four, or five. The examples are not always correct from a modern biological point of view, but the basic idea is that the soul in its upward aspiration, while expressing itself in the outer world, unfolds in such a way that it can gain experience and knowledge of ever more elements. Evolution has added the mind to the highest animals and humans. Beings going through hellish or heavenly experiences all have a mind, as stated earlier. This indicates that the heavens and hells are, primarily states of consciousness, besides spatial locations. Without the power of mind, no creatures can acquire hellish or heavenly experiences.

Below I give a brief summary and explanation of the Jain classification of nature.

I a Immovable beings with one sense (i.e. feeling, including paranormal feeling): earth-lives, water-lives and plants (discussed in chapter 5).

The plant kingdom has in the first place been classified according to physiognomy, or rather growth forms (shrub, bush, tree, etc.), and the number of souls per plant: one or more.

I b Movable beings with one sense: fire lives and air or wind lives.

The water, air, fire and stones we feel and see with our senses are merely the physical bodies of the souls which are currently using these forms. A drop of water, for example, is the cohesive body of a large number of individual water souls of which the individual bodies are too small to be perceived by the (naked) eye. This refers to the water itself – not to microorganisms living *in* that water, as some might think. The same is true for a flame, a gust of wind, etc.

- II Beings with two senses (always feeling and taste).
Examples are worms, mollusks, leeches and so on.
- III Beings with three senses (always feeling, taste, and smell).
For example ants, termites, millipedes.
- IV Beings with four senses (always feeling, taste, smell and vision).
Examples: flies, mosquitoes, bees, butterflies.
- V Beings with five senses (the former, and hearing added), with or without a mind
 - a. Animals higher in evolution than those already mentioned, and these are further classified into animals that live in or on earth, water, or in the air.
 - b. Humans, classified into two types:
 - Aryans (= noble-minded people), who value religion-philosophy or higher values, and
 - Mlecchas, the low minded, who are not seriously interested in religion, true philosophy or spiritual matters, but only in worldly and evanescent affairs.

The Aryans are further subdivided in relation to the spiritual powers which may have manifested in them, which include “enlightenment” (buddhi), the power to shift from one body to another according to

will, ascetic powers, miraculous powers and the power of healing. Aryans without special powers are born in a favorable land and/or family, or have a high-ranking profession, behave in the right way and/or follow a true religion.

The Mlecchas do not fulfill these demands, but many can still live on this earth in paradise-like circumstances and can be vegetarians, but with degrading desires.

- c. Divine beings which live in the Middle World, such as the goddesses of the seven mountain lakes and the many divine beings who reside on islands in lakes at the foot of the mountains and hills – each of which has its own divinity. There are also “gods” or celestials of the lowest kind who live in the Middle World as well as the highest hell.
- d. Celestial bodies (*Jyotishka*): suns, moons, planets, constellations and stars are included in the Middle World as well, and move in a circle around Mount Meru. Among other things they can exert a direct influence on the rhythms of the earth and its meteorological phenomena.

Inhabitants of the lower worlds

For their extreme passions, anger and deceit the lowest (7th) of the lower worlds is occupied by the most wicked human souls (revengeful people who behaved like cruel animals) who were of the male gender. Women can go no lower than the 6th because they are unable to degrade themselves as much as men. Wicked rulers, too, usually occupy the 7th of the lower worlds. Animals are said to occupy different layers in the underworld as a result of their thoughts and suffering at their time of death. Carnivorous animals occupy the 6th infernal world, while birds abide in the 1st or highest hell. Animals mostly face a violent death in their earthly life. Sometimes they die fighting and often in agony. Thus dying in emotion

causes them to take form in a hell, but of a relatively high type.*

The lower worlds are not only inhabited by beings which have to go through hellish experiences – mainly ex-humans. The highest region of hell is also inhabited by celestials belonging to classes which can also be active on earth. These have been divided into two types: those living in fixed locations and those who transmigrate. Some belonging to this group are extremely unjust and cruel and use all their ingenuity to enjoy themselves routing hellish beings, which already undergo so much suffering. Apparently they hate those who were “bad” people on earth and they take sadistic pleasure in tormenting them even more. Do we not also recognize this character among earthly humans? Despite their in a sense spiritual development they have trained their character in hatred. But most of the astral beings of this class are involved in meteorological and geological phenomena, and, where possible, protection of man against these.

The second group includes those who live on earth or on the other dvīpas of the Middle World as well as in the lower celestial and highest hellish worlds. They live in forests and caves, and can, if they want, come to help individual human beings. Some may give warnings when danger threatens, because their senses stretch out further in space and time than ours. Often they live in wealth and happiness, and enjoy sexual pleasures also – something which of course no longer occurs among the higher gods or those who successfully practiced asceticism. Some of them, particularly some of the *yakshas* (*vyantaras*), prefer to abide near ascetics or enlightened men, because they feel that much good radiates from them. But others are only the “shadows” of humans who passed away (from their physical body) and which spook around for good or evil, possess people or can even vampirize them. There are many people in India who can relate personal

* Courtesy of Ms. S.R. Jain

experiences of this nature, and we know stories of this type are found all over the world.

The vyantaras may occupy a tree, some old, deserted house or ruins, temples or whatever region they can live. Because they have a subtle body they can not be seen by our eyes, but they protect their own territory. Hence Jains, when entering a temple, do not want to disturb them and request them to permit them to enter the temple by saying "Nissahi, nissahi, nissahi!" and when leaving say "Āssahi, āssahi, āssahi," "thanks, take your place," so that these celestials are not offended or hurt.

Sometimes such celestials protect the area by taking various body-forms, such as those of multi-headed animals, as are shown even in Indus drawings from thousands of years ago, or they may take the form of semi-human figures, as we can see in the walls of modern temples also. They are also known as yakshas and yakshinis, protecting the temple grounds.*

All these beings fulfill specific intelligent and conscious roles within a karmic totality and their "society" is structured hierarchically, each hierarchy with an Indra or divine king at the top. The same applies to the next class of gods or celestials, which live in the lower regions of the higher heavens.

Inhabitants of the higher worlds

Those who live in the heavenly realms are in possession of all five senses and a mind. They are called *Vaimanikas* because they have a vimāna – a heavenly vehicle, airplane or flying palace. Such flying palaces are of celestial beauty, richly adorned with jewels, and sometimes as big as whole cities. All of them have been humans in the Middle World and will again be humans in the future. In general we may say that in

* Courtesy of Ms. S.R. Jain

an “upward direction” their age, capacities, joy, radiance, purity and thought-color (*leśya*), sensory powers and visual knowledge ever increase, and that their attachment to the world and their pride decrease. But even the most advanced remain attached to the guru they had during their earthly existence. High heavenly beings may still feel a loving connection with their family left on earth when they physically passed away.⁷⁰ All these heavenly beings are we ourselves – after our physical death – depending on our spiritual advancement. Some of them, who have already passed through an intensive spiritual self-training, need to be born as humans only once more, and then, through penitence, they will reach final liberation. Others, who at present live in the highest heavens, need only two more human lives. The human kingdom is the only gate to *nirvāna*.

The inhabitants of the lower heavens still enjoy pleasures in their consciousness which are akin to the human, but become of an ever more subtle nature, and less “intense.” They express their sexuality, for example, in an ever nobler way. In the lowermost heavens they still do so in the same way as humans, but above this stage only through touch, in the next heaven only through seeing, and finally only mentally (by remembering or hearing). In the high heavens sensual desires no longer exist. The state of consciousness is of course more important than outer form or color, but the descriptions of their outward appearances as given to us in literature are symbols – reflections – of their inner state. Their bodies, consisting of subtle matter, reflect the condition of their soul; they are far less rigid and inconstant than the physical body. Perhaps those who have developed an eye fit for that purpose and are pure and well-trained against illusions can properly perceive them in these forms and colors.

Those who live in the *kalpa* heavens (the lower 16 (or 12) heavens), like those in the lowest heavens, are organized in a hierarchical “social” structure. Their leader or king is an *Indra*, then follow gurus, priests, courtiers, bodyguards, protectors (“police”) of the four directions, the “populace”,

those who can turn themselves into riding or flying animals to carry the higher divinities, and finally servants.

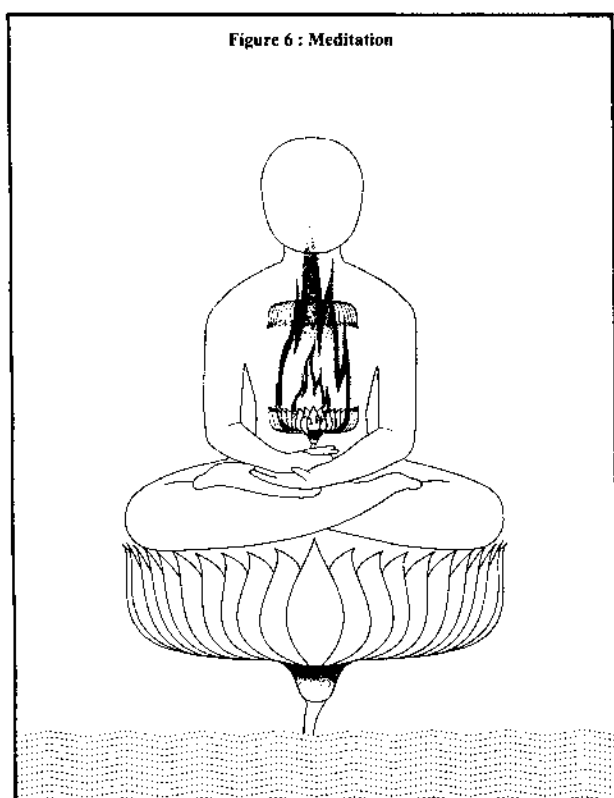
Elevated above those who abide in the 16 (or 12) kalpa heavens are those who are born in the higher heavens. Among them are 24 classes of *laukantikas*, those who have reached their goal within the universe. They are equal in status, i.e. without hierarchical differences, and they are all connected with each other. They know no more sexual desires or other passions. They need at the most two more human incarnations to reach liberation. If ever these elevated human souls descend to the Middle World, it is only to pay homage to incarnated Tirthankaras at important crossroads in their lives – for example the moment they decide to renounce the world. Time does not exist in the heavens, because they are situated above the *Jyotishka*, the heavenly bodies which rule the time divisions. All heavens seem to be the result of the spiritual development of the individual and his measure of control over the lower aspects of his psychological constitution during life on earth. The heavens and hells are regions of consequences, whereas our earth is called by the Indians a “work planet” (*karmabhūmi*), the region of causes, because it is only on earth that one can consciously choose to do good (or bad) works, physically, verbally, and mentally.

Those who have left all worlds behind and live in *siddhaloka* are omniscient in the universe, are freed of all karmas, and have left behind ultimately and for ever their human bodies, and radiate as pure and freed souls. The characteristics of their (and our) pure soul are: knowledge, spiritual insight, bliss, power, right faith, right conduct, imperturbability and freedom from all limitations in the universe.

7

Yoga and Meditation

Right knowledge, right vision and right action
are the three jewels of true life



To achieve salvation every one of us must attain a level where we gradually grow in spirituality. This is not a mere posing, but a total inner change that ultimately influences our mentality, speech and behavior. Nobility, compassion, care and pity spring from the heart and are felt for all those who are ailing, suffering and in need. Serenity and calm are felt in the face of those who deny and oppose, gratitude and humility develops towards virtuous and meritorious people, and the heart is filled with humility and devotion towards the gurus. Straightforwardness becomes a natural part of our character without any tensions whatsoever.

Everyone should pray for such qualities before beginning yoga. Yoga is the unification of mind, speech and action.. Instead of orienting the three in an outward direction, in Jainism they are directed inwardly, towards one's own Self, the soul (*jīva*). Even if that happens only for a fraction of a second, it is called *samayik*. Samaya is the indivisible smallest fraction of time. It is the "present." To live in samayik is called living in the present, because the past has already gone and nothing can be done to save it, while the future depends on the present. Hence the present must be free from follies, and that is samayik. A layman begins with samayik and then enters into yoga and dhyāna (meditation).

To learn something about the meaning of yoga and meditation we must be honest with ourselves and first examine our own mental condition and character. Often we think something different from what we say, and our behavior may again be very different, and that is because we dare not fully rely on our own clarity of mind and purity of intentions. Perhaps our real intentions are hidden behind the self-interest which the world with all its tensions seems to demand of us, and we tend to hide these because otherwise we feel insecure. This makes it difficult to concentrate and sometimes we may get impatient. Often someone's health is hampered by sleeplessness. One begins to feel irritated and the memory partly fades. Patañjali in his *Yogasūtras* advises *astāṅga yoga*, which includes control of breath (*prāṇayāma*), posture

(*āsana*) and meditation (*dhyāna*) to coordinate mind, speech and action. In the West this form of yoga (especially the *hatha yoga* aspect of it) has become dominant. But all this does not lead to self-control, though the exercises may have their own usefulness.

Jainism does not recommend this yoga. Patañjali's yoga focuses body, speech and mind on one object, but because it is always an external object it leads to the attraction of karmas which attach to the soul and thus cause damage or obstruction. Jainism considers the immortal soul as the highest essence; the soul is the master and the body is a tool, a vehicle that it uses to reach its destination: first equanimity, then liberation. The soul may be compared to the "driver" of a car for whom safety is the first concern and whose task is to care for and maintain his vehicle. He should always keep his destination in mind, and never forget to provide his car with fuel, oil, and water – and he should always be vigilant for all possible kinds of contingencies. He should also have good driving skills, eyes and responses.

In daily life everyone acknowledges that he needs to earn a living to obtain food and shelter. At the same time we maintain relations with family, friends and colleagues with a variety of mental attitudes and a psychology which reflects their descent and education. Even a person with a normally stable character who feels himself at ease may have to contend with an environment which doesn't suit him. In such circumstances he may react in a way one wouldn't expect of him. Someone can be hurt deeply within his or her soul, and emotions and passions may be aroused which bind the soul even more tightly to karma. It may be an explosion of anger, sadness, disappointment, depression or even passion. All of these create tension which in turn gives rise to unpleasant ways of reacting. Of course the thinking mind and intelligence are continuously involved, but the one who really suffers is the soul. For that reason these kinds of mental activities which keep the mind focused on one point are sometimes taken for "meditation," but they are not meditation of the right kind.

Such “meditation” is called *durdhyāna* or bad meditation in Jainism, and this pollutes the soul. Jainism shows a way to avoid such pollution by means of good meditation: the mind and speech are guided in the right direction so that the soul is unaffected by reasoning. Through meditation the karmic fruits ripen faster and the new influx of karmas is checked. Thus meditation is the kind of activity that serves the soul while making use of body and speech. Just as someone who drives an old car may expect problems, in the same way we can harm the soul immensely by thinking in the wrong way. Almost everyone will have at least some thoughts during the day which may be called “bad meditation” because we are not aware of the harm such thoughts may bring to our soul. We ridicule or criticize people; we pay attention to the faults and weaknesses of others, while at the same time we avoid facing our own; we may be jealous when seeing the successes of others, we boast, backbite, meddle in someone else’s affairs while at the same time we neglect our duties; under a cover of humility and politeness we may carry hatred in our heart; sometimes we are cruel and an urge to possess goods may cause us to act selfishly; we present ourselves as humble, but all the same we maintain a strong sense of ego. All such action makes a man or woman into a petty human being. Jainism advises anyone who wants to do yoga to abandon such mental habits first. Only then can one concentrate with full attention of mind, speech, and body on something of real value.

According to the most commonly practiced yoga systems such concentration is reached by meditating in an easy (preferably lotus) posture in seclusion and staring without blinking at a point on the wall, the rising sun, or the tip of the nose, and as long as one can keep the mind away from the outer world, this strengthens concentration. *Garuda* is the name Jainism gives to the yoga of self-control and control of mind, body and speech, so that even earth, water, fire and air can come under one’s control. *Śiva* is in Jainism control over the passions and the acquisition of such self-

control that under all circumstances equanimity is maintained. *Kāma*, passion, is the forbidden snake which can endanger any yogi. Yoga means a united focus on mental, spiritual, and verbal attentiveness. This can serve good as well as evil purposes. Āchārya Kumundendu mentions in his *Jñānārṇava* that people often practice yoga out of desire to acquire special powers for making worldly gains and sometimes to subject demons of a lower kind to one's will by means of mantras. Sometimes yoga is used for sorcery, hypnosis, revenge, or to kill someone by means of mantra, to gain control over water or fire, to poison a person, to practice witchcraft, to perform magical attacks and to control certain goddesses so that they perform particular tasks according to the yogi's wishes. Yoga is also used to be able to stay under water, or to enter an underworld, to gain control over death, to move through the air or to walk on water etc. Yoga may be performed to get visions about where a treasure is hidden, to make oneself invisible and to obtain many other powers. Such types of yoga are a danger for the soul (and this means much), are based on wrong belief and are therefore regarded as *durdhyāna* – evil meditation. Jainism only supports yoga which has the betterment of the soul as its aim by means of right insight, right knowledge, and right behavior, so that the inflowing karmas are either of the good type, or, best of all, no more karmas are attracted and attached to the soul. The latter is called *śamayik*, in which the mind, speech and action are quieted, and is called *trigupti* when silenced for a desired duration.

To be able to perform Jain yoga it is compulsory to first abandon all personal hopes and desires because these poison all that one may gain and may drive the senses to insanity – with all its inherent misery. A yogi must observe celibacy to be able to use his energy fully for the purpose of concentration alone. At any time one should be alert to how one walks (not stepping on living creatures etc.) cares for others, speaks, eats, picks up and puts down objects and so on. One who aspires to make spiritual progress should live

constantly in agreement with right vision or intuition, right knowledge and right (i.e. nonviolent) conduct. While practicing meditation a yogi has to abandon mentally all his possessions. He or she should purify him or herself by abandoning every aversion or attachment which may lead to degradation of thoughts.

The Jains reject tantric meditations, because they involve harm being done to other beings and sometimes sexual passion and the taking of alcohol and drugs. Moreover they reject any practice that leads to the forcible acquisition of powers or selfish accomplishments. Jain meditation is only directed towards wisdom and purity.

Jains, lay people as well as sworn clergymen and women, attach very great importance to vegetarianism. Every real Jain is a strict vegetarian, i.e. including eggs and fish, and for the practice of yoga and meditation it is an absolute condition. Meditation depends on the direction the mind chooses. Usually our mental activities during daily life are not very spiritual and we pay most of our attention to what will bring satisfaction to the senses. Such enjoyments may be at the expense of other living beings with which we share our world. This is the only cause why the eating of meat was ever introduced by humankind. Curiosity has even induced certain people to eat the flesh of other people. Such creatures can no longer be called human – they are beasts on two legs. It is the duty as humans to be fundamentally human or humane because our minds are superior to those of all other creatures. Because humans are the most advanced creatures on earth, they should never break the laws of nature for any selfish purpose. The biological constitution of the human body is both anatomically and physiologically that of a vegetarian. He has however imitated the for humans unlawful act of meat-eating and hunting from dogs etc., and even though humanity claims to have made progress in civilization, it has in reality made a step backwards. According to the Indians, humans were vegetarians originally, whether the first man was called Adam or Rasul, and that remained the case for long periods

on Jambūdīpa (our present earth). What we eat has a huge influence on our psychology, and that is why vegetarianism is an absolute precondition for the practice of yoga, and one is supposed to eat *sattvic*, i.e. 'wise' food. Excessive, fatty, spicy food or foods of a bad quality, such as leftovers and meals that are prepared with indifference should be avoided. Milk and dairy products are however regarded as "vegetarian" by the Jains, and they call it "the nectar of Mother Cow." But the cows are not milked mechanically. One allows the calf to drink first, or takes care that enough milk is left for it. A Jain has a friendly relationship with his cattle, and the cow generously gives the milk she doesn't need for the calf; and if she doesn't want to give milk she just jumps away.

Our food determines our psychology, and our psychology influences our meditations and mental activities. Jains feel that non-vegetarians are selfish by nature, greedy, impatient, cruel, and without compassion – that is what the Jains think, but not say. Such people pay attention to their own satisfaction and to their own sufferings only, and are not interested in those of others. This mentality can induce someone can become inclined to kill other living beings for the sake of his own palate and food.

It can be argued that plants are living beings as well, and that one can not eat them without killing them. But the Jains teach that the *jīva* – the soul – leaves a corn grain when it has ripened and dried (after an incubation period, when germinating, a new soul has entered the grain; hence, Jains do not consume germinated seeds). Fruits fall off by nature or can easily be taken when ripe. If one picks parts of a plant, such as a number of leaves, this does not kill the plant. On the contrary it stimulates its growth and thus produces a higher yield and produces enough seeds. Jains who take their religion seriously do not take tubers or bulbs, because this kills the whole plant. Thus one develops the right mentality for meditation through compassion and caring for other lives.

One should constantly remember the twelve subjects of reflection. These are: 1. the evanescence and shortness of

existence and of all that exists; 2. Your own complete unprotectedness against the fruits of one's own karma; 3. the unhappy condition of existence within the cycle of births and deaths; 4. the loneliness in which one is born, dies and walks the path of life; 5. the fact that as an individual one stands alone in fulfilling one's task; 6. the separation between all individuals; 7. that all problems are caused by karma; 8. that a true spiritual teacher is the only haven; 9. that every wrong idea needs to be expelled; 10. the five Great Vows (non-violence, not lying, not stealing, abstaining from sexual misconduct, and from worldly attachments) and keeping the senses under one's control at all times; 11. that the soul in its peregrinations is limited to the dimensions of loka, the knowable universe; and 12. that the True Soul as refuge is the only consolation – compared to which every worldly connection is futile. In addition, particular yoga postures are advised which can influence meditation positively.

Prāṇayāma – breathing exercises – are performed to strengthen the ten prāṇas or flows of life energy. Through this the elements of the constitution – earth, water, fire and air – are also strengthened. At the same time the five chakras are controlled. Prāṇayāma also helps to stabilize one's thinking and leads to unhampered direct experience of the events around us. By entering the four elements the soul gains experiences. Next one practices *pratyāhāra*. *Pratyāhāra* means that one directs the senses away from the enjoyment of sensual and mental objects. The senses are part of the nervous system, and their task is to send data to the brain through which the mind as well as the soul is provided with information. The mind tends to enjoy this at the cost of the soul as well as the body. The concentrated mind of somebody who practices yoga neglects such things completely. In certain circumstances a yogi behaves towards his senses as a turtle withdrawing its limbs in the face of danger. *Pratyāhāra* is obtained by focusing the mind on one point for the purpose of receiving impulses: on the eyes, ears, tip of the nose, the

brow, the navel, the head, the heart or the palate. The next thing is to prepare for meditation.

People who live in the world – laymen and -women – take shelter in religion and focus their mind, reflecting on the following: the first type of is *agnya vichāya*, in which one meditates deeply on the seven tattvas or elementary facts (life and non-life, the inflow, bondage, stoppage and removal of karmas, and the final accomplishment of liberation). The second is *apaya vichāya*, in which incorrect insights and behavior in which “sleeping souls” indulge, are reflected upon. The third is *vipaka vichāya dharma dhyāna*, in which one reflects on the eight causes or basic types of karma (see chapter 4), The fourth is *sansathan vichāya dharma dhyāna*, when one thinks about the vastness of the universe and the loneliness of the soul, which has had to face the results of its own causes all alone since it first began to suffer as a result of ignorance and constant reembodiments in the 8,400,000 body forms or species which exist. The omniscience of the *arhats* has over and over again unveiled the universal knowledge about the universe to humankind. Mahāvīra, the last Tīrthamkara, did just that. That knowledge was written down in the form of stories. All these stories are meant to open the eyes of mundane souls and inspire them to destroy the poisons known as passion, anger, arrogance, meanness and obstinacy, and to be a normal being.

Those who have advanced a little further on the path of meditation (*dhyāna*) apply a number of techniques known as *pindāstha-dhyāna*, *padāstha-dhyāna*, *rūpāstha-dhyāna*, *rūpātita-dhyāna*, *savīrya-dhyāna*, etc. In the case of *pindāstha-dhyāna* one imagines oneself sitting all alone in the middle of a vast ocean of milk on a lotus flower, meditating on the soul. See figure 6 at the beginning of this chapter. There are no living beings around whatsoever. The lotus is identical to Jambūdvīpa, with Mount Meru as its stalk. Next the meditator imagines a 16-petalled lotus at the level of his navel, and on each petal are printed the (Sanskrit) letters “*arham*” and also an inverted lotus of 8 petals at the location

of his heart. Suddenly the lotus on which one is seated flares up at the navel and flames gradually rise up to the inverted lotus, burning its petals with a rising golden flame which not only burns his or her body, but also the inverted lotus at the heart. The flames rise further up to the throat whirling in the shape of a swastika and then reach the head, burning it entirely, while taking the form of a three-sided pyramid of golden flames above the head, piercing the skull sharp straight up. The whole physical body is charred, and everything turns into glowing ashes. Thus the *pinda* or body is burnt off and the pure soul survives. Then suddenly a strong wind blows off all the ashes; and one imagines that a heavy rain shower washes all the ashes away, and the pure soul remains seated on the lotus. That pure Soul has infinite virtues, it is *Myself*. Why should I get polluted at all? One tries to remain in his purest nature. This is called *pindāstha dhyāna*, in which one ponders the reality of feeling and experiencing.

In *padāstha dhyāna* one focuses on some *pada*, i.e. mantras, words or themes. Since the soul has been purified by the fire, it now thinks of *OM* and *Arham* only. *OM* signifies remembrance of the five classes of spiritual beings (the embodied and non-embodied Jinas, the ascetics, the monks and the nuns); pronouncing the word “*Arham*” makes one feel “I myself am the omniscient soul” and one tries to improve one’s character accordingly. One may also pronounce the holy name of an arhat and concentrate on the universal richness of the soul.

In *rūpāstha dhyāna* one reflects on the embodiments of arhats, the *svayambhuva* (the self-begotten), the omniscients and other miraculous people and their attributes, such as three umbrellas and whiskers – as seen in many icons – unconcerned about one’s own body, but almighty and benevolent to all living beings, destroyer of attachment, enmity, etc. Thus the meditator as a human being concentrates his or her attention on the virtues of the omniscients to acquire the same virtues for himself.

Rūpātita dhyāna is a meditation which is focuses on bodiless objects such as the liberated souls or *siddhas*, which stand individually and collectively for the infinite qualities that such souls have earned. That omniscient, potent, omnipresent, liberated and untainted soul is called a *nirañjāna*, and this stage can be achieved by right vision, right knowledge and right conduct only. Right vision, right knowledge and right conduct begin the fourth stage of the 14-fold path (see chapter 9).

The ultimate aim of such yoga and meditation is to pave the way for the spiritual elevation and salvation of the soul. Some yogis develop their own methods for meditation. But every one of them has to learn how to silence his or her mind, body and speech.

The *kayotsargi* method is found to be very useful by many Jains. The meditator sits in a comfortable position (preferably in a lotus position on the ground) and breathes easily and deep, with closed eyes for five minutes. Next one imagines oneself to be dead, and that the body has lost its consistency: visualizing upward from the toes to the heels, the knees, the thighs, waist, chest, shoulders, neck, face, cheeks and eyes and then the forehead, the body is a corpse, i.e. utterly relaxed. Then one starts all over again from the toes to the forehead, and so on, repeating until one feels fully relaxed.

With every cycle one feels a deeper relaxation and the breath becomes slow and deep. Because the meditator imagines that he is dead, he listens to no one and nothing, and feels no pain. All physical senses have been extinguished. The meditator is even unable to move. Simply as an observer he knows that his body breathes and his heart beats. Then he asks himself the following question: Who am I? When I am dead, is this body “I” or something else? I was once a child. Before that I lived in my mother’s womb – what I don’t remember. This “I” is completely alone. I came alone. I live alone and will go alone. For whom and for what purpose am I here? Who really belongs to me in this world? Who can liberate me from suffering and death? Has anyone ever been liberated and

become immortal? What is the purpose of life? Is it just a pastime, or is it meant to do something of value for myself and others? Have I been gentle to all people and other living beings – as I would wish them to be towards me? Who in the world owes me anything for my kind gestures? Can I share the troubles of others? How?

If I receive a satisfactory answer to these questions from within, then my yoga and meditation have been successful. That will bring a great change in one's attitude to life.

To end the meditation one sings again the prayers for the well-being of every soul in the universe. Naturally the needs of such persons in the world gradually diminish, and simultaneously they become more and more compassionate, milder, and quieter. Their worldly problems begin to dissolve naturally. Each day they feel better, and gradually they rise higher and higher in a spiritual sense.

Persons like these jump up the fourteen stepped ladder of the spiritual path – as described in detail by the Jains (see Chapter 9) – from the first to the fourth step, though they have not taken any particular religious vow, but their vegetarian, compassionate, caring and conscious ways of living lead them to the doorway of spirituality, at the same time relieving them from the burden of an evil mind which may before have weighed on their heart like a stone.

For quite some time they then practice *trigupti*, which means that up to that point they were guiding their minds intentionally towards thinking about meditation. Now they satisfy their mental activity by letting it free and by quieting their speech and their body, realizing that this body is not “me.”; hence they no longer identify with their name, their body and their speech, and no longer have to make an effort to control them. One simply observes the body with its automatic in- and outbreathing, but otherwise regards it as a corpse, a mere instrument. Such persons feel: “No worldly sensations arise in my mind any more. I am the same old

individual residing in it, I can see, I can hear, smell, taste, feel, and think without moving. Yes, this body is a mere tool. I should not misuse it, I should use it for the good of the spiritual Self and for the benefit of others only !”

8

Seeing Holy life in Practice

A personal experience

A sitting posture symbolizes
meditation and repentance;
standing he accepts completely
what comes to him, without resistance

In 2004 I was already living in Jaipur, Rajasthan, but until then most of my knowledge came from books and from discussions with learned Jains during earlier travels through India. I thought it was time to step outside the limits of theory alone, and take a look around the country. First I visited a temple in Amber City (i.e. Amer), which is much older than Jaipur but is now a suburb of this city of millions. Apart from their beautiful and refined architecture Jain temples are characterized, in their interior by an abundance of simple but perfect statues of their spiritual teachers, the 24 Tīrthamkaras. An outsider would hardly distinguish them from Buddha statues – but they are totally nude, and often they have a four-leaved flower on their heart, signifying their pureness, having left behind all four types of karma (see chapter 4). Most statues in Rajasthan are made of pure white and shining

marble – shine being the characteristic of Indian marble – of the finest granular structure. All radiate simplicity, without adornments. Jains recognize no creative God, but only perfected people of pure soul who once were like they, and who can serve each of the beholders as an example – as an example of the ultimate goal of complete realization and perfection of what we *really want* to realize in the depths of our hearts – which in reality we already are. You don't have to be a Jain to feel admiration for these Jinas, these conquerors of all illusionary ideas, weaknesses and obstacles within themselves. Who would not want to have the power and compassion of someone with an unlimited intellect and spiritual insight, unhampered by physical and psychological suffering? In fact this desire is our only real hunger.

The atmosphere in Jain temples is usually very quiet and pure. You will not find any people who come to beg the gods to solve their problems. The visitor is only strengthened in his or her feeling about the right external as well as inner attitude in life and stimulated towards self-discipline. No ministers or priests pose themselves between our present condition of life and the aim of reaching perfection. All one does, thinks or feels is the cause of one's own future – and every suffering is the result of selfish choices in the past, however subtle and seemingly insignificant they may be.

The next weekend I decided to visit a temple in Sanganer, another ancient suburb of Jaipur. There things were a little different. An old man was sitting at the platform above the stairs to the temple's entrance, and I had to give him all I had. I was not allowed to take my camera. One wants to show the beauty of all this to your friends back home. My thought was, 'What sense does all this make when you're not allowed to take pictures and the beauty is only for yourself as long as your memory can keep it. Religious fanatics prefer to keep these places pure but for themselves alone, rather than sharing their good things with others!' But now, after a year among the Jains, I understand these things differently. For the Jains these sacred places are not merely places of beauty and

harmony, but places where *thought* has to be pure, where the *thought atmosphere* has to remain pure – where things are only done and spoken and thought on a level which is above everyday thought and emotion. This is not an illusion. Sacredness is an actuality, which can be felt, and which has to be preserved at all cost, which serves a far greater purpose than the mood of the visitor alone. I feel that sacred places of particular types are connected and form a protective web around the world, the value of which is far beyond what the eye and mind of a curious tourist who has not trained himself in purity and devotion can perceive.

Brahmāchārīnī

I received a phone call from the temple of Sanganer. A very special learned person whom I should absolutely meet had arrived and who was to stay for a while only. So again I made the bone-shaking bus journey to Sanganer. Instead of the eminently dressed gentleman I had imagined, a white-clad female figure appeared before my eye when I was led into a small, almost dark room. Immediately we were friends: we had that feeling of familiarity and friendship that happens only a few times in one's life. Her white cotton, not entirely clean sari, indicated that she was a nun, or more correctly a *brahmāchārīnī*, bound by many voluntarily taken vows. Her English was almost perfect, and she even spoke some German. We had a short talk, but she had to leave soon. *Brahmāchārīnī* (as I will call her), rarely stays in one place for long. She goes from one sacred place to another, from one site of pilgrimage to another. But she strongly urged me to meet her at Jaipur railway station at three o'clock. She didn't have to tell me twice, because she was intelligent, entertaining and extremely enthusiastic about her archeological research. At the station I proposed that we went to the station's restaurant to continue our talk about philosophy, science and Jainism over a snack and a drink. I ordered. She wanted nothing. She took a bottle of water from her luggage, though water was

freely available in the restaurant. Even though it was 40 degrees Centigrade she ate and drank only once a day, in accordance with her vows. Moreover she would accept nothing from “outside” i.e. nothing that was not prepared either by herself or by Jains who lived up to the same standards. According to Jain norms; water should be filtered and boiled to prevent any living being from becoming a victim of human consumption. Because she eats very little she needs little sleep, but I have rarely seen her tired. Tasty foods have lost their attraction. She is a radiating and cheerful personality. At the age of 68 she shows more vitality than I, the-55-year old standard-eater-and-drinker on my 55th. Her enthusiasm knows no bounds. During and in between her pilgrimages, she does archeological research into the occurrence all over India of inscriptions in Indus script such as have been found in Harappa and Mohenjo-daro (now in Pakistan). Her conviction is that thousands of years ago the so-called Indus culture was spread all over India; and also that these people were Jains. She has cancer. She has already lost a breast and a kidney. Some time ago she was so weak that she needed help with every movement. But thanks to the blessings of her guru and the community of monks she is now a lot more radiant and happy than the average world citizen. There is no medical proof that her cancer has vanished, and doctors would like to keep a medical eye on her and possibly give her further treatment. But as she sees it, death is only a transition to another form or condition of existence – nothing to be afraid of. So she is no longer interested in any medicine or treatment. Food and water once a day – that is all. Her head is full of plans for future research and publications. She wants to finish her scientific work –which she started only a few years back, after retiring from her profession. she was asked to do so in a dream, and received crucial information. She feels it is her duty to her forebears, co-bearers of a tradition many millennia old. Our special encounter seems more meaningful than a cozy private chat. Karma must have brought us together at the right moment. At the time of our meeting she

had written three books (the number would be almost double that a year later). But the language and typographical qualities are “Indian.” I have a digital camera, a laptop and other technical gadgets. She has knowledge, intelligence and fire. We readily agreed that I would go with her, after a month, on a pilgrimage-cum-scientific expedition. But when the gods give assignments, it does not mean that the road will be smooth. On the contrary, one builds character through resistance and conquest.

A few weeks later the telephone rang: “Come at once.” She had gone to a monastery more than a 1000 kilometers to the South. When we met again it was a meeting of friends. She has a deep emotional-spiritual relationship with the leader of the group, guru Āchāryaji, and she is respected by everyone. For the last 35 years she has been following him from pilgrim’s site to pilgrim’s site. Jains are very strict in their principles, but are aware of the relativity of their rules as well. I too was accepted into the community with love and openness, though probably no Westerner had ever been allowed to put his bare feet on the sacred soil. I owe this to the fact that I am a vegetarian, consume no alcohol or drugs, and approach every living being – even the smallest – with care and sympathy. Also I am not married – and that has a very different meaning in such circles in India than it tends to have in the West.

Naked

Nothing but cordiality and openness in the Jain community. Immediately after arriving in the early dawn, I was taken to the inner square of the monastery. The guru, Āchāryaji, was meditating there between two temple towers. All the monks, nuns and guests sit devotionally at his feet and takes part in the prayers. The women to the right of him, most of them dressed in the white of the nuns. The men to the left, all of them naked, as was the guru. Unknowingly I had come to a

gymnosophists' community (photo 1). The guru was well into his fifties, and had not worn any clothes for the last 35 years. I had heard about the existence of this sect of monks who were clothed with the wind only, but this was quite an unexpected adventure. If I had any picture of such a community, I would have imagined a few shriveled old men for whom life had nothing left to offer anyway. But here I met a few dozen young people – most of them between 25 and 35 – who had vowed not to wear any clothes for the rest of their lives, never to have any possessions, never to take part in worldly pursuits, but to seek the values of the soul only. They live a perfectly disciplined life, in a perfect daily rhythm. Complete control over even the least manifestation of sexuality is an absolute condition. To guarantee that they are never alone: three monks are always together, during the day as well as the night. I asked one of them how that is possible, at such a young age – the youngest one had been there since he was nineteen. It is a matter of mind and diet. These sensitive meditating vegetarians know exactly the influences that various foods have on the body. Water and sometimes a little fruit juice is their only drink, which they take along with their food once a day. But control of the mind is the key. The smallest thought which could be a blockage on the path to enlightenment is immediately ignored and replaced by meditative thoughts they know from the Jain teachings. To them every female is either a sister or a mother. Sexuality is of course the most intrusive and most visible emotion. But the same measure of self-control applies to all things of the body, speech and mind. They pay no attention to hunger, thirst or pain; heat or cold, not even when their feet bleed during pilgrimage due to glass splinters, thorns or sharp pebbles on the road.

One might expect that, as a result of their lifestyle, a photo of these people would remind us of a concentration camp. But nothing is further from the truth. They are the most perfectly formed people one could imagine, with a happy expression, neither too fat nor too thin, with a shining skin,

straight spines and raised heads. As a result of self-imposed avoidance of shaving implements, they remove their hairs, beards and moustaches by pulling the hairs out of their heads and faces with their own hands. That has been the habit for millennia. It struck me how balanced their way of walking was, and to this I have seen no exception. Apparently they were not only outwardly innocent like babies, but also inwardly.

Their day begins early, at 4 in the morning, and in isolation from the outside world. But in other respects they live a public life. Every truly respectful person may walk in and out of the temple throughout the day and see what is going on there. But at a fixed hour (around 10 o'clock) the nude monks, after taking their daily vows, walk one by one, calm, silent and smiling, in a long line out of the temple. Not every one of them, because some have taken a vow to fast that day, and skip eating and drinking for another 24 hours. They always wear their compulsory broom of peacock feathers to softly brush aside tiny living creatures which otherwise they might have stepped on. They are awaited by lots of householder women, and brahmāchārinīs dressed in white saris, and some men also, who approach them with deep bows while all the time calling, "namustu, swami, namustu" – "be greeted, swami, be greeted" (photo 2), until a monk stops at a group of his choice. The group then starts a respectful and devout circular movement around him, three times, while the monks remain motionless. They are the ones who will provide him with food that day. Monks possess nothing, so no cooking utensils or crockery either, and thus depend for their food and drink entirely on others. Of course there are severe prescriptions for those who prepare the food. First they are worshiped and then given food. The most important thing is that no living being may be harmed during the process. The meal the men and women have prepared is carefully and conscientiously investigated before it is placed or poured into the hands of the monk. He grasps nothing; he only accepts

what he has passively received in his hands. Whatever has been put in his hands, he himself again examines patiently under many observing eyes before putting it in his mouth. If even the tiniest fly has landed on the food, it is rejected and he refuses all food and drink for the next 24 hours. All this symbolizes their attitude of absolute nonviolence – of absolute harmlessness.

Of course this way of life applies only to sworn ascetics and not to other Jains to the same degree. But most worldly Jains try to approach this behavior as much as possible. Ideally no Jain eats after sunset, because then it would be too dark to see whether any creature might be killed. Water is filtered and boiled before being drunk. Jain monks and nuns of the white-dressed sect often wear a cotton cloth in front of their mouths to prevent them from possibly breathing in tiny creatures or killing any by breathing out. Of course all these modes of behavior are symbolic. Jains know very well that billions of creatures are simply too small to be seen by the naked eye and to be obstructed by filters. This conduct is but an outward expression of an inner attitude.

Monks eat their meals motionlessly and emotionlessly. For at least half an hour they stand just as motionlessly and silently as the stone images of the Jinās, and completely balanced. They will During that time they do not even adjust the position of their feet (photo 3). After having taken food they return to the temple to spend the rest of the day sitting, studying and meditating. The nuns in their white saris do the same, but take their food in their hand while sitting.

When I took out my contact lenses before going to rest I considered what it would mean for *me* if I had to abandon *that* “garment” – it would mean never being able to read anymore, never being able to see the details of a flower or a piece of art, and being dependent on others for information. These monks are reading and studying continuously. What do they do when their eyes begin to fail? Next day I asked Brahmāchārīnī.

Well, the ability to read was not the most important thing. But one would no longer be able to check one's food for purity. There would be a time when a monk would refuse food for that reason. It is his karma, which he will not try to avoid. As an example she told me about something that had happened only a few weeks before. A monk had been bitten by a rabid dog outside the temple. The disease persevered, and the monk was offered treatment. But this he refused. He did not accept medicine, and his condition steadily worsened. Until he felt that the moment had arrived to take *sallekhana* – the vow of peaceful death. So from that moment on he refused all food. His body became weaker and weaker; but his mind became clearer and clearer. Subsequently he refused to drink as well. When he had lost all his energy and his awareness faded he moved his lips only once and for the last time and said: "Yes, now I know for sure that I have chosen the right way." And he left his body.

Not everyone is so severe on himself. There was a very learned, somewhat older man who was wearing glasses and who was reading and studying almost continuously. His whole being radiated learnedness and culture. But, so I was told, while taking food he would take off his specs. It is a centuries old – indeed many millenniums old habit of monks and nuns to approach death in this peaceful way. When they feel that the vows they have taken can no longer be practiced, due to old age, disability, a sudden mishap, or an incurable disease, or if external circumstances make it impossible for them to maintain their religious vows, they enter into peaceful and blissful fasting until death, to "fight" off their karmas, because all such events arise only as effects of their own karma. Thus; when someone feels that his *ayu*-karma, i.e. the karma which determines the normal length of their earthly life, runs out, he or she chooses this path of *sallekhana* which leads to peaceful death, *samadhi-maran*. In hundreds, perhaps thousands of places in India two engraved feet can be seen in the hard bedrock, signifying a monk who has taken *sallekhana* at that spot. Some die while standing upright. On the rocks

near Śravaṇa Belagola in Karnataka many of these feet can be found. The monks came to these places to die. Brahmāchārīnī will die in the same way when her time has come. We visited several places where friends of hers had entered another form of existence in that way. Laymen and -women can also take *sallekhana*. The last phase of life and the last thoughts are very important for one's future. They strongly influence the experiences of one's consciousness in the period between physical death and rebirth as well as the mood in which one is reborn. We too should try to prepare ourselves to die in emotional peace, with our mind directed towards the eternally immortal and with the silent wish to continue selfless compassionate service in the future.

I felt immediately at home in the community of these monks. I soon got used to their nudity, and I found myself in contact with a group of extraordinarily sympathetic and valuable people. Thanks to their openness concerning any philosophical or spiritual subject and their interest in my studies and ideas, I felt that I was among real friends. The people have nothing and desire nothing, and can not hide anything about themselves. They can not tell untruths, can not snatch anything from you, and they expect no reward from you whatsoever. I have been able to have deep discussions with the few who spoke good English (photo 4), and with others when Brahmāchārīnī acted as an interpreter. Matters concerning karma and reincarnation which I had never understood well now became clear to me. Their knowledge of Jainism was of course tremendous, and their clarity of mind was like crystal. But some of them were also well informed about certain matters such as developments in science. Without dogmatic reactions we could for example discuss the differences between Jainism and Buddhism, and how to reconcile certain scientific ideas with their old doctrines. They always remained humble and friendly and showed inexhaustible sympathy, even though sometimes we couldn't agree. For example, the Jain teachings are presented by the teachers in the form of an absolute dualism: life versus not-

life; universe versus non-universe; souls versus body; and, as the Jains teach, the smallest building blocks (anu – “atoms”) of the universe are physical and have a physical dimension. These ideas are, after long and deep study of Theosophical and Buddhist books, unacceptable to my logical mind. But at least I understand now what they mean.

These monks are completely different from the Indians than the unwary tourist is confronted with in the big cities. What also struck me was their enthusiastic interest in spiritual matters with which they were unfamiliar. One monk wished to know about the Kathars, and was also interested in the original (Gnostic) message of Jesus the Christ, and in the life of Apollonius of Tyana which I told him about.

The miracle temple

We had a so-called miracle temple within our walls. Real miracles sometime happen there, Brahmāchārīnī told me. It was one of the temples on the monastery's grounds, dedicated to Śāntināth (the 16th Tīrthamkara), which daily attracts a lot of visitors who symbolically – by means of rice grains, nuts etc. – come to offer all their good deeds and part of their basic needs to the service of the higher beings. Though Jainism recognizes no creative God, it does recognize many entities which have been humans, but have attained godhood, as well as many “demigods” (and even “demidevils” – as we have discussed earlier). These demigods (and devils) were once men and women, and still have five senses and a highly developed intelligence while residing in their own world. During their existence on earth they may have built a special attachment to a particular place, guru or a statue of a Jina. Also due to the occult consecration of such a place by an advanced monk possessing the necessary knowledge is qualified in that field – possibly centuries ago – several aspects of a good and religious man or woman who has passed away may linger there. An example of this was the three-man-high statue of Śāntināth in our temple. The

worshippers make obeisance to the statue. But the image is just stone, and does nothing. The Tirthamkara himself, or any siddha who lives in siddhaloka, is not involved in any worldly matters whatsoever. But the invisible beings around the sculpture can, if and when they want sometimes give a sign, or perform a “miracle” as the simple-minded say, because their realm of existence enables them to do things that are impossible on our physical level. Sudden cures may take place, or somebody is rained upon by saffron spray, etc. It doesn’t happen often, but when it does – and that can only be in agreement with the karma of the person involved – such an event is of course a psychological boost for the rest of that person’s life. As a result of their tremendous self-control, advanced monks such as the guru of this community also have control over unseen powers, i.e. beings. Brahmāchārīnī herself had been cured at least once in such a way.

The monks continued their daily routine. Apart from eating and drinking once a day, they all have to go to the “toilet” every day; all at the same time, at a fixed hour. In a long line, all of them carrying a water container and of course their peacock brush, they come out one by one through a side door. It is the only time that they actually move out of the monastery grounds when not traveling. They walk quite a distance away from the grounds to find a proper place. Their only free moment, one might think. But no, their life during the day is completely public, and so they are followed by a mob of onlookers who want to see how these holy men do what they have to do. In silence they tread their “path of duty” and afterwards return to the temple in the same manner. After that they try to study and meditate, always in a sitting posture, because lying down is something they only do at night. Try ... because they are approached by pious people, who kneel down in front of them with hands joined, head on the ground: “namustu, swami, namustu, swami, namustu.” The swamis make a blessing gesture with their right hand and then the devotee leaves him. There is no room where the ascetics can

withdraw and be alone for. All rooms are public domain. People constantly come to beg for their blessings and to ask questions. The monks seem to be completely unaffected by what happens around them. I asked one monk how he could stand it, all this adoration and perhaps not always very intelligent questions. But he had no problem. Calmly he answered the result was that in any case beneficial. For the questioner at least if he or she was listening seriously, but if not then for himself, because in this way he gave a spiritual lesson. I would explode in irritation and despair. Not they. Irritation is an emotion which attracts undesirable karmic molecules which will become an obstacle for the liberation of the soul, and they will not allow themselves to do such a thing.

The highest form of pure behavior, only exhibited by ascetics who have tremendous stamina and enlightened knowledge, is a form of ascetism named *pariharavisuddhi* – meaning *total* abstinence from violence, which entails fasting for an extended period, restrictions on the types of food to be taken, meditation, and service to fellow monks. All this should be done in a state of total mental and emotional equanimity. In agreement with the rules, nine monks join hands and follow uninterruptedly for nine month this severe path of penitence. In the Śvetāmbara (but not in the Digambara) tradition, six monks practice this asceticism during the first six months, and four others carry the responsibility to serve the four fasting monks. This is necessary because their bodies can become very weak, and because they engage in meditation only. One of the four serving monks is chosen as āchārya. During the second phase of six months their roles are reversed, but the same person remains the āchārya. In the third period it is the task of the monk who served as the āchārya for the last twelve months to practice – as the only one left – his asceticism. One of the other eight monks now becomes āchārya and the other seven serve him (*Pacisavana Bola* p.146).

But the command over body, emotions and thoughts must also be stainless during the regular life of monks. In the days I spent there I saw no sign of irritation or depression in their faces. Still, inwardly they may or may not be constantly confronted with emotions and inner conflicts. Of the fourteen-fold path to the liberation of the soul they have only reached the third to fifth stage, or exceptionally the sixth stage. The guru can, in his best moments, reach the seventh stage, I was told. But even then a very long and difficult path lies before him. The next chapter discusses this path in some detail.

What inspires people to begin such a life? In the first place they must have an undreamed-of love for all that lives: to give up all worldly enjoyments because they do not wish to inflict any harm or pain on any living being. Externally their life is completely relaxed: no family, no troubles, no mobile phones to recharge, no text messages from whiny girlfriends, no fear of missing the latest download, no jealousy, because no one has anything to be jealous about. Their emotional life has become entirely internalized. Jainism knows only simplicity and philosophy; there are no complex rituals no secondary gods of various kinds to whom people can beg for personal help. One can only travel the path alone. Pure motives will lead to pure results. One already has to have quite an intelligence to distinguish the essential from the senseless: the thousands of rituals and forms of worship and prayer with which so many religions entertain the people and which have perhaps some effect, but distract from what is essential – or to become an autonomous and fully developed human being. Therefore most of those who choose such a path will be intellectuals with a deep spiritual confidence.

Brahmāchārīnī was an example of this. With a university education and a broad scientific interest, a successful academic career behind her, unmarried and childless, but with the heart of a mother and a grandmother at the same time, she spent hours sitting in pure devotion at the feet of her guru. She kept strictly to the rules she found useful, but for other ones she did not care. The guru had great respect

for her and gave her hints for her research – they have known each other for decades, and, whenever possible, where he goes, she goes. She regards it as her scientific task and ancestral duty and is prepared to postpone her own salvation a few lifetimes for this. What merit is greater than abandoning even that most spiritual of all egoisms: the subtle desire to reach the liberation of your soul for the benefit of yourself alone?

The deepest motivation for leading a monk's life is to reach omniscience, salvation and nirvāna, leaving all mundane matters and false desires behind. An eternal, immortal, spiritual life is in store. From a man one becomes a god. Therefore one bends one's spiritual thinking and acting always towards universal love, nonviolence and purity and the acquisition of a perfect unlimited clarity of mind to avoid illusion. For this purpose one gives up or avoids yielding to any impulse from the evanescent: physical as well as psychic and mental desires. They can stand pain, hunger, thirst and discomfort thanks to their deep belief that they are not identified by their body, but that they are their soul, which only needs to do away with the physical body and all other karmic bondages to free itself. Because of their absolute separation of spirit and matter they can abhor the body while glorifying the soul. Still they do not inflict any harm on their bodies, and there is no self-torture in Jainism: that would be an act of violence against the billions of living beings of which the body is composed.

I asked the youngest of the monks whether it did not frustrate him that he would have to wait so long before reincarnating in a period when there would be an embodied Tīrthamkara on earth to instruct him directly – tens of thousands of years in the future. But he had a cheerful answer to that: after his death in his present incarnation he would be born and live as a celestial being for a long period of time (by earthly standards) in a body of a more subtle type of matter than our physical senses can perceive, but that nevertheless is as real as the body we are used to at present. In this condition

there is no earthly time concept, and tens of thousands of years would go by in a flash. So, soon he would be able to live in the company of a Tīrthamkara on earth, and then he would be able to reach final liberation by his own effort – to become a Jina, a conqueror.

The great example for the monks is Bāhubali, the first human being to reach liberation in this cycle. An abundance of statues of him are to be found in numerous temples and on sacred sites. Therefore I should first tell you the story of Bāhubali.

Bāhubali

Bāhubali was one of the 99 or 101 sons of Rishabha, the first Tīrthamkara, and also he had two sisters. All sons but one, and his daughter Brahmī were begotten by one wife, and one other son, Bāhubali and her daughter Sundarī by his other wife. According to Jain calculations this must have been millions of years ago. Bāhubali was no ordinary son. Even at the time of conception his mother saw in a dream an enormous white elephant enter her womb – and that is a very good sign. It indicated that she would bear a strong, healthy and courageous son. And is what happened. He appeared to be a prodigy in all respects. The oldest of all the sons, born to her sister, was Bharata. When father Rishabha withdrew from his worldly functions and began to live an isolated spiritual life, all his sons, including his favorite son Bāhubali, inherited a kingdom, but Bharata, being the oldest, received the greater part. Bharata was given an invincible weapon, a new invention called chakraratna, literally a discus-jewel. He who owns this weapon may call himself the lord of the universe, because the gods themselves protect this weapon. With it he conquered all domains of ancient India, because nobody could resist him. His pride grew, and he was unable to bear any defeat. But when the king returned to the gates of his city after his campaign, the chakra refused to enter. Sages conferred as to why this could be so, and concluded that he had not yet

conquered everyone who could be conquered: namely all his brothers. All but one of them surrendered immediately and their kingdoms now belonged to him alone. The exception was Bāhubali. A war between the armies of Bāhubali and Bharata seemed unavoidable. After long deliberation both gentlemen decided that it was very bad to sacrifice so many human lives and cause so much human misery in order to settle a purely personal conflict. Finally they decided in a duel. Bharata was full of self-confidence. But Bāhubali was much bigger and stronger than he was. The first challenge was to look each other in the eyes until one of them would wink. But because Bāhubali was much bigger than his powerful brother he had to glance down only, whereas Bharata had to stare upward. Bāhubali won easily. The second challenge was to knock each other over by splashing water at each other. Once again, of course, the big and strong Bāhubali won. The final challenge was a wrestling match between the two men with their muscular arms. But Bharata was already frustrated and extremely angry because it was the first time he had had to face defeat; he saw his power and his enormous empire falling to pieces, all because of his younger brother. After some wrestling Bāhubali held Bharata above his head and he could have smashed him down and killed him. He would have inherited the whole world. But then he thought again. How could he humiliate his elder brother like this!? He put Bharata on the ground and gave him his whole empire. Bāhubali himself went to an isolated region on Mount Podanapur. There he gave up all that was of the world and went into meditation. He stood naked, day and night, in heat and cold, without drinking and without food or sleep, in perfect concentration, remaining motionless on one spot for one whole year. Lianas grew around his body up to his ears; and those lianas are characteristic of all statues of Bāhubali (photo 5). Every weakness or illusion a man can have he overcame. His body was no longer subject to gravity and was floating above the ground. Every realm of true knowledge irradiated his mind. Even the celestial gods asked him to bless them and

guide them. His soul sought unification with *paramātmā*, the super-soul and by this effort answers were given to still unanswered questions. Bharata and both his sisters came to him to see the miracle he was with their own eyes. At last he reached the highest state – omniscience and also liberation of the soul – even earlier than his father Rishabha. Bāhubali thereby became the first in the present great cycle of joy and suffering to reach perfect enlightenment. His father too, and later Bharata, reached this state, but Bāhubali will for ever be the great example for the spiritual endeavors of the Jains.

To one question the monks have never given me a satisfactory answer.. The most outstanding feature of the pure, liberated soul is omniscience. Nothing in the universe is unknowable for the liberated soul. When I reach omniscience, I will no doubt also know the suffering of all beings, and the causes of their suffering as well as the possible solution. How could I ever experience peace and bliss if I perceive all the suffering of others and do nothing? Should I understand that on reaching omniscience compassion is dead? Their Jain's answer is: "No! Compassion is not dead! But no one, and nothing but their own efforts, can save the suffering souls. Just as no god could help me on my path of purification, and I can only progress through my own effort, this applies equally to everyone else. Compassion has its value for worldly souls only. And even then even those suffering souls of a human or even a god will not receive help if their karma does not allow for it." Personally, rather than withdrawing into a state of lofty bliss and leave things in a mess, I would rather return incarnation after incarnation to the earth to do whatever little or much I can – accepting the accompanying problems for what they are, even though the earth with its life-forms may continue to exist for millions or billions of years. Would there not be something very deeply hidden in the consciousness of that cosmic bliss which is troubled, and whispers: "You are neglecting your duty: see how billions of creatures are struggling – you are abandoning, whereas you one of the very few who could do something for them." Will there never be a

new universe in which my soul will be pervaded by regret, and the desire to help will yet be cultivated?

The path of the Jains, and of the monks in particular, is the path of utter detachment. Even detachment from the stability of a regulated life; because, though the monks may stay in the same location for months, this could be different an hour from now. Without any indication, announcement or consultation the guru may stand up and start walking. Immediately every monk takes his own peacock brush and water carrier and follows him. Naked like Adam before Eve they walk for tens or hundreds of kilometers through fields, villages and cities, over mountains and through valleys. Maybe they will not return to the same place for months or years, or perhaps never. Throughout India there are temples and monasteries within walking distance of each other where they can spend the night. They stop walking one hour before sunset. They need nothing but a floor of earth or stone to lie down on. The monks do not know how long the walk will continue, where they will reside or whether perhaps their feet will burn on modern asphalt or bleed through splinters of glass.

The road of death

After bidding farewell to the naked ascetics we visited the sacred mountain named Muktagiri. We arrived in the early evening and the spectacle was beautiful. The low sun threw most of the green fields into the shadow, but the peaks and summits, studded everywhere with large and small temples on which the reddish sun was shining, stood out against the immaculate azure sky. This mountain is a very sacred place for the Jains. Advanced ascetics go finally to this place to leave their physical bodies, ideally for the last time, and enter siddhaloka – the universe of those who have accomplished the path. Few outsiders know where to find this mountain.

One peculiarity of this mountain is that somewhere on it is a small shrine, and in it an icon of the last-but-one

Tirthamkara, Parśvanāth, who lived about 2900 years ago. He is always depicted with a cap of seven (or more) cobra heads because during his life he was protected by the serpent-god Dharaṇendra. The fact is that this image is visited daily by a living cobra, a life size-cobra, which moves around the statue twice and then sometimes climbs on top of it. Apparently this snake is worshiping Parśvanāth. The Jains explained this by supposing that this snake may have been a human in his former life, someone who had strong devotional feelings for Parśvanāth and perhaps had spent his or her life praying to him. But specific karma which the soul of that person – now the snake – still had to work out had made him incarnate in this form. Jains believe that it is possible for a human after his death to be reborn on earth as an animal, plant, or even a microorganism or mineral as the result of particular wrongdoings. If this is true, the higher aspects of the ex-human of course remain “elsewhere” in latency. When all these karmas have had their specific effect, one can be reborn as a human and pursue the noble path or neglect it, followed by a matching result. When we visited the shrine the snake wasn’t at home. I would have loved to take a picture. But somebody *had* a photo. We were taken to a house, where we were met by a very unpleasant old man. He had a discolored photo of the icon with the snake hanging in a frame on the wall. We were allowed to see it. But take a picture of it ... never!!!!!! Even the great guru Āchāryaji himself he would not allow a that. And so we learned that the desire for an occult phenomenon can get so much hold on a man that he turns maliciously against the real thing: the guru is for everyone a living example of the highest detachment and ethics. So another opportunity to record a real miracle for science had been lost.

Our aim was to prove that the so-called Indus script and Indus culture, whose remnants are mainly found in the region of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro in Pakistan, was once spread out all over India. Therefore we had to visit remote places for

very ancient scriptural signs and expressions of art. And those were found and photographed. It is remarkable that the diseased and 68- year old Brahmāchārīnī had begun her research only five years before I met her. She had been a devotee of the Digambaras or gymnosophists for decades though. She told me that someone taught her the Indus script in a dream. The next day she opened “by chance” a book: the page at which it opened showed exactly those signs! They were depictions of ancient sacred signs, but not pictographic or phonetic signs; they were not an early form of Sanskrit, as some have tried to claim, but symbols which can only be understood by the Digambaras. She started her research. Her intuition, supported by her trained microbiologist’s eyes, constantly helped her to recognize the weathered inscriptions and read them. She traveled through most of India. Now she has deciphered the whole script and can read it. Moreover it appears by to occur all over India – something which formal archeology had not previously noticed. Most engravings tell about the individual course of life and dying of monks. She herself does not know exactly how this dream and the intuitions have been able to manifest. Perhaps a reawakened memory of a former existence? But from a Jain philosophical point of view the most logical explanation is that someone who has passed away many centuries ago, and who lived in the days the inscriptions were made, made them known to her in detail. The time has now arrived for a person fit for that task to bring this knowledge to humanity again. Her books will send shock waves through the world of archeology; perhaps she will make bitter enemies, and everything will be done to sweep her ideas under the carpet. Therefore it is important to proceed carefully and thoroughly.

We visited the famous caves of Ellora east of Mumbai. There are 34 numbered caves, Hindu, Buddhist as well as Jain. In those days these religions must have lived side by side in brotherhood. That has not always been the case. A relief on a wall of the Kailasa temple – which was entirely hacked out of the bed rock – seems to show that Jains were



(1) Guru Śrī Vidyāsāgar Ji Mahārāj and his disciples.

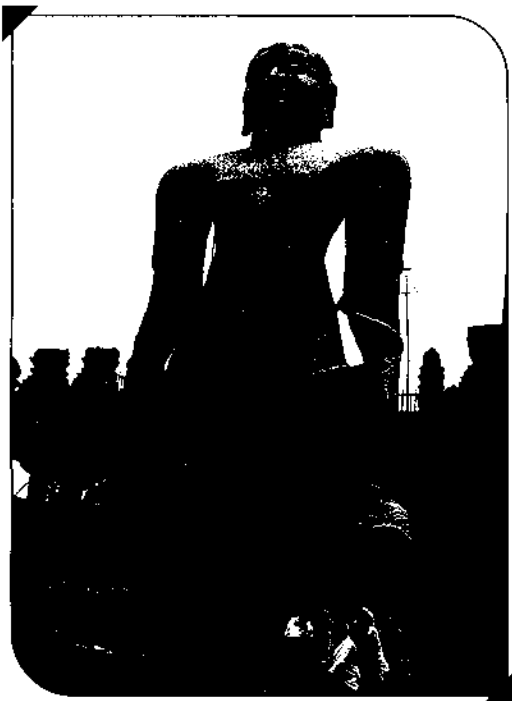




3) Motionless as a statue the monk receives his food.

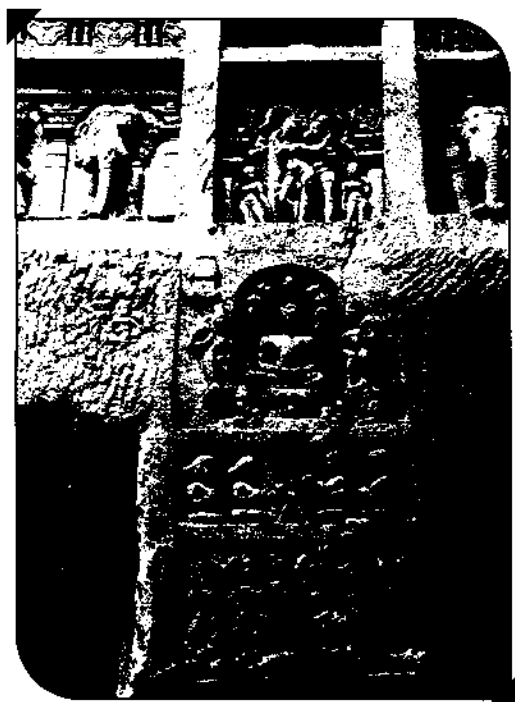
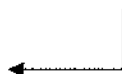


(4) Studying monks with the author



(5)

Bāhubali on the
Vindhyagiri
at Śravana Belagola,
granite, 10th century.

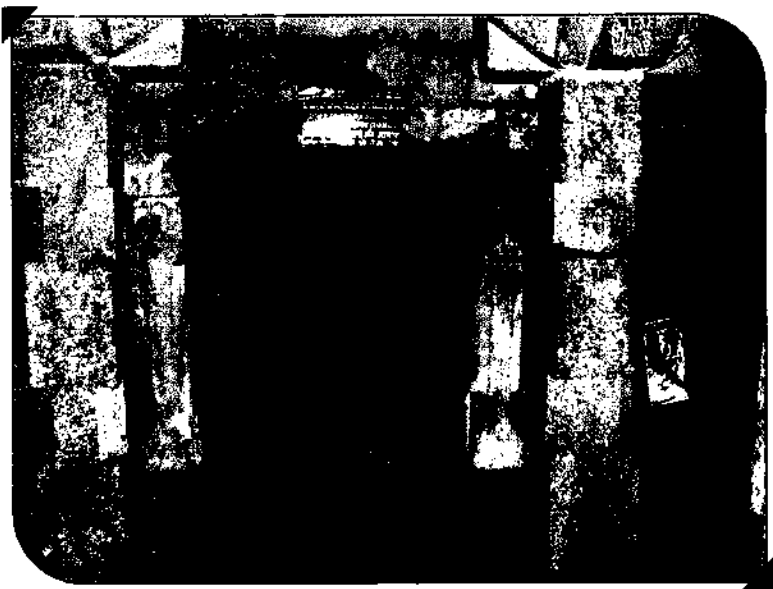


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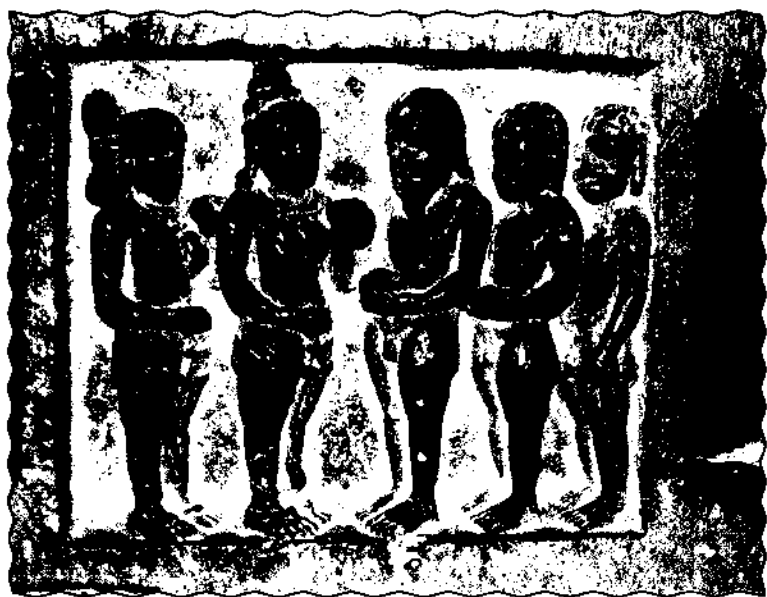
Jain monks are
trampled on
by Hindus;
Kailas temple, Ellora.



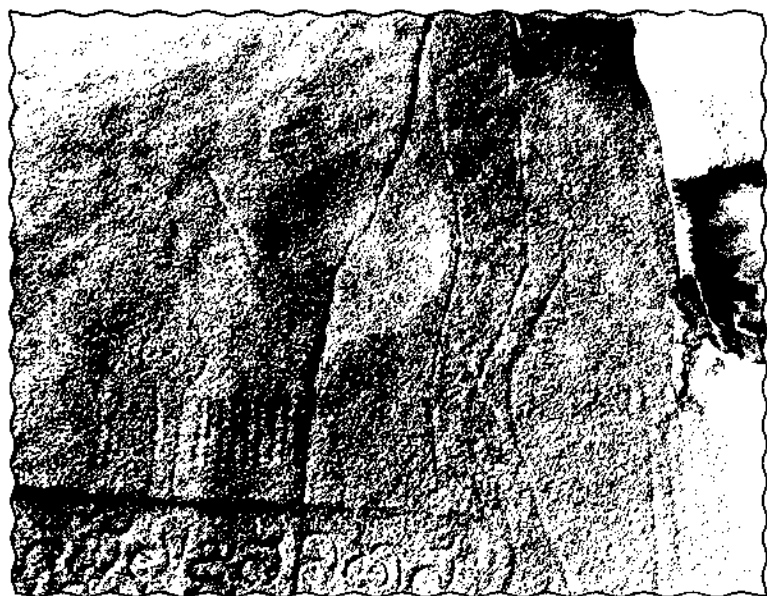
(7) Svastika: symbol of the four conditions in which the soul can exist: Vindhyagiri.



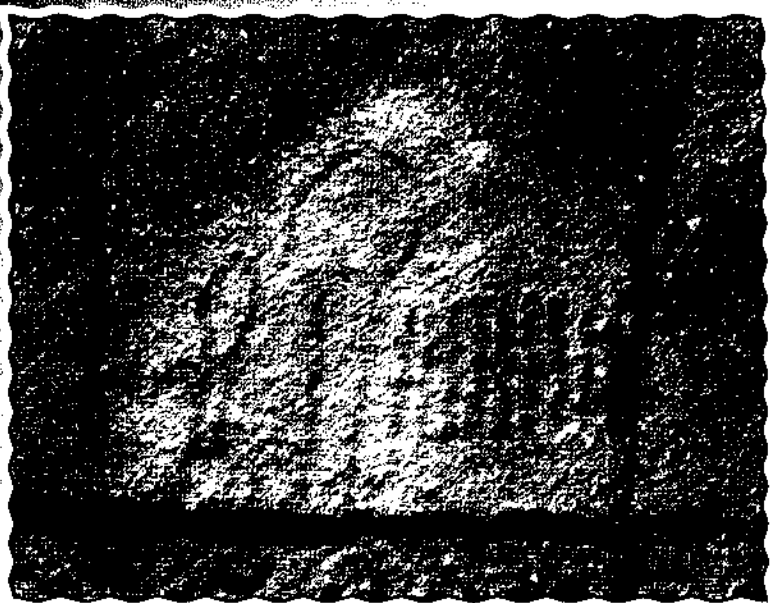
(8) Stone screen depicting the life of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya, 350-300. BC.



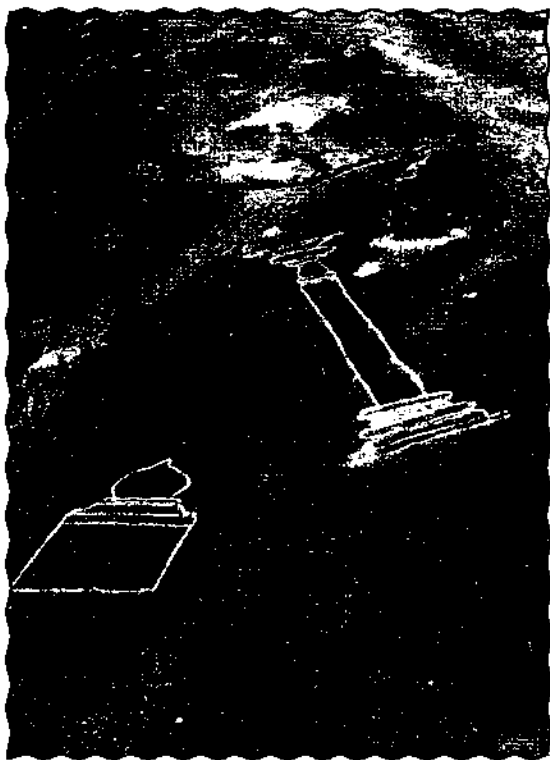
(9) Stone screen depicting the life of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya, 350-300, BC.



(10) Key Indus Rock of Karnataka: Vindhyagiri, Śravaṇa Belagola.



(11) Indus script on Key Indus Rock of Karnataka, Vindhyagiri.



(12)

Rock carvings
pointing towards
manastambha
and temple
on Vindhyagiri.

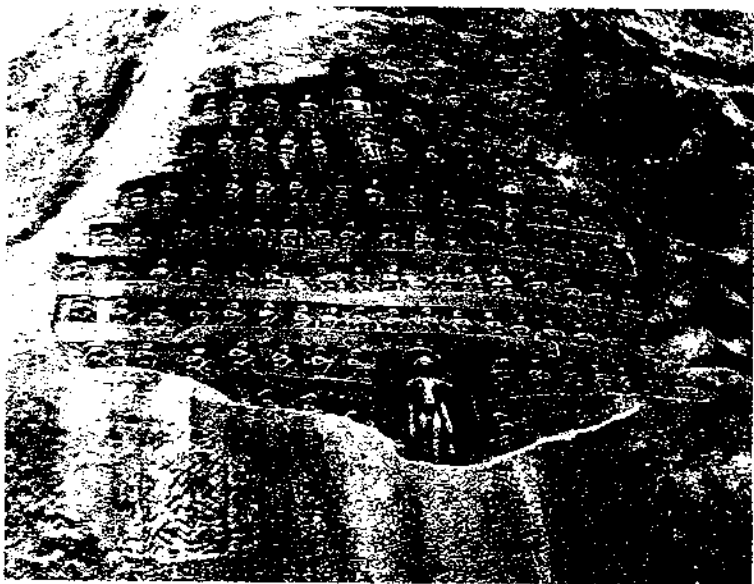


(13)

Jina carved on the rock
pointing the direction
towards a sculpture
of the same.



(14) The two brothers during their penitence: 2nd art phase; Vindhyagiri.



(15) Rishabha's family; 2nd phase of art; Vindhyagiri.

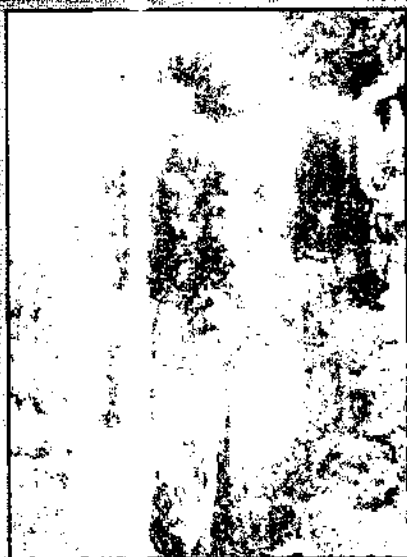


(16)
Female
spiritual person;
2nd art phase;
Vindhyagiri.





(19) The icon of Chandra Prabhu Vindhya



(20) Risabha, 47 meter high,
next to In us seal of about 3 cm



(20A)



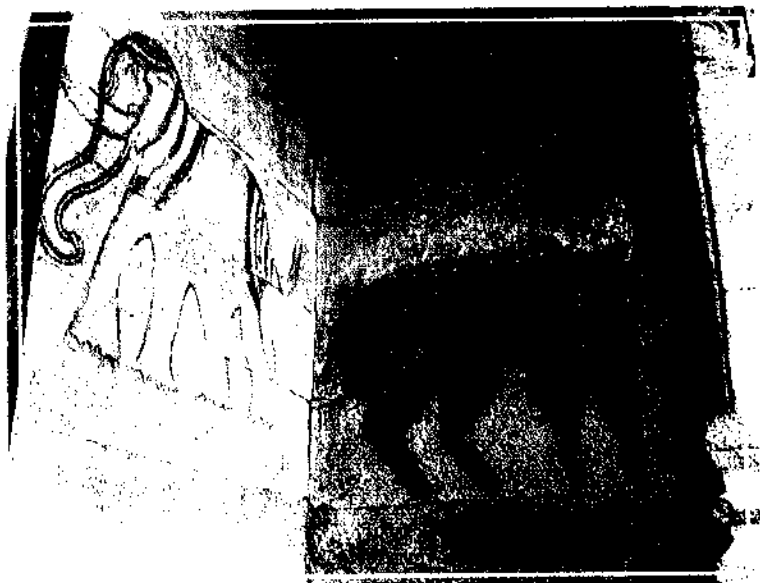
(21)

Depiction of the
12 holy books
(angas) in a temple
in South India.

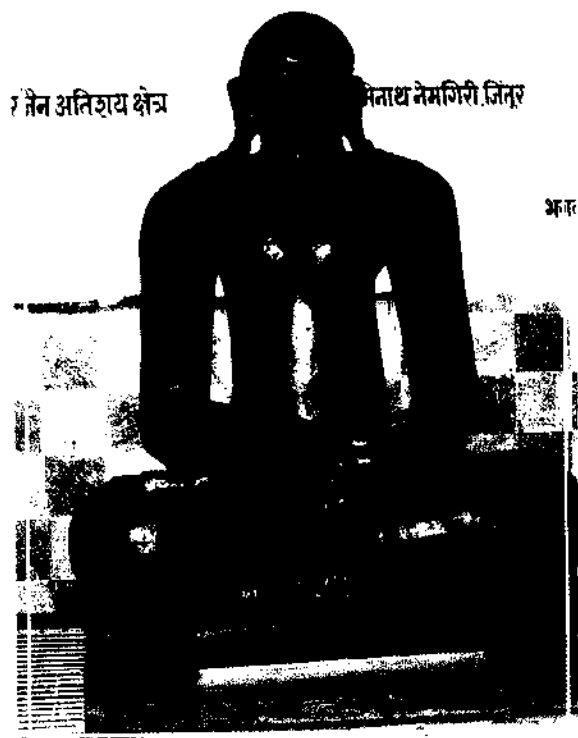


(22)

Sitting Jina: 4th
phase of art;
Muktagiri.



(23) Ancient wallpainting; Vindhyagiri.



(24)

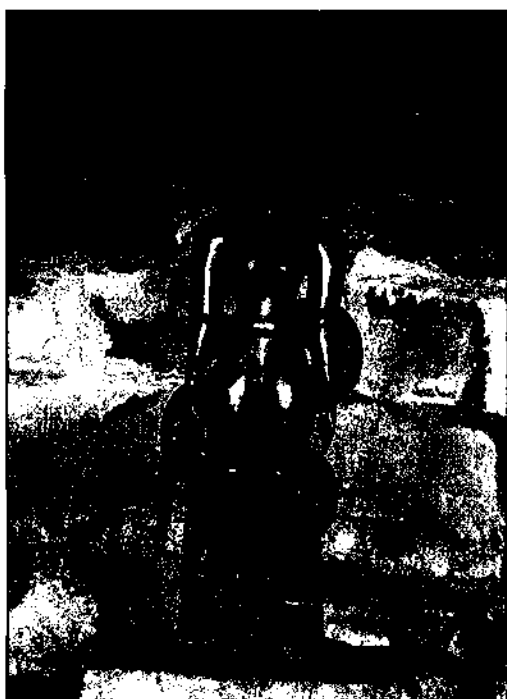
Sitting Śantināth,
2500-3000 years old;
rough 5th phase.



(25) Standing Jina of kasauti stone; 5th phase.

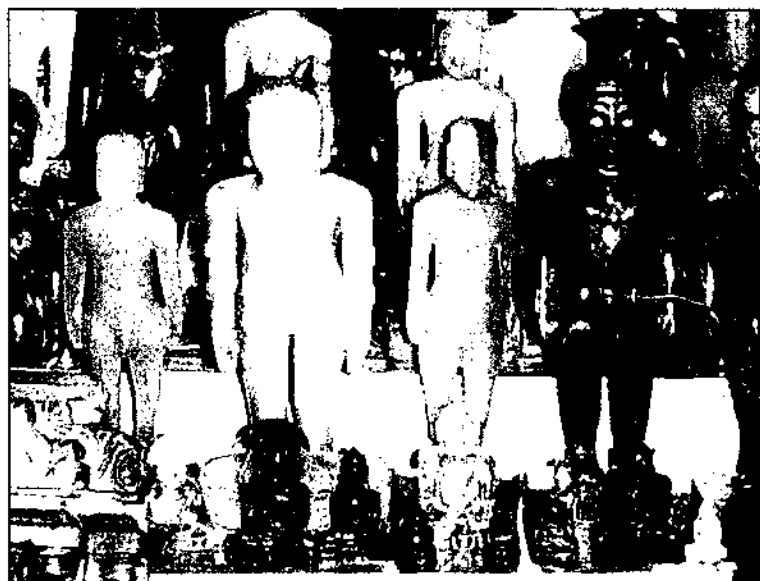
(26)

Parūvanatha in the
Chandragupta temple
on Chandragiri;
approx. 350 BC.

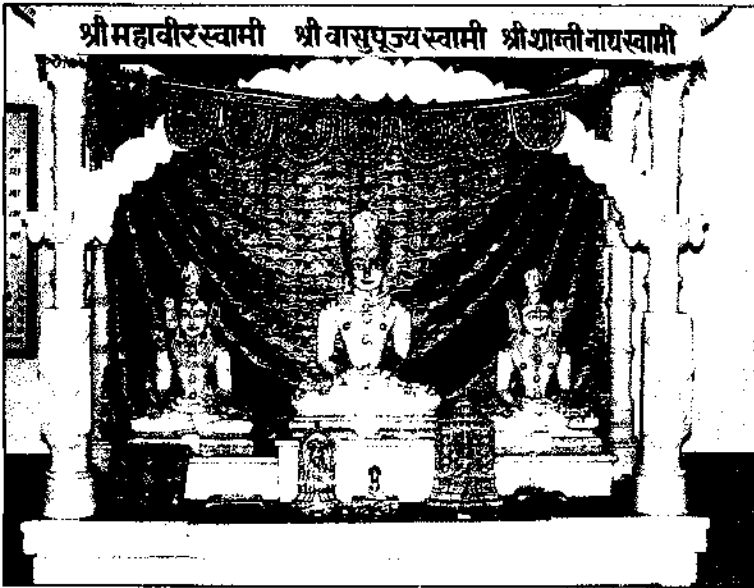




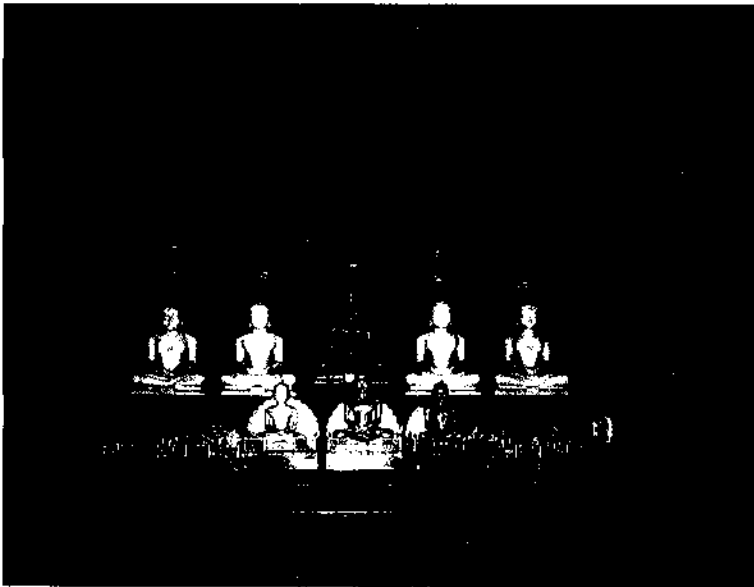
(27) This sculpture in a different technique may be thousands of years older, Paithan.



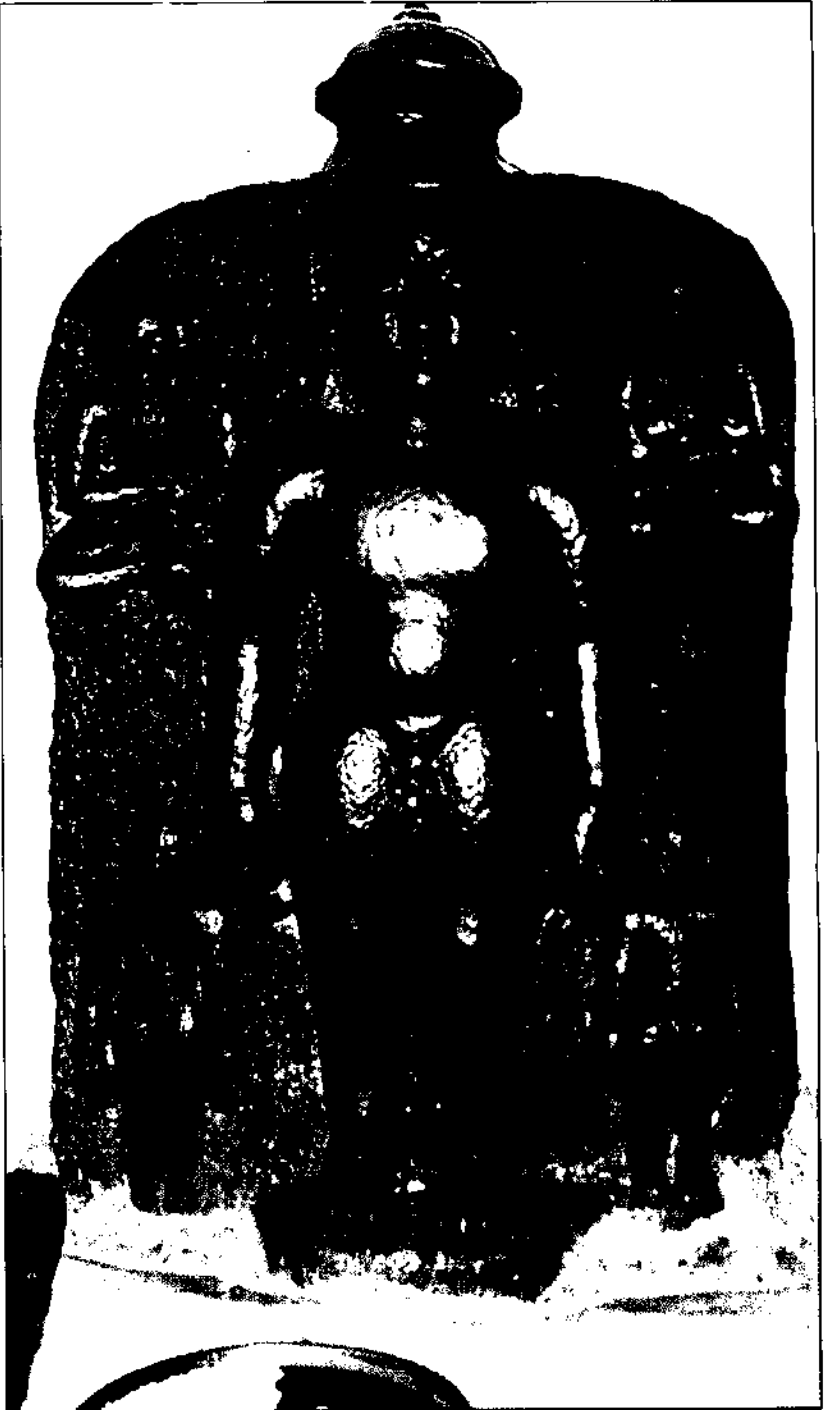
(28) Images of precious stone from the “treasure temple”



(29) Interior of a modern Svetmbara temple; Malviya Nagar, Jaipur.



(30) Interior of a modern Digambara temple; Malviya Nagar, Jaipur.



(31) Ādinātha with standing and sitting ascetics; South India.

tortured by Hindus, and who danced on the corpses of the monks (photo 6). In view of their non-violent attitude it was easier for the Jains to leave their present body than to defend themselves with weapons.

Our next destination was Śravana Belagola (or Sravanbelgol), the famous place of pilgrimage deep within Karnataka – not unknown by the more adventurous type of tourist – where on top of the highest hill, the Vindhyagiri, stands a 27 meter high and still totally undamaged and unweathered granite Bāhubali more than a thousand years old – it was inaugurated on March 13, 981 to be precise. The statue is also known as Śrī Gomateśvar. This monolith has not been placed there, but the people living there a thousand years ago hacked away the granite mountain top until the image remained.

Scattered over the mountain there are engravings depicting two feet. These were made through the millennia, each time a monk took *sallekhana* – voluntary fasting until peaceful death.

The other mountain is known as the Chandra Hill, because the famous Indian emperor Chandragupta Maurya, grandfather of the equally famous Aśoka, lived and died there hundreds of years before Christ. One temple at least existed before Chandragupta arrived. His life has been depicted in 90 panels in two screens in the temple where the icons worshiped by the emperor himself still stand. Chandragupta was a great and powerful sovereign (see chapter 10). But one day he gave up all his wealth and earthly ties. He removed his jewelry and his clothes. The rest of his life he spent as a naked Jain monk. But even more interesting for us were the inscriptions on the rocks. These will be discussed in Chapter 10. Many thousands of years ago Jains must already have lived there, long before Tīrthamkara Mahāvīra, who lived 2500 years ago in North India. They lived in the same way as the monks in the monasteries today, and they died in the same way. What became of their souls after they had left their bodies behind on these rocks? What will become of the souls of those who do

the same in our day? We will have to travel the path ourselves to answer this question (photo 7).

9

The Fourteen-Fold Path to Freedom

Infinite knowledge, infinite purity,
and infinite freedom are the goal

All living beings – the earthly minerals, plants, animals and men form only a minority in this vast cosmos of life – from the most primitive with only one sense faculty to the highest divine, have their specific forms, conditions of life and stages of evolution due to karmic action. In their always very systematic approach, the Jains have elaborated a scientific classification of 148 types of karma, as discussed in chapter 4. The core of Jain ethics is ahimsā – nonviolence in action, speech and mind – the total abstention from doing harm to any living being, even the smallest and least developed. As far as humans are concerned, apart from not doing physical harm, they practice tolerance towards different opinions – because no person can, unless he has reached omniscience, claim to have the ultimate correct and complete view. As said, Jains are strict vegetarians, and avoid professions which might involve physical harm, even to the smallest of creatures.

The purpose of these practices is twofold. First, suffering is limited as much as possible for all creatures and they are not hindered on the path their souls have chosen. Second, they purify themselves from karmas which cling to

the soul due to violent or otherwise unharmonious thoughts and emotions, which limit clarity of mind and true vision, and in this way they develop an almost superhuman compassion for all that lives.

The final goal of the soul's pilgrimage through astounding varieties of forms of existence, in fact all space and time units that can be conceived within the universe, is to reach the point where the consciousness is fully at one with the qualities of the soul: infinite knowledge, infinite purity and infinite freedom within this universe. The possibility of acquiring an unstained clear mind and infallible intuition and insight is no doubt the ultimate dream of every scientist or other truth-seeker. If we really want to know truth about ourselves and the universe and its laws, and the purpose of our existence, of seen and unseen worlds, and our relation with all be-ing and be-ness, and, above all, if we wish to work for the well-being and betterment of the world, for all its inhabitants and for the human condition, we can not avoid practicing of ethics, which means acting in harmony with the laws of the universe.

The Jains divide the path towards purity and final emancipation and omniscience within our universe into fourteen stages⁷¹ or gunasthānas. Even though it may not be possible for us to live in all respects like a Jain, taking notice of the general principles may be helpful, and is indeed in itself purifying. Opinions differ, and some say that this teaching was invented in the last two millennia, but it may also be a very ancient teaching, as it seems that the concept of the gunasthānas is already visible in the Indus script, and it continues today in the form of the snake ladder game, in which the ladder represents the spiritual path, whereas the snake form denotes passion (S.R. Jain, personal communication).

The first stage is what the Jains call "false worldview."⁷² This signifies our "normal" state of being, in which the soul is caught in, and suffers from, false appearances or worldly illusions. We have been bound by

passions and illusions from the beginningless past. It is the stage in which the soul (jīva) has always been, until it reaches the first recognition of its own nature. It is the normal state in which the majority of people find themselves, unaware of the practical possibility of a spiritual life. We may form our ideas and theories, but being unaware of the spiritual truths that lie behind the external manifestation of phenomena we will never have a real understanding of the nature of the cosmos and of life, and we are suffering the frustrations of that fundamental ignorance. This stage describes the situation of humanity at large in the present stage of evolution, which is karmic: due to past thoughts and feelings we have attracted those species of karmas that delude right views. But the soul has the innate capacity of to break away through its vesture of karmic limitations. There comes a moment, somewhere along the pilgrim's road of the soul, when the first flashes of true insight dawn; and this is truly a historic event in each one's individual journey. The stage when this occurs is called, literally translated "capability of correct-and-false insight-ness."⁷³ When this occurs one progresses at once to the 4th stage of the ladder.

There are some very interesting teachings about the concept of "correct-and-false insight-ness." This stage is so special because from then on for the first time in his soul's history the individual can take charge of its path towards final attainment. The soul itself has the innate capacity⁷⁴ – bhavyatva – to initiate this event, and it has always been inherent in the nature of the soul, but slumbering. This breakthrough only occurs when the soul has grown to a point of "readiness" to be touched by the inner impulse, once we have placed ourselves in the right karmic conditions. Bhavyatva may be awakened from its dormant state by listening to spiritual teachings, or meeting with a spiritually developed person. Even seeing the beautiful and pure image of a great spiritual teacher may evoke the noble qualities of the soul.

Another factor that has always been inherent in our soul, even when it was still clothed in the forms of the most primitive beings, is the urge or initial cause, or “autonomous capacity”⁷⁵ to free itself from the chains of bondage-causing inclinations. This is the fundamental, ever-pressing driving force of evolution towards liberation. The translator of one English version of the *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra*, Nathmal Tatia, writes: “Moral and spiritual consciousness only dawn for the soul when it is sufficiently conscious of, and confronted with, the force that has eternally been keeping it ensnared. To facilitate this, the soul has an innate, beginningless ‘autonomous capacity’ that is always struggling to relieve the soul of its karmic burden. This capacity is the willpower which drives the soul towards liberation” (p. 280). These two factors – the potentiality to become free and the urge to self-liberation – are the indispensable precursors to the following stage.

But let us first reflect on the nature of living beings as presented in the Jain teachings. We see that at the core there is: 1) a *jīva* or soul that is pure and omniscient by its very nature; 2) a component of great compassion and enlightenment that may at the proper moment, due to the right “call from below,” project a ray of spiritual light and energy into the recipient personal consciousness, thus temporarily enlightening the mind and setting it aflame to the extent that it is able to contain that ray; 3) an innate desire or driving force towards liberation; 4) a lower, passionate mind that is the slave of its illusions, which continuously draws karmic elements of a lower nature around the soul, thus blinding clear vision and counteracting the free development of the higher faculties and keeping the soul in bondage. The whole is dressed in three vestures: 1) the karmic body, or body composed of karmic matter particles, the causal body of the outer form as well as one’s personal mental and emotional tendencies; 2) the electric body formed of fine molecules of electric matter and 3) the physical body.

The one strongest obscuring karma,⁷⁶ which had until this moment clung to the innately pure soul and obstructed it from shining forth forcefully, is now temporarily pushed aside due to the spiritual impulse. In such moments when the spiritual sun breaks through the clouds, many worldly interests of physical, psychological and mental character disappear into the background. One realizes that there is a true essential nature far above the illusions of everyday life. This gives great inner peace, and within that peace, a strong desire for spiritual advancement and learning. Once the soul has entered the path towards moksha or nirvāna (enlightenment), every subsequent event in life becomes a teacher if seen in the light of the soul. This then may go hand in hand with actual teachings received through a more advanced person who has gained a deeper understanding of the inner life.

Through this instruction and training, purity and insight increase further, and numerous karmas are removed, as when the sun evaporates a cloud which obscures it and great energy shines forth. The urge towards liberation that was always inherent in the soul now becomes very strong and for the first time the pilgrim is placed face to face with his enemies: his own gross passions that have accumulated around the soul since beginningless time, and the factors (karmas) that have always been deluding real vision. Recognizing and forcefully removing these enemies or forces, all deluding factors are temporarily suppressed and one experiences an unobstructed insight. This is the nature of the stage called "correct world-view."⁷⁷ It is the most crucial stage in the development of the soul.

The consciousness now experiences an insight that it had never had before, the first dawn of final enlightenment. Thus far, through good deeds and thoughts, through the awakening inner urge, through the inner capacity of the soul to send rays of enlightenment to the mind which has become recipient, and the growing insight accompanied by natural instruction, and by facing and suppressing the soul's "enemies," the aspirant has been approaching the gate. From

now on, he can enter the gate and tread the path of spirituality that makes him an ever greater and wiser beneficial force for all living beings. And he (or she) will succeed. From now on he may truly be called a Jaina, because he has entered the path of the jinas, the conquerors. Perfection is reached, however, through the difficult stages that follow.

This stage of temporary true insight may refer to a rare and deep mystical experience. But, perhaps on a lesser scale, many of us may have experienced moments of extraordinary clarity. To our regret these moments never last very long, and after some time we are merely left with the memory, unable to recall them. We had suppressed our tendencies, but not yet conquered them. Still we have not been overcome by our old passions: we spend a time in a stage in which the insight is no longer clear. But then we may even start to doubt whether we have not just been floating on a self-inflated cloud. This stage of memory of "something" is called "mixed stage,"⁷⁸ but due to so many down-pulling karmas, our own heritage, in a moment we may be drawn down as it were, we take up our old habits and worldly desires, and may entirely forget the experience: we continue our life as before. But only for the time being. Once the soul has been touched by this enlightened experience, one has irreversibly entered the path towards moksha, enlightenment and omniscience. No doubt, many of us have gone through some deep experience in a former life. Perhaps this is why one may experience a feeling of recognition when coming in contact with spiritual teachings or objects of spiritual beauty in the present life. A modern theosophical writer put it thus: "Any one of you who has once felt the touch of the god within never is the same again. Never can be the same again. Your life is changed; and you can have this awakening at any moment, any moment that you will take it" (G. de Purucker).

Someone who has experienced "correct-and-false insight-ness" and holds on to it has undergone a great inner change, which reflects itself in outer attitudes and behavior. He feels great inner joy, despite the tremendous difficulties

that still await him. First a person had identified himself with his body, with his possessions, his status, the compliments or rebukes he receives etc., and everything he met in life was judged as either pleasant or unpleasant. He had identified himself with his ego, thinking that his personal willpower is the real actor in life, thus feeling proud when something had been accomplished, or frustrated when some personal aim had failed. Thus, unknowingly, he has always been trying to work against the spiritual laws of nature, to row against the stream of the spirit. In this way the cycle of bondage was continued. Now his attention is entirely redirected and becomes wholly focused on his own nature (svabhāva). Outer things, his body, possessions, psychological conditions such as anger, fear, hatred, self-pity, pride, passions, greed are no longer of paramount interest. He becomes interested in seeing the self within, in knowing the spiritual side of nature rather than outer appearances. In this way gains a great pureness of mind and behavior, which will enable him to practice the purity in motivation and conduct and the one-pointedness that are needed to follow the path further towards its ultimate goal. For the world around him, he has become a more peaceful, tranquil, stable and patient person and naturally shows what the Hindu *Bhagavad-Gītā* describes as the characteristics of the wise: equal under all circumstances, cold or hot, praise or humiliation, prosperity or loss, etc. He knows now that there is an essential nature behind the veil of illusion he had thus far regarded as realities. But of he now realizes that these “realities” are transitory. They are nothing but “modes”⁷⁹ of an inherently free and omniscient living soul. This applies to all forms of life, all living beings, all of which are forms of expression of an essential core, which is of a fundamental all-encompassing conscious nature.

At once one realizes the brotherhood of all beings, that all beings have a soul with the highest innate qualities, and that every living being has the innate possibility to reach its spiritual summit. This awareness of brotherhood brings forth strong feelings of compassion (anukampā) for all beings.

Brotherhood and compassion, as well as disinterest concerning worldly desires and attachments are therefore described as the character qualities of a man or woman who has experienced this first spark of enlightenment. As P.S. Jaini writes in his *The Jaina path of Purification*:⁸⁰ “Whereas the compassion felt by an ordinary man is tinged with pity or with attachment to its object, *anukampā* is free of such negative aspects; it develops purely from wisdom . . . and it fills the individual with an unselfish desire to help other souls towards *moksha*.”

The spark of enlightenment has also opened the mind in such a way that one can effectively reflect on such universal questions as all human beings have, but which cannot be solved by the brain mind and a materialistic approach alone, such as “what is death?”; “what is the purpose of life?”; “what are the laws which govern life and the universe?”; “what is the inner structure of the universe and of man, composed of living forces and of intelligent beings?” A man who has caught this glimpse of the nature of the soul, or even if he has only seriously taken notice of the possibility, will never again entirely stumble into the pitfalls of materialistic nihilism or of dogmatism - the two spooks which haunt our western sciences and many religions.

P.S. Jaini makes a most interesting statement when he writes about compassion which “develops purely from wisdom” and “fills the individual with an unselfish desire to help other souls towards *moksha*.” “If this urge to bring all tormented beings out of *samsāra* is particularly strong and is cultivated, it may generate those auspicious *karmas* that later confer the status of *Tirthamkara* upon certain omniscients. When present to a more moderate degree, *anukampā* [compassion] brings an end to exploitive and destructive behavior, for even the lowest animal is now seen as intrinsically worthwhile and thus inviolable” (p.150). The above statement shows that Jainism does not only teach the path towards self-realization and detachment as the final aim. It allows the possibility, urged by great compassion, to

postpone one's own liberation and turn one's face towards all sentient beings which are struggling their way upward towards final accomplishment, and stretch out a helping hand by reviving the knowledge of eternal truth.

Perhaps not all Jains have been sufficiently aware of this idea. It would however, in my opinion, seem strange if the core teaching of compassion and utter detachment from selfishness were to suddenly appear unreal and be abandoned when the universal insight is acquired. No doubt the highest compassion and unselfishness would compel the soul on the threshold of liberation to turn back for the sake of all beings, rather than spend eternity in lofty bliss and omniscience, but only for oneself. This would bring the Jain teaching very close to the Buddhist and theosophical distinction between pratyeka Buddhas - Buddhas for themselves alone - and Buddhas of Compassion, who accomplish all that can be accomplished by a human being and abandon the reward of a very long period of bliss and peace to help the world. However only 48 souls will function as Tirthankaras in the world's great cycle of pleasure and pain in which all human development takes place, whereas Buddhism and theosophy teach that *everyone* can make the choice to postpone his blissful reward over and over again when inspired by compassion for all beings that still suffer from the illusions in which they are caught.

The higher stages describe the processes of overcoming and eliminating all restrictions, and the actions that must be undertaken to perform this. Depending on one's situation in society and one's determination, the Jain may choose the path of the layman or laywoman first, or at once the more strenuous path of the mendicant. The conditions for both are described in the fifth and seventh stages.

Now that one has really chosen to approach Truth and to take away every obstruction that hinders the full shining forth of what one is in one's essence, one needs to actively cultivate ethics in the purest form possible. A great help in keeping one's determination alive even during difficult times, is to take vows, before a teacher and before one's inner self.

The naked monks we met had all made such vows. The serious pilgrim towards truth is very much aware of the courage it takes to make such a vow, and of the consequences of failure to keep it.

The core of all Jain ethics is *ahimsā*, non-violence, the avoidance of giving injury, physically, mentally, or in words. This includes one's own actions as well as one's responsibility for or support for violent actions by others. The main difference between the lay and mendicant paths is the strictness with which *ahimsā* is practiced. Every Jain will always avoid killing, or being indirectly responsible for killing, the forms in which souls are incarnated, whether human or animal, and as much as possible even plant and mineral lives. Of course they disagree with animal sacrifices such as practiced by certain religious groups, or misuse of animals in scientific laboratories. If modern science had grown up within a Jain culture, no research would ever have taken place which does harm to animals or any other living being, and they would have studied life directly, instead of analyzing corpses from which the conscious essence has flown. Indeed the world would have looked entirely different, without slaughter, without wars, without man-induced extinction of species, and without any form of environmental degradation. The Jains prove that such a way of life is possible.

The most important lay vows are called *anuvrata* - "atom vows": 1) non-violence; 2) truth, not lying, however subtly, under any condition, which involves great care in speaking at all times, and perhaps not speaking when this could result in harm to any creature; 3) non-stealing, or not taking anything that is not given; 4) no sexual misconduct, i.e. sex outside marriage, and excessive indulgence in sexual pleasures with one's partner; 5) non-possession and non-attachment. Possessions, then, are material objects as well as internal possessions, passions, sentiments, or attachments in general.

The sixth stage⁸¹ is that of the mendicant. The principle of nonviolence is carried out to the fullest possible extent, and includes the tiniest and most primitive life-forms, even the elements: the mendicant must not dig the earth, walk on grass, or extinguish a fire, etc. Thus he develops an attitude of absolute harmlessness towards living beings and the natural environment, and takes only what is given without asking. He has become a perfect friend of all beings and a perfect environmentalist. To continue his quest he will do everything to better the qualities of his character, and reflect mentally on the various aspects of universal philosophy. This is formulated by Jain ethics and philosophy respectively in the form of ten dharmaś or observances, and twelve mental reflections or meditations.⁸² The ten dharmaś are, as summarized in the *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra* (IX, 6): perfect forgiveness, humility, honesty, purity, truthfulness, self-restraint, austerity, renunciation, non-attachment and chastity.

The meditations or mental reflections are of a philosophical nature, and lead to insight in the nature of the universe and its basic laws, and of life, the human condition, and the path of spiritual evolution and liberation from suffering and ignorance. Suggestive subjects to reflect on, as given in the *Tattvārthadhigama Sūtra* (IX 7:) are, among others: everything is subject to change and therefore transitory; there is no point trying to avoid what is inevitable, because the seeds sown in the past must come to fruition according to their natural character; the soul moves through endless cycles of embodiment and true happiness can only be obtained by release from this cyclicality; I am alone the doer of my actions and the enjoyer or sufferer of the fruits of them; the inflow of karmas, the result of passions etc., is the cause of my mundane existence; the inflow can be stopped; it is possible to purify the soul of its obstructing and deluding karmas, through conscious effort and the practice of ethics; the universe (contrary to contemporary western ideas about a big bang and possible big crunch) has no absolute beginning or end, was never created and operates according to its own

laws without divine intervention; the sacred teachings are absolutely true, the core of all ethics is ahimsā, and the path leads to the ultimate goal of eternal peace and omniscience.

All these observances and reflections are meant to lead to complete renunciation of all forms of egotistic thinking. These are the meditations practiced by the ascetic monks referred to in the previous chapter. A mendicant, while taking vows, first rises to the 7th stage, then regresses to the 6th. The seventh stage⁸³ is when one cultivates the higher meditations. The meditations and awakening of states of higher awareness bring the aspirant ever closer to his goal, but many of the remaining karmas still have to be suppressed and indeed eliminated. The higher meditations and processes are too esoteric to be described in words. It would make little sense it seems, to try to explain subtleties that grosser minds can not possibly grasp.

In the eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh stages the so-called conduct-deluding karmas, such as anger, pride, deceit, greed, grief, fear, sexuality and certain others are either suppressed or destroyed, including the most subtle ones. One can imagine that, as one progresses on the path, one has to face every single delusion and weakness to which one has succumbed in past lives, and every single one has to be conquered. It must indeed be a dreadful experience to come face to face with all harm one has ever done to the world through time. And what if, driven by Compassion, we wish to destroy all that causes evil in the world, and thus evoke all this as enemies against us in the form of the most dreadful monstrosities? Everything must be conquered – and we have the power, as long as we do not forget that the ultimate purity, wisdom and force for the good of all beings is innate in the soul. Up to the eleventh stage one climbs one of two “ladders”: the one of suppression or the one of elimination. As long as the karmas are only suppressed the aspirant will reach the eleventh stage, but the passions will resurface and may

draw him back to a lower stage. But eventually he will have enough energy to eliminate the karmas and pass beyond the eleventh stage and enter the twelfth, the stage of Arhat, avoiding the dangers of the 11th stage.

The last conduct-deluding, knowledge- and perception-obscuring and energy-restricting karmas are now eliminated and the obstructions to endless bliss and energy are no more. The aspirant reaches the thirteenth stage spontaneously: he possesses omniscience⁸⁴ during incarnation, either as a Tīrthamkara or as a kevalis (omniscient one).

The fourteenth and final stage is the stage reached by an Arhat just before leaving his physical vehicle. All vibrations of the soul that attract karmas and cause bondage have now ceased. After having left the physical body for the last time, he enters moksha, the disembodied state of eternal bliss and omniscience.

Some, very rarely – in harmony with the law of cycles, and in consequence of their karma – remain as omniscient and liberated teachers for the good of humankind and all living beings. This karma is above all that of universal compassion, and charity towards all who strive upward. They are the Tīrthamkaras.

10

Art and architecture

The inner value of the soul is priceless and worth much more than whatever worldly gain, which they but regard as worthless dust.

Introduction

When was the art of writing invented? According to the Jains it was the first Tīrthamkara, Rishabha, who taught humanity the six skills. Art was one of 72 specializations, and drawing was part of the art of writing.

If we wish to learn something about the early art of the Jains, we must turn to old caves and hills all over India, and especially those in the East, and in the South in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, to inscriptions and engravings in the massive rocks left untouched by time. In the oldest Jain temples as well, much can be seen. The people who lived in the South in those days (and partly even today) were the Dravidians, who were followers of a particular group of Jain ascetics (S.R. Jain, personal communication). According to historians the original Dravidians have long since been driven away from their lands.

An archeological survey presents an amazing richness of antique art objects, old scriptures, paintings on walls and ceilings, icons, symbolic diagrams (yantras) with geometrical drawings and written mantras, used for paying homage in highest concentration to some highly honored Jina, and also

lessons noted down in the form of *prathamamu* yoga stories.⁸⁵ Enormous rocks high up in the hills show us Jain art in the form of granite engraved sketches, relief sculpture, engraved footprints, paintings, and scriptural signs, which are also reflected in the Indus culture. According to official science the art of the Jains covers a period of at least 7000 years, and these precious forms of art are still being added every day in our modern times. There are numerous reasons to suppose that this culture is far older than 7000 years. In the evolution of art a number of phases can be distinguished, but until today nobody has been able to give an exact date to the finds in stone.

Though much remains today for us to investigate, through the centuries, but especially in modern times, enormous damage has already been done to the ancient art of the Jains. Rival religious groups have constantly tried to erase Jainism from the surface of the earth, to burn their original books (with complete success, as far as we know), and to destroy or damage their artistic accomplishments. Conquerors from elsewhere have done their bit. Nowadays damage is mainly being done as a side effect of tourism and (deliberate?) neglect by institutions like the Archeological Survey of India and the State Archeological Departments in this Hindu dominated country. Tourists are attracted by more conspicuous objects such as large images and temple complexes, but walk with their feet and "their eyes closed" on things which are of far more value from an archeological and cultural point of view. These things have however been neglected or hardly investigated and publicized, and have often been misinterpreted due to bias. All this is so old that it partly stems from times when no dispersal of cultures and religions as we know today had taken place in India. Moreover what we find is so rich that the United Nations should recognize it as World Heritage, and the international community should ensure its protection.

The Jains have always carefully protected their sanctuaries in the cave temples in the South Indian hills, the

Saurashtra Hills of Gimar (West Gujarat), and many other places in India. They deliberately and purposely kept them secret from possible intruders and gave them no publicity outside Jain circles. On places which are often difficult to reach one can find well-preserved or damaged *chaturdikis* (small or large pillars with sculptured pictures of standing or sitting Jinās on four sides), yantras, manuscripts, paintings, copper works of art; and all this together provides us with detailed information about the art of the Jains. The author and photographer owes it exclusively to the Jains themselves who – because of his lifestyle and the genuine respect he has for them – revealed to him the things he has been able to see. In the temples there are sometimes manuscripts which provide information about the art of the Jains in the form of drawings.

As reported the *Dwadas-anga* (the 12 angas), scriptures existed until Mahāvīra's period, around 2600 years ago, but from then on they were lost or destroyed, and they were preserved only in the memories of holy men and monks who knew them by heart. But the scriptures themselves as well as the exact record of what was contained in them were lost, partly because of neglect, partly because of the rivalry of the Brahmins (who base themselves on the Vedas – the authority of which is denied by the Jains and Buddhists), the “lingites,” worshipper of the *linga*, the symbol of the Hindu god Śiva, and also the Buddhists. In Mahāvīra's days there were many local wars between small kingdoms, of which the Jains became victims after the loss of the Nanda dynasty. Jains ascribe the disappearance of their palm-leaf manuscripts to great fires which raged in the two great universities of those days: Nalanda (in Bihar, in the Northwestern part of India) and Taxila (now in Pakistan near Lahore). Nalanda later bloomed as a famous Buddhist university, and its sizeable ruins are now a tourist attraction. Some old temples have free-standing pillars (*manastambhas*.⁸⁶) with depictions of the cosmos together with the Jain *śruti-skandhas*, the collection of above-mentioned 12 angas, complete with a description of the contents per volume. But the texts themselves have been lost

(according to the Digambaras, but the Śvetambaras still claim to have 11 of them) – with the exception of part of the twelfth anga, which was found more than two thousand years later in South India near Mangalore, and on which the Digambara Jains in the recent centuries have found material matching later scriptures on which they based their reconstruction of all twelve angas. In front of most temples we can find a *manastambha*, a high slim stone pillar with on top a *chaturdiki* with its four carved Tīrthamkaras. *Manastambha* means “ego pillar,” because those who look up to it and see the lofty conquerors of all passions who have left all mundane affairs behind forget their egos (*mana*) and know that reality is beyond all attributes of the ego. Some temples have objects of brass or other metals with depictions of the twelve scriptures, which prove that this literature existed five centuries BC.

In the temple of India’s great emperor Chandragupta Maurya,⁸⁷ on the “Chandra Mountain” at Śravaṇa Belagola in Karnataka we find a statue of Paśvaṇāth (the last-but-one Tīrthamkara, who lived about 800 BC; see photo 26) and of local deities (*yakshas*) dating back over 2000 years. The *jali* or openwork granite screen (photo 8) constructed as two fences, through the open spaces of which one can see the Paśvaṇātha statue in the room behind, show important episodes in the life of emperor Chandragupta Maurya. Photo 9 shows a detail.

The earliest stage of art

The finding of four Indus scriptural signs together with a standing Jina on the South Indian Vindhyagiri at Śravaṇa Belagola has shed much light on the Indus script (photo 10). The standing Jina is only partly visible, but his posture is very clear. His head and shoulders have been damaged by the roof of a later temple. On the remains of the floors and the steps of the original temple, which is much older than the Harappa period, some important Indus signs are visible. All these art works represent the first art historical period of art in the

history of the Indus culture. In Śravana Belagola we see engravings measuring 90 to 120 cm, the largest ever found, and much larger than those described by R.S. Bisht at Kuttch on the Northern peninsula of Gujarat (West India, bordering Pakistan).

The Indus signs of Śravana Belagola have much to say about the standing Jinas. The first of the four signs depicted here (photo 11) is a “spear,” which signifies in Jainism the self-control acquired by a Jina. The second sign is a “broom” of peacock feathers which the monks used (and still use today) to softly brush aside living beings which they otherwise might step on – a symbol of *mahāvratā*. Mahāvratā means the Great Vows an ascetic has taken. This sign is so big that the end stroke has been overwritten by a later text in old Kannada, an old script of Karnataka, which has been forgotten and can be read by no one today. Apparently the people who long ago added these Kannada writings to the rock even then had forgotten or did not understand the significance of the old signs. The third sign is a trident and symbolizes the *ratnatraya* – the threefold jewel of right vision, right knowledge and right conduct – which inspires the monk to perfection in their meditation. The awakened soul of the penitent thinks of nothing else than the eternal soul and liberation from all karmas by contemplating the seven “thatnesses” (tattvas) (the soul, karma, the inflow of karmas, the bondage by the karmas, the stopping of the inflow, the removal of karmas and final liberation), here represented by seven vertical lines. Thus the four Indus signs of Śravana Belagola together with the carved standing Jina convey a very deep philosophical Jain message for one who understands them and values the protection of his own soul. If we consider this text it appears that the Indus script is not a worldly language for everyday use, but serves a specific intellectual purpose. The profane world can not understand these signs because they are true hieroglyphs – sacred script – which can not be understood by those who do not know the higher ethics and teachings of Jainism.

The rock was therefore given the name *The Key Indus Rock of Karnataka*. Such a valuable monument of human civilization is now being neglected, but that was very different 2500 years ago – one and a half centuries before the arrival of Emperor Chandragupta. This inscription in the Indus script thus contains three symbolic signs and a pictograph meant for Jain śramanas (ascetics) as guidance for the last moments of their lives. The same form of art was used to scratch the Indus signs into the granite rocks and told the life history of private monks. It was used at the beginning of the period in which humans learned to master the art of writing. From the viewpoint of art history we may regard this as the first phase, which came into being when writing implements were still nonexistent, but the desire to write was already strongly felt. The signs were merely used for religious purposes. In those days one was able to cut rough pillars, but no artistic refinement was possible in this hard stone. Climbing the rocks can not have been easy for the ascetics who lived in caves either, and once every two or three days they went down to collect food. In this manner the monks could live their austere lives away from the buzz of the world. The Greek Megasthenes, who followed the route of Alexander the Great in these days but went much further South than Alexander himself, kept a detailed diary of his observations. In his *Indika* he wrote in detail about their life and how they used to come down from the hills to the social world, and how the people had great respect for them and invited them into their homes to give them food. The only food the ascetics would accept was rice water. Various engraved markings in Indus style on the rocky surfaces of the Vindhya giri in Śravaṇa Belagola show that the rock had the function of a temple long before Bahabadrū, the spiritual teacher of Emperor Chandragupta, arrived there.

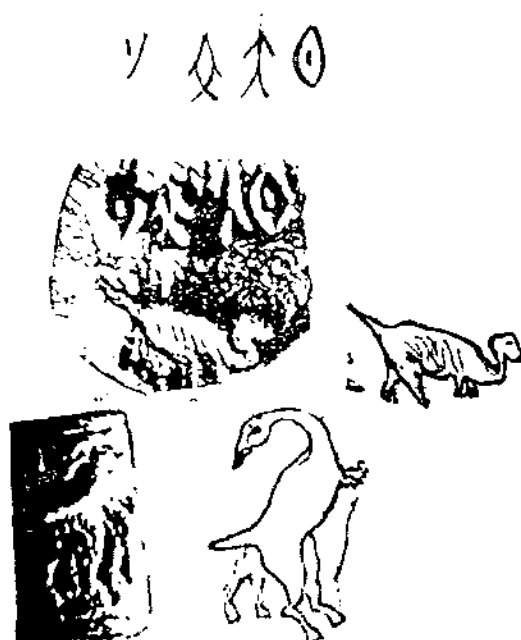
On the bare rocks one sees large markings intended pilgrims pointing the way to the sacred shrines and locations on the rocks (photos 11 and 12). So both hills in Śravaṇa Belagola show in fact a temple-like form of Indus art, with

rock hills ending in a peak, and a Jina dedicated to penitence with lianas growing around their bodies to show how long they were standing motionless in their meditative posture.

South of Śravana Belagola too an Indus culture bloomed in the period long before Parśvanāth, who lived 2900 years ago, as is shown by engravings on various South Indian rock hills, with the seventh Tīrthamkara, Suparśvanāth, characterized by a hood of 5 snakeheads.

The findings in and around Harappa and Mohenjodaro (now in Pakistan) in the first part of the twentieth century provided sensational information about these early forms of human civilization. Some experts estimate the antiquity of early Harappan culture at 7,000 years, the middle period at 5,500 and the later period at 4,000 years. The objects are numbered and stored in museums. So one now has texts available, and modern catalogues⁸⁸ contain detailed information. They show the seals and other objects which were studied later, notably by the Finnish researcher Asko Parpola,⁸⁹ the American G.L. Possehl,⁹⁰ and Iravatham Mahadevan⁹¹ of India. Many others⁹² have tried to decipher the script. Some claim partial success, but all give their own interpretation to the scriptural signs. Phonetic values have been assigned to them, but without the authors explaining what their assumptions are based on. The basis of transliteration by Indians has often been prejudiced and they have tried to explain the signs from a Vedic background (B.B. Lal, S.R. Rao) or to see the meter of the Hindu Gayātrī mantra or other suppositions reflected in them. Such claims have however recently been firmly rejected by leading scientists, particularly by Ram Sharan Sharma on a platform of the *Indian Council of the Historical Research's Foundation Day* in March 2005. Sometimes more than one meaning is given to one sign, or one meaning to different signs. None of the researchers has considered the possibility that the signs could be read in a very different way, and could be approached from the mental perspective of the ancient Jains – the śramana tradition.

The Indus scriptural signs could be far older than the alleged 7,000 years: there seem to be a number of seals which show dinosaur-like creatures together with the script!



Dinosaurs in the Indus culture?

Did people live together with dinosaurs? According to the almost universally accepted scientific opinion dinosaurs died out some 60 million years ago, and cultural man came into existence not much more than 1 million years ago. But according to ancient Indian literature humankind already existed long before 1 million years. Jains (and also Hindus) do not find this strange, because according to their time calculations the first Tirthamkara lived many millions of years ago and even then humanity had already existed for many millions of years. So estimates of the antiquity of the Indus art vary from 7 thousand years as a minimum to more than 60

million years as a maximum. No doubt it will take some time before everyone agrees on this subject. But it can hardly be doubted that some rock art is much older than the seals found at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, which archeologists estimate to be 7,000 years old. In any case, these are artistic masterpieces as well, and perhaps they were used as easily transportable souvenirs of what the South Indian rocks must have shown: in enormous dimensions. All these writings and the Indus Ke represent the initial stage of rock art.

The second stage

Gradually it seems, one started trying better methods on and in the rocks to produce art and preserve it for the future. What is shown on the rocks was later also produced in brass. During those days the rocks at Vindhyagiri must have been lying in a somewhat different position than they do today, perhaps due to earthquakes or erosion, because it appears that pilgrims originally took a different route to the top. The second phase in the development of art produced images showing a more prominent relief because the rock around the carving was chipped away and the Jinas became more prominent. Apparently the enormous boulders among which the inhabitants found shelter were found the most suitable for durable art. That is why, it seems, the same boulder on Vindhya Hill was used to apply this technique to make the icons clearer.

The two brothers

An ever recurring theme in Jain iconography is that of the two brothers. They lived in the period of the 20th Tīrthamkara, Munisuvrata. Their names were Kul-Bhushan and Desh-Bhushan. They were the only two children in the family. When seven and eight, these princely brothers were taken to an ashram for education. They stayed there until they were twenty-five. During this time they had no contact with their

parents or other people at the palace where they had spent their early years. When the time had come for them to return, a great party was organized to welcome them. Both the family and the people in the city had prepared a big feast. Ministers were sent ahead to receive Kul-Bhushan and Desh-Bushan outside the city and to accompany them to the palace. In the city there was a joyous and excited atmosphere everywhere when the parade passed by on its way to the palace. In front of the palace their mother and other family members were ready to give them arati – a hand-held copper plate with butter flames which is turned around slowly before a guest or deity as a greeting. On the balcony of the palace stood a young and very attractive woman who threw garlands of flowers at them. Both brothers at once decided that they wanted to marry her. Independently they shared their desire with a minister. He however did not answer. When both the brothers discovered that the other had the same desire a big argument broke out. It became so fierce that they drew their swords and were ready to attack each other. Then the minister could no longer contain himself, and said: “Stop that nonsense, she is your sister!” “What!” they shouted. “We had no sister!” “When was she born?” And the minister told them that soon after they had left the palace the rooms were filled with the sound of a crying baby – a girl – and this was her. They could not move because of the remorse they felt about the sin they had committed by desiring their own sister. Immediately they both vowed to do uninterrupted penance until they reached the highest enlightenment (moksha). They observed their vow strictly, finally attained moksha, and left their bodies on the Kuntha Hill in what is now the province of Maharashtra, where today we can still see their charanas – carved footprints – engraved in the rocks.

Penitence or penance has nothing to do with a psychological guilt complex or self-castigation. It means that someone takes upon himself the vow to accelerate his spiritual path and to make no more effort to escape his karma. He knows that

sooner or later he has to face his karmas anyway. In fact he accepts everything he has to endure with gratitude, for after this his soul has been purified a little more, and his noble qualities can shine forth more brightly. Through his vow and spiritual orientation he brings his karmas to ripeness at high speed and intensity, but his deep trust in his guru, his own soul, and the final goal help him through all difficulties. He opens himself up completely to what comes to him without any resistance, and that is what is symbolized by his standing posture. A sitting posture symbolizes meditation and repentance.

The two brothers, who are also depicted on Indus seals as copies of the original, can be seen in the rocks of Vindhyagiri at Śravaṇa Belagola in their sitting posture of inner meditation as well as their standing posture of penitence – with their peacock feathers and water container next to them on the floor. In the lower part of the sculpture they are depicted sitting with their hands joined, but still as laymen, in preparation for taking their vow. They are still wearing clothes and their hair is knotted sideways in “Indus fashion.” Above this they are depicted naked and standing (photo 14), which signifies that now they have started their lives as holy ascetics. Creepers are growing over their bodies, and their long hair has been replaced by short locks (which in the meantime have already grown again from their bald heads). Above their heads we see one *chatra* or umbrella, which signifies power of the mundane world – originally destined to become protectors of the people as sovereigns. The stone has been chiseled out around the figures to make them prominently visible.

In the same second style of art the family of Ādināth or Rishabha, the first Tīrthamkara, has been depicted on that rock. His most well-known sons, Bāhubali and Bharata (see chapter 8), have both been portrayed, Bāhubali in standing posture, and Bharata sitting together with his 99 other brothers (photo 15). Close to it we find a sunken relief in the same style depicting Rishabha with a row of monks and nuns.

Rishabha himself is depicted as an arhat (or arahant, literally destroyer of his (inner) enemies) with three umbrellas above his head. Three umbrellas means that he is sovereign (has knowledge and command) over three worlds: the Middle World (including the earth), the lower worlds and the higher worlds. The best artistic accomplishments in this style are found on the same rock as Bāhubali. Taken as a whole this rock can be seen as a temple. On the backside of the same boulder we find a female devotee, in sitting posture with hands joined (photo 16).

The difference between men and women can not be seen from their hair style, but only from the contours of the breasts, as common in Indus art. This style of art can also be seen on the other hill of Śravana Belagola, “the hill where pious people die,” now called Chandragiri after Emperor Chandragupta Maurya who lived and died there.

One of the Indus seals from Harappa looks like a replica of this place – which again would indicate that this South Indian culture is older than that of Harappa in Pakistan. The same form of art is found in most rock Jinas at remote places in the province of Tamil Nadu (Southeast of Śravana Belagola, which is in Karnataka), and is represented by engravings or relief carvings of the Tīrthamkara Suparśvanāth (the seventh), Ādināth or Rishabha (the first) and Bāhubali, Rishabha’s favorite son described earlier in this book. These signs of the oldest culture in India are now threatened by quarries, which transform sacred rocks into slabs and rubble.

In earlier millennia a great deal of rock art may already have been destroyed by volcanic activity and earthquakes. But the two-storied temple on the Vindhya giri, which was built on the bedrock, has been preserved. The surrounding structures have collapsed and rolled down the hill. Perhaps there was an ancient effort to save the Key Indus Rock and to keep it in its place, because masons seem to have been working on it. The Bāhubali temple was constructed much later, and in such a way that its roof has destroyed half

of the standing “Key Jina.” Apparently nobody cared at the time this temple was built. All this happened long before Parśvanāth (who lived almost 3000 years ago), when the Indus script was still in use. In the period of Mahāvīra (2500 years) the Prakrit languages and Brahmī script were developed. The Rig Vedic Sanskrit came also in use then. But the third stage of Jain art development maintained the use of the Indus script and signs even in that period.

The third stage

In the second stage of stone art only the rock just around the image was chiseled away to make it more prominent, but in the third phase the artists moved on to figures with more natural proportions. The rock around the figure was now removed to a regular depth, so that the figure itself emerged as a clear haut relief in a sufficiently deep niche – see the photo of the elephant on the doorpost (photo 17; in this case the niche’s edge has been removed too). The temple of Chandraprabhu, the 8th Tīrthamkara, with its *manastambha* (“ego-pillar”) was also built according to this principle. This stage of art reached an ever greater perfection. People started to adorn the icons with attributes and ornaments (photo 19). One of the small seals found in Pakistan shows a standing Jina in this art style which reminds us of the 47 meter high Jina named Bavangoja of untold age in the rocks near Malva close to Indore, in Madhya Pradesh (Middle India). This old photo shows the situation several decades ago (photo 20, and 20A). Now the image has been plastered over and has lost its antiquity or beauty. This third style phase is also found in the Sittanvasal caves in Tamil Nadu in South India, but these are of a later period. In a rock-cut veranda there is a Suparśvanāth (7th Tīrthamkara) and a monk with one umbrella. Inside the cave are three icons of siddhas chiseled from the same mountain rock, including an umbrella; a notable acoustic effect is that the OM sound when spoken in that corner resounds a long time. All these developments in art took place

before the Harappan culture. Some of the sculptures on the two mountain peaks called Māngi (and) Tungi near Nasik in the province of Maharashtra represent this artistic stage as well, but the art is badly weathered.

The fourth stage

As the skill of the artists improved they increasingly tried to separate the sculptures from the bedrock. But it was difficult to make the ears and limbs completely free and at the same time maintain the balance of the image. Because they worked with hammers and thick spikes, the possibility of damage was considerable when trying to free the relatively thin limbs from the stone, and therefore a connection with the bedrock was necessary. In this period brass art advanced rapidly and many sculptures were made in metal. The beautiful copper objects showing the twelve angas - which were then still in existence - were also made in this way (photo 21). Many old temples in South India also possess copper objects depicting the Nava Devata (the nine objects of worship of the Jains, which include the arhats, the doctrine, and the communities of monks and of nuns). This stems from the period before Mahāvīra - so they are more than 2500 years old. The *vidhyadharas* (technicians) also made molded images of sand and lime, which were plastered black with a charcoal paste based on resin and gum to protect them against humidity and weathering. In this way one was able to make movable statues, which one could not or dared not yet do from hard stone types like granite and kasauti, also called touchstone (because it can be used to test gold). An example is the sculpture made by the vidhyadharas Nīl and Mahānīl which was installed by King Karakandu Naresh of Cambay (Gujarat) during or even before the Parśvanāth period, in the very old Dharaśīva caves near Osmanabad in Maharashtra of Ādināth and Nemināth (which cave was already there in the days of the Hindu avatar Rāma). Another example is the Jina of the temple of Thirumalai (Tamil for: the mountain which takes

(the aspirant) away from the world towards liberation) near Chennai in Tamil Nadu.

Slabs of rock were used to make four-sided sculptures, and the square pillar pieces known as chaturdiki which were decorated on each of their four sides with sitting and standing Jinas. The largest chaturdiki, ever found can be seen on a naturally square boulder near Tirukkoil in Tamil Nadu, which is almost as big as “two elephants on top of each other.” The first icons made from stone slabs were sitting Jinas – these are easier to make than standing ones. In the beginning the work was still rough and the long ears rested on the shoulders to support the head – almost as they were in reality, because the rich used to have long stretched ears caused by heavy earrings. Long ears are always among the physical features of Tīrthamkaras as well as Buddhas. Freeing the arms of the image was still a problem (photo 24). But in time one learned to make freestanding sculptures out of granite and kasauti stone, as were found at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro in the form of torsos of standing Jinas in sandstone. Such statues were also found in Lohanipur near Patna (Bihar) and Mathura (Uttar Pradesh). The standing Jina of the temple of Śāntināth (the 16th Tīrthamkara) on the Vindhyagiri also represents this art style. This sculpture shows no decoration whatsoever; the only purpose was to show the serenity of a Jina dedicated to penitence – just as we have seen on the *Key Indus Rock*.

Apparently the pilgrims in those days approached the hill from the little village of Jinathapuram and were guided by engraved sketches on the rocks which led them along the sacred boulder to the top, so that they could do their mandatory obeisance ritual (pūja). Monks climbing the Vindhyagiri to take *sallekhana* (peaceful death by fasting) lived in the shelters among the rocks and revered this rock and the manastambha even from a distance. The Śāntināth temple was built later, and still later was visited by Bhadrabahu, Emperor Chandragupta's guru, who went there in the fourth century BC with a large group of followers from the North during a prolonged famine. Still a number of years later, some

2350 years ago, the temple named Kattale Vasadi with sculptures of Parśvanāth and of yakshas and yakshinīs – these are local male and female celestials which devote themselves to serving a Jina – was reportedly added by Emperor Chandragupta Maurya himself.

Another good example of Jain art consists of the wall paintings in some of their old temples. The Jina-Kanchi temple near Kanjivaram in Tamil Nadu contains over 2000 year old wall and ceiling paintings depicting Prathamanyoga stories – karma and reincarnation stories. The Matha temple in Śravana Belagola shows paintings which are almost 2000 years old depicting *samavasaram* – the birth of a Tīrthamkara – and events from the lives of Bāhubali. We also find well preserved paintings on the walls of the more than 2500 year old caves of Thirumalai in Tamil Nadu. In old temple walls on the Vindhyagiri we find painted elephants and horses in red and white which look as if they were made yesterday, but were actually made more than 1100 years ago (photo 23).

Many images were made of precious or semiprecious stone and kept in temples only to be shown on particular occasions. Most of such sculptures are of the first Tīrthamkara, Rishabha. Often miracles are connected with such statues which the people regard as inexplicable mysteries. In our day, too, there still exist mystery statues which produce actual miracles, as we have seen in chapter 8. Such large blocks of precious or semi-precious stone, might sell for millions of dollars or euros or crores of rupees, and many people in the world would rather not see them converted into religious idols to be donated to a temple. But this is exactly what the Jains did and do, because they realize that the inner value of the soul is priceless and worth much more than any worldly gain, which they regard as merely worthless dust. To understand that, one almost needs to be born as a Jain. A real Jain attaches no value to a dead body, and not even to his own living body. Therefore there are no Jain burial places, graves

or mummies. Throughout the history of Jain culture no mummy has ever been found, but through the ages one has given utmost attention to spiritual messages by means of script, symbols or sculptures on rocks and in caves which will guide the soul on its upward path. This is the only goal worth striving for.

The treasure temple

In the summer of 1999 something unusual happened. It was in a little old temple in Rajasthan – about which for security reasons I will give no further details. Below the three-storied part of the temple above the ground there were said to be another four levels. There was a story about a treasure being hidden there. But nobody had ever had the courage to descend into the catacombs. There is no light, and it can be very dangerous because of snakes and invisible beings. Once a year only a few people descend to the upper floor of the four subterranean ones to perform a ritual in the total darkness.

But on that day in 1999 one monk had the nerve to go down. He reached the catacombs and tried to find his way. But he was not the first person in the history of the temple to have been there, because he found an old sign saying “don’t go any further, there is danger here.” So he decided not to go in that direction, but continued to a narrow opening which might perhaps lead to another room. The passage was so narrow that he could hardly move either forward or backward, and then, right in front of him, he saw a cobra, moving in the opposite direction. The man understood that his moment to die had arrived and started singing mantras. The serpent approached him and ... slid out between his legs. The monk regarded this as a sign. He followed the animal and saw that it disappeared into a small hole in the floor. There he found a stone that could be shifted aside. Under the stone was another level, but it was filled with water. He put his hand into the water. Then he felt something hard and smooth and round. He gripped it and pulled it up. It was a sculpture of a Tīrthamkara

made of an unusual type of stone. Overcome by emotion the monk took the icon out and took it up to the surface to show it to the others. Then he immediately returned underground. He found dozens of statues, big and small, made from numerous different types of precious stone. He took a number of them back to the surface. But then something eerie happened. He grabbed another image head – and his hand became immobile. He was unable to remove it, no matter how hard he tried. He was caught by a yaksha – the yaksha whose task it was to protect the icons. It lasted some five minutes. He begged the yaksha to set him free, and to be allowed to take the images out for just four days. He promised to bring them back within three days and then leave them in peace for twelve years. Then the yaksha let go of his hand. He brought the other icons to the surface. The message spread within no time among the Jain community of India, and people came from all corners to see the miracle – trainloads of them. Everyone was allowed to take part in the washing of the statues, but was expected to donate money for the temple, because it dearly needed a facelift. Within the three days tens of millions of rupees – hundreds of thousands of dollars – were donated. Then the icons were returned to their subterranean abode, under the protection of the yakshas. Now, in 2005, the temple – at least the part where the public may go – looks renewed and beautiful. In other respects nothing special can be seen. It seems that fake stairs and entrances have been built to guard against possible interests other than religious ones. Even so, photography inside the temple is strictly prohibited for outsiders. But the statues were photographed before they were put back. See photo 28 – a photo made by me from an existing printed picture. The monk then said that – if he is still alive – he will descend again after twelve years. This moment is anticipated with awe.

The fifth stage

The instruments and skills reached a high level of development during the Parśvanāth period when the Nāgavanshis started to make idols of Nāgarāja (literally the Serpent King) and of paired serpents. The Nagarcoil temple of Nāgarāja near Cape Comorin (Tamil Nadu) is said to be very old. A stolen Jina from that period from Kalinga in Bihar is famous from literature, but it is not known where the icon is now. Like the Indus torsos the Jinas here were made of black touchstone or of granite, and also of red sandstone. Jinas of this period can be seen in most of the old Jain temples (photo 24).

The approximately 3000 year old Jina of Jinthur (Maharashtra) in touchstone is one of the first attempts to make a detached sculpture of hard stone, and is therefore one of the earliest pieces of fifth style art. The arms are partly free, but quite cunningly the artist lets the sculpture lean on a frame on which he has carved plants (photo 25). The style in which he has done this links this piece of art with an early Indus style. This image therefore fills the gap between the older Indus style and the standing Parśvanāth of Chandragupta (photo 26), which is supported almost entirely by a curled seven-headed serpent.

Long before the fifth stage in hard stone was reached, images were made of limestone covered with charcoal paste. The Jina of Paithan (the 20th Tīrthamkara, Munisuvrata) Rāma and Sitā are said to have used personally for their worship, is an example of this (photo 27). Despite its very great antiquity this image shows the fifth stage of art, long before such images could be made of touchstone or granite, as can be seen on the previous two photos. This was far more difficult in stone, and these two photos show early efforts.

The intention to express the beauty of penitence by means of icons of the Jinas was a reflection of the desire to express the noble qualities of the soul, and with it one also

depicted the celestial and other nonhuman beings which were at the service of the Jinas besides the support they received from humans. One can see Jinas accompanied by attributes and heavenly servants such as protectors, bodyguards, and gatekeepers.



Indus seal

On the picture shown here of the Indus seal we see on the right an ascetic devoted to penitence (arms down), accompanied by three (in physical reality invisible) celestial beings holding swords or sticks above the ascetic's head for protection.

Temples in the North Indian city of Jaipur (Rajasthan) also have such black touchstone sculptures, but most are made of white marble, though not always of a very good quality. In the old temple of Ladnun, North of Jaipur, a splendid statue of Ādināth has been found. Most later statues were made in the period which begins with King Vikrama – from about 50 BC, and in fact continuing to the present – of which period quite a few early icons can be seen in old temples. Historians tend to accept the Ādināth of Mathura blindly as the oldest, by which they create an enormous gap between the factual truth told by the Jains themselves and their own historical imagination. The original art we have seen in on the hills and in the caves of South India is unique and much older than the finds in Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

Long after the Harappan period, in the fourth century BC, there was a schism between the nude Digambaras and those who became the white-dressed Śvetambaras. The Śvetambaras “converted” many nude statues by removing their genitals. At the same time the marble art jumped ahead. At the time of the (European) Middle Ages one made astoundingly rich ornamentation, and the images were surrounded by marble celestials. Most Śvetambara temples represent this lavish form of art, as can be seen at the temples of Dilwara on Mount Abu and Ranakpur (both in West Rajasthan) which are well-known to foreign tourists. The same trend was followed in the temples of pink sandstone in Khajuraho of which no square inch is left without decoration. Celestial beings were also depicted with mudras (hand postures). This tradition continues until today in all its splendor, as evidenced by temples in new housing development areas (photos 29 and 30).

Regrettably the Jains themselves show little interest in their cultural heritage in stone. They attach value primarily to a number of places of pilgrimage where, apart from the icons, almost nothing can be seen of the glorious past which is now threatened by renovations.

Note: Shortly after I met her Dr. S.R. Jain went on an excursion within the framework of her research to “Virgin Rocks in India” and I joined her as a photographer. The information used in this chapter was written by her and used with her permission. – RJ.

For much more and deeper information about these subjects see the following books by Dr. S. Rani Jain:

The Key Indus Rock of Karnataka, 2003 ⁹³

The Ethical Message of Indus Pictorial Script, 2002 ⁹⁴

The Harappan Glory of Jinas, 2001 ⁹⁵

Notes

¹ Both sects have four subgroups: the Digambaras have 1) Terahpanthi, 2) Sthānakvāsi, 3) Derāsari and 4) Rājchandra; the Śvetambaras have 1) Terahpanthi, 2) Beespanthi, 3) Tāvan Tami, 4) Kānjipanthi.

² Jainism however teaches that there are those who fundamentally and by nature deviate from their path of being proper humans. Such souls are called abhavya. They are unable to *ever* become jinas or siddhas – liberated beings. They are compared to seeds which never receive water and therefore never sprout. Such souls can never attain to rest and/or allow others to be at ease. A curse rests on them which no one would wish to have, but which they have earned for themselves by a karma called abhavyatva.”

³ Avasarpinī and utsarpinī respectively, literally descending and ascending serpent.

⁴ The six phases are respectively called sukha-sukha – meaning “joy-joy”; joy; joy-misery, misery-joy; misery; and misery-misery (dukkha-dukkha).

⁵ Siddhaloka, situated above the highest heaven according to Jain cosmology.

⁶ Pratiśruti, Sanmati, Kśemankar, Kśemandhar, Simankar, Simandhar, Vimalvāhan, Chakṣuśman, Man, Yaśasvi, Abhichandra, Chandrābha, Naruddeva, Prasenañjit, Nabhirāja

(ref.: Tilloya Pannatha, Triloka Saer, *Padma Purāṇa*, *Harivamśa Purāṇa*, *Mahāpurāṇa*).

⁷ According to Śvetambaras ("the white-dressed") and Digambaras (the gymnosophists) respectively. This "problem" we find also in Hindu and Theosophical literature. Sometimes two are taken together, because the Manu at the end of a Manu-antaric cycle is taken together with the first Manu of the next such cycle. (The Digambaras sometimes mention 16, when they include Rishabha and his son Bharata as Kulankaras.)

⁸ The first of the Kulankaras, who was also the first of the Manus for this cycle, was Pratiśruti. The first Manu is called Svayambhuva in Hinduism and Theosophical references. The relationship between Svayambhuva and Nabhirāja is also mentioned in the Hindu *Bhagavatam Purāṇa*.

⁹ This idea seems to be supported by the *Kalpa Sūtra*, when it states that "Arhat Rishabha had instituted two epochs marking the end, which were as follows: the epoch signifying the termination of a 'generation', and an epoch signifying the termination of categories, the former having terminated after innumerable generations which had been lived through, the latter within less than 48 minutes after his attainment of omniscience" (*Kalpa Sūtra*, verse 226).

¹⁰ Karma-bhūmi.

¹¹ In the Hindu system Rishabha was the ninth avatāra (out of 24) or incarnation of Vishnu.

¹² *Kalpa Sūtra*, verse 207.

¹³ Depending on the literature consulted.

¹⁴ Other names, which were given to him by the gods, included Prajāpati – the forefather; Hiranyagarbha – the golden (all-encompassing) aura; and Viśvakarma. Blavatsky says that (the Vedic) Viśvakarma is "the great patron of the initiates," an "architect, artist or carpenter" and the "father," i.e. the initiator and teacher, of all later gods of his cycle, including the more recent ones which are known to us, like Jesus of Nazareth. He

represents the totality of spiritual mankind. He is the first to appear when the time has come for a great renewal, a new cycle. Viśvakarma is the modeler of all things, the one who reawakens the energetic forces of nature. In the Rig-Veda he sacrifices “himself to himself,” and according to Blavatsky this means that when a manvantara (i.e. a cycle between two Manus) opens, the beings which are – because of their karmic duty or impulse – the origin of it, by themselves and of themselves form the beginning of things, thus sacrificing themselves to “themselves” – the latter being their manifested plurality (See Blavatsky, H.P.: *The Secret Doctrine* search for “Viśvakarma(n)” in index or electronically. Also described in the *Encyclopedic Theosophical Glossary* which is only available on the internet.

¹⁵ Among others in the *Svapna-sūtra*, the *Bhagavati-sūtra*, the *Matsya Purāṇa* and the *Agni Purāṇa*.

¹⁶ We should feel pity or great admiration for the wife of Rishabha who bore all these 98 sons and a daughter, if this is to be taken literally. The number 98 can be expressed as 7×14 , and these numbers remind us of the above-mentioned Manus. The “sons” of Rishabha are therefore rather his spiritual sons, who represent the essence of the whole Rishabha period in the smaller subperiods. The Jain cycle is usually divided into 12 segments, but if we take the ratios of duration the 1st period lasts 4 time-units ($= 10^{14}$ sāgaras) the 2nd last 3 time-units, the 3rd 2 time-units, and the 4th, 5th, and 6th together last 1 time-units (reminding us of the ratio of the Hindu yugas also). In occult teachings cycles always consist of seven subcycles, each of which is opened and closed by an initiator and closer respectively, and they carry the seeds of the past and the future within them.

¹⁷ The following information is taken from: Kalghatgi, T.G., *Study of Jainism*, Prākṛit Bhārati Academy, Jaipur, 1988, based on the existing ancient Indian literature on this subject.

¹⁸ The umbrella is the symbol of giving protection. Kings have one umbrella, signifying that they protect and control the world (called middle world) and its inhabitants; Tīrthamkaras and great initiates are depicted with three (sometimes more) umbrellas, symbolizing that they have knowledge of and control over all three worlds (lower, middle, and upper).

¹⁹ Known as kshatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras respectively.

²⁰ Kevala-jñāna.

²¹ Ācārya Devasena (8th century) says that the Buddha was a great learned disciple of the saint Pihitāsraṇa who ordained him as muni Buddhakīrti in the Sangha of Parśvanātha, the twenty-third Tīrthamkara of the present era (Hiralal Jain: *Jainism in Buddhist Literature*, www.ibiblio.org/jainism/database/BOOK/jainbudh.doc)

²² Lalwani, Kastur Chand (transl.): *Kalpa Sūtra of Bhadrabāhu Svāmī*, Motilal Barnarsidass, Delhi, 1979.

²³ Arhat, literally “killer of his (inner) enemy” i.e. passion.

²⁴ One of the Indo-Tibetan teachers of H.P. Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society wrote in a letter in 1881 or 2 to A.O. Hume (who is well-known as the founder of the Congress Party in India) about matter: “there is a moment in the existence of every molecule and atom of matter when, for one cause or another, the last spark of spirit or motion or life (call it by whatever name) is withdrawn, and in the same instant with the swiftness which surpasses that of the lightning glance of thought the atom or molecule or an aggregation of molecules is annihilated to return to its pristine purity of intra-cosmic matter. It is drawn to the mother fount with the velocity of a globule of quicksilver to the central mass. Matter, force, and motion are the trinity of physical objective nature, as the trinitarian unity of spirit-matter [spirit, matter, and their underlying unity] is that of the spiritual or subjective nature. Motion is eternal because spirit is eternal. But no modes of motion can be conceived unless they be in connection with matter.” From: Barker, A.T.: *The*

Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. & K.H. Transcribed, Compiled, and with an Introduction by A.T. Barker; Facsimile Edition, Theosophical University Press, Pasadena CA (1923) 1975, letter 22 (also available online at www.theosociety.org/pasadena/tup-onl.htm).

²⁵ Rishabha, 2 Ajita, 3 Śambhava, 4, Abhinandana, 5 Sumati, 6 Padmaprabha, 7 Surārśva, 8 Candraprabha, 9 Puśpadanta, 10 Śītala, 11 Śreyamsa, 12 Vāsupūjya, 13 Vimāla, 14 Ananthanātha, 15 Dharmanātha, 16 Śāntinātha, 17 Kunthu, 18 Arahānātha, 19 Mallinātha, 20 Munisuvrata, 21 Naminātha, 22 Arisṭhanemi (= Neminātha), 23 Parśvanātha, 24 Mahāvīra.

²⁶ So says Dr. Jyoti Prasad Jain, in his *Religion and Culture of the Jains*, Bharatiya Jnanapith, Delhi, 3rd ed, 1983.

²⁷ Icons with a five-headed serpent represent the 7th Tīrthamkara, Suparśvanātha, which for that reason is often confused with Parśvanātha.

²⁸ See among other works: *Kalpa Sūtra*, or: Jain, Kailash Chand: *Lord Mahāvīra and his Times*, Motilal Banarsidass (1974) 1991.

²⁹ Dr. Ramesh Chand Jain (ed.): *Sūdhā Sagar Hindi-English Jain Dictionary*, Āchārya Jñānasagara Vāgartha Vimarśa Kendra, Beāwar (Rājasthān) & Shri Dīgamber Jain Atishya Kshetra Mandir, Sanghījī, Sanganer, Jaipur (Rājasthān), first edition, 1999.

³⁰ K.L. Lodha: *Sakarātmak Ahimsa; Shāstriya aur Charitrik Aadhar*, Prakrit Bharati Academy, Jaipur.

³¹ Helmuth von Glasenapp: *Jainism, An Indian Religion of Salvation*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi 1999, p. 173.

³² Purucker, G. de, *Questions We All Ask.*, series 1, no. 34.

³³ Gertrude Van Pelt, in *Karma*, Point Loma Publications, San Diego CA

³⁴ The fluid body is not to be confused with the Theosophical/Hindu linga or astral body, or the Anthroposophical ether body which is intimately linked with our

physical body, of which it is the model. In Jainism the form is defined by the physical form which is defined by the karmic body.

³⁵ physical body	audārika śarīra
fluidic body	vaikriyaka śarīra
assimilative body	āhāraka śarīra
fire body	taijasa śarīra
karmic body	kārmāna śarīra.

³⁶ jñāna cetanā

³⁷ karma cetanā

³⁸ karmaphala cetanā

³⁹ āsrava

⁴⁰ samvara

⁴¹ bandha

⁴² nirjarā

⁴³ moksha

⁴⁴ The *Tattvārthadhigamasūtra* was written by Umāsvāmi or Umāsvāti, which the Śvetambaras regard as two names for the same person, but the Digambaras say that the first lived a century BC, the second a century after Christ. The Digambaras do not recognize the version of the Śvetambaras. The differences are small, but subtle, according to the Digambaras.

⁴⁵ kashaya

⁴⁶ mithyātva

⁴⁷ avirati

⁴⁸ pramāda

⁴⁹ yoga. "Yoga" in Jainism has an entirely different meaning from the Hindu (and western) meaning of the word. It is the name of the faculty of the soul itself to attract matter, under the influence of past karmas. The activities of body, mind and speech bring this faculty into play (TDS comm. 124).

⁵⁰ kārmāna-śarīra

⁵¹ taijasa-śarīra

⁵² See note 35.

⁵³ gunas

⁵⁴ dravya

⁵⁵ paryāya

⁵⁶ anekāntavāda, literally the doctrine-of-not-one-conclusion-only

⁵⁷ According to Theosophy, in the distant future the soul will go through even grander evolutions beyond our present imagination.

⁵⁸ The nitya-nigodas.

⁵⁹ Buhner, Stephen Harrod; *The Secret Teachings of Plants; The Intelligence of the Heart in the Direct Perception of Nature*, Inner Traditions India, Rochester VM, USA.

⁶⁰ The English terms used in figure 1 are a translation of: Liberated souls, those who have accomplished all: Siddhaloka. Five heavens of (spiritual) victory: Anuttara. Nine Anudīśa heavens: "Subdirectional" heavens. Nine Graiveyaka heavens: "Neck heavens": (sometimes a figure of a standing man is drawn around the cosmos; these heavens are at the level of his neck). Below these are the 16 empyrean heavens (kalpopapanna): abode of: 1 the deep one: Āraṇa; 2 the unshakable one: Achyuta; 3 the resolved one: Ānata; 4 the kneeling one: Prānata; 5 he with a hundred facets: Śātāra; 6 he with a thousand facets: Sahasara; 7 the radiating one: Śukra; 8 the ultimate radiating one: Mahāśukra; 9 the mysterious one: Lāntara; 10 he of the banyan tree: Kāpishtha; 11 the great lord: Brahmā; 12 the greatest lord: Brahmottara; 13 the eternally young one: Sanatkumāra; 14 the very highest lord: Mahendra; 15 the just one: Saudharma; 16 the lofty lord: Iśāna. Below these 16 follow: Celestial bodies: Jyotishka; lower celestials: Bhavanavasi and Vyantara.

⁶¹ A rajju, literally a rope, is of an order of magnitude comparable with a light-year, and is defined as the distance which is bridged by a god when he flies uninterruptedly through space with a velocity of 2,057,152 yojanas (about 20 million kilometers) per second, i.e. some 60 times the velocity of light.

In general the rajju is used as a relative rather than as an absolute measure.

⁶² In modern Theosophical literature we find reference to a so-called “eighth sphere” where only those who have abandoned and opposed every spark of higher nature will go. Finally, after many lifetimes of evildoing, the thread between their personal and spiritual souls is broken, and then the personal soul reaches “avichi-nirvāna,” the opposite of nirvāna. But even those are not lost forever. In the next grand cycle of evolution they will have to start all over again. Nothing in the universe is destroyed forever.

⁶³ A yojanas is – according to varying opinions – 8 to 15 km.

⁶⁴ The eighth is Nandiśvara Dvīpa, and the last one Svayambhura-ramana Dvīpa.

⁶⁵ Manushottara Mountain Range.

⁶⁶ In Hindu literature (*Vishnu Purāṇa*) this mountain range encircles the seventh and outermost dvīpa.

⁶⁷ In Hindu literature it the cones are narrowest at the surface of the earth and that they become wider and wider both above and below the earth. The partly diabolical shape of the Jain universe also suggests that a magnetic “mountain” in a magnetic universe is meant rather than a physical continent

⁶⁸ Because the central, round dvīpa, Jambūdvīpa, is encircled by saltwater and we live on it, and the other dvīpas which are unperceivable by the eye, have the same center point, namely Mount Meru, we may suppose that Jambūdvīpa refers to our earth. In modern Theosophical literature (*The Secret Doctrine** and *Fountain Source of Occultism***) we find commentaries on Mount Meru which may provide a key to understanding the meaning (or one of the meanings) of the three cones of which it is composed. There we find, briefly summarized, three “floors” or stages which are the spiritual home of humanity. The “ground floor” is described as: “the beautiful and mysterious region of Śambhala [‘under which beats the heart of Mother earth’]; the

next is the mythical north pole, geographically identical with the north pole of the earth, but mystically quite different; and the highest floor is the sun." Not the sun we see with our eyes, but the spiritual heart of the solar system with which the earth is spiritually and magnetically connected. Perhaps this is what the original Jain Kevalins (Knowers) who had reached the highest stages of the "Path" meant when they spoke about the three "terraces" of Mount Meru where divine beings reside. "On these floors live three separate classes of entities, with all of which the human race is in strait spiritual and intellectual union." When our inner substances separate themselves from our physical bodies and we travel through one or more of these regions, we first become great souls [mahâtmas], "from mahâtmahood we pass into quasi-divinity, and from quasi-divinity we become gods." The Jains speak of ascetics who, after leaving their physical bodies, abide in the highest three levels of the universe: those who need to be reborn twice, those who need to be reborn only once, and those (the liberated ones or siddhas) who are no longer reborn at all. Once a man belongs to these higher classes of being he can choose to return to earth to fulfill a lofty, but often very inconspicuous task, say the Theosophists.

* Blavatsky, H.P.: *The Secret Doctrine; The Synthesis of Science, Religion and philosophy*, 2 Vols. Theosophical University Press, Pasadena CA, (1888) 2000 / (Zirkoff, Boris de (ed)): *The Secret Doctrine*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton IL, 1993.

** Purucker, G. De: *Fountain-Source of Occultism: A Modern Presentation of the Ancient Universal Wisdom based on The Secret Doctrine by H.P. Blavatsky*, Theosophical University Press, Pasadena CA, 1974.

⁶⁹ In this connection interesting hints can also be found in Theosophical literature. Blavatsky described in her *Secret Doctrine* that this refers to the protectors of mankind, who have control over a hierarchical "host of heavenly beings" who are th

intelligent agents or executors of karma on earth. We are talking about spiritual beings who were themselves humans in the distant or relatively recent past, and now work actively as protectors and for the wellbeing of humankind. However, they cannot and are not allowed to protect humanity or individuals against their own karma – the self-created results of their actions. Karma is a universal law, and as long as there are causes on a particular level of conscious existence, there are results as well. It cannot be otherwise. No god, tīrthamkara or buddha can do anything about that. That is why the sages of all ages have always stimulated us to awaken spiritually and to live in harmony with life – jīva – on the basis of the wisdom thus acquired.

The protecting bird who lives in the Jambūtree of spiritual accomplishments guards the profane eating from the fruits they can not yet endure.

⁷⁰ But they can never “come down” to those on earth (until their next incarnation). Their love is of a very high and subtle nature without any personal attachment, and may be perceived only by the superconscious aspects within men and women on earth – were real help and protection may be given. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the experiences of spiritism.

⁷¹ The fourteen stages or gunasthānas are:

1	mithyādrishti	false doctrine, false world view.
2	sāsādana	downfall
3	samyak-mithyātva	correct-and-false-insightness, lack of insight.
4	samyak-drishti	right insight or aviratasamyak-tva, vowless right belief
5	deśa-virata	partially stopped (by partial vows)
6	sarva-virata	completely-stopped (but by imperfect vows)

7	apramatta-virata	not carelessly-stopped (by perfect vows)
8	apūrvā-karana	the unprecedented-causing, the capacity to generate series of various novel experiences, new thought activity
9	anivritti-karana	advanced capacity to generate progressively purer, homogenous thoughts
10	sūkshma sāmparāya	subtle flickering passions
11	upaśanta-kashaya	subsided delusion
12	Kshīna-moha	eliminating delusion, delusionlessness
13	Sayoga-kevalin	omniscient still with soul vibrations
14	ayoga-kevalin	omniscient without soul vibrations

⁷² mityādrishti

⁷³ samyakmithyātva

⁷⁴ bhavyatva (innate capacity). See also Chapter 5, where it was discussed in relation to evolution.

⁷⁵ yathāpravrittakarana

⁷⁶ anantānubandhi karma

⁷⁷ samyakdrishti

⁷⁸ sāvādāna

⁷⁹ paryāya

⁸⁰ Jaini, Padmanabh S.: *The Jaina Path of Purification*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1979.

⁸¹ pramatta samyata

⁸² anuprekshā

⁸³ A pramatta-virata

⁸⁴ kevalajñāna

⁸⁵ Prath(a)manu yoga stories are texts which paint in vivid colors the repeated reincarnations of various important personalities of the spiritual or lay community of the Jains, which indicate which karmas have brought about which results in subsequent lives.

⁸⁶ The Hindu Śivalingams have, according to Jains, evolved from the Jain manastambhas, because several Jain stupas were converted into Śivalingams, but can still be identified from their shape: rectangular at the base, octangular in the middle and oval at the top.

⁸⁷ Chandragupta Maurya, the great emperor who lived around 400 BC (and who had met Alexander the Great when he was 18) unified India for the first time into one large empire. With him began the Maurya dynasty. Later in his life he returned to his original faith Jainism. The distinction between Śvetambaras and Digambaras had not been defined in those days (though the split began in that same period in North India). Eventually he became a monk, abandoned his imperial, i.e. his worldly attributes, and lived and died on the mountain in Śravaṇa Belagola which is now called Chandragiri.

⁸⁸ Especially those of Sir John Marshall: *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*, London: A. Probsthain, 1931; Ernest J.H. Mackay: *Chanhui-Daro Excavations 1935-36*, New Haven CN, American Oriental Society, 1943; Ernest J.H. Mackay: *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro* New Delhi: Government of India, 1938; and Vats, Madho Sarup: *Excavations at Harappa: Being an Account of Archaeological Excavations at Harappa Carried out Between the Years 1920-21 and 1933-34*, 2 Volumes, (1940) 1997.

⁸⁹ Parpola, Asko, *Deciphering the Indus Script*, Cambridge University Press, 1994. See also: Parpola, A. et al., *Decipherment of the Proto-Dravidian Inscriptions of the Indus Civilization: A First Announcement*. pp. 18-19, 22-23; *Further Progress in the Indus Script Decipherment*, Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen, 1969-70, p.35.

⁹⁰ Gregory L. Possehl: *Harappan Civilization; A Recent Perspective*, Oxford & IBHPublishers, 2nd Edition, 1993.

⁹¹ Mahadevan, Iravatham: *The Indus Script: Texts, Concordance and Tables*, Archeological Survey of India (ASI), New Delhi, 1977; and: Mahadevan, I, *Early Tamil Epigraphy*, CRE-A, Chennai & Dept. of Sanskrit and Indian studies, Harvard University, 2003; other literature of Mahadevan: Mahadevan, I. 1973. *Method of parallelisms in the interpretation of the Proto-Dravidian Script. Procds. of the Third International Conference-Seminar*, Paris 1970. Institut Français d'Indologie, Pondicherry TM (India), pp. 49-51; Mahadevan, I. 1982. *Terminal Ideograms in the Indus Script. Harappan Civilization*, ed. G.L. Possehl. Oxford & IBH, New Delhi. pp. 314-16; Mahadevan, I. 1986. *Towards a Grammar of the Indus Texts: 'Intelligible to the eye if not to the ears'*. *Tamil Civilization*, Vol. 4, Nos. 3 & 4. pp. 24-28.

⁹² E.g. W.A. Fairservis: Fairservis, W.A. 1992. *The Harappan Civilization and its Writing*. Oxford & IBH. New Delhi; S.R. Rao, *Indus Script Evolution*. Other researchers/authors are: M.S. Mishra, B.B. Lal, S.M. Punekar, Rajaram, and Jha, Ojha.

⁹³ Jain, S.R.: *The Key Indus Rock of Karnataka*, 2003; © Dr. S.R. Jain, Station Road, Sagar MP, India.

⁹⁴ Jain, S.R.: *The Ethical Message of Indus Pictorial Script*, 2002; J.K. Jain, Indrapuri, Bhopal MP, India.

⁹⁵ Jain, S.R.: *The Harappan Glory of Jinas*, 2001; J.K. Jain, 63/A Govindpura Industrial Estate, phone 5861127, Bhopal MP, India.

Jain interpretation of an Indus seal.⁹⁵



It was in the Middle of Avasarpinī. An aimless soul, under the power of Karma, wandered from birth to birth in the human and in the animal kingdom, to heaven and hell, until he reached the end of his wanderings. He left his house and went to the forest and all alone he performed his standing penitence. He had the crown of the three virtues on his head and stood so long that lianas grew around his body. Together with the bull [symbol of Rishabhā] another king, with a five virtue crown [Bharata], came to pay his obeisance, and wished to offer food to the ascetic. The meditating ascetic had experienced the three highest meditational states of a Tīrthamkara. Seven kings were meditating there.

- Interpretation based on the Mahāpurāṇa, parva 174, given by Dr. S.R. Jain in: *The Harappan Glory of Jinas*, 2001

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The book is well-written and entertaining, especially those chapters in which Rudi relates his own experiences among the Jains and introduces us to the everyday life of both lay-people and monks. The people he describes follow an ascetic path and radiate warmth and kindness. This introductory book is highly recommended.

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