

Celebrating Mahāvira's Teachings



**THE LESSONS OF
AHIMŚĀ AND ANEKĀNTA
FOR CONTEMPORARY LIFE**

Edited by

TARA SETHIA

**CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
2002**

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Contents

Acknowledgements	v
Introduction Tara Sethia	1
Views on Ahimsā, Compassion, and Samyaktva in Jainism Kristi Wiley	10
The Jaina Response to Terrorism Kim Skoog	18
Ahimsā and the Question of “Just War” Padmanabh S. Jaini	35
Nonviolence For All Satish Kumar	46
Mahāvira, Anekāntavāda, and the World Today Samani Charitrapragya	54

Why is Anekāntavāda Important?	62
John M. Koller	
Anekānta, Ahimsā and the Question of Pluralism	73
Anne Vallely	
Multi-dimensional Significance of Anekānta in Present-day Social Life	83
Kamla Jain	
Beyond Anekāntavāda: A Jain Approach to Religious Tolerance	91
Paul Dundas	
Religious Dissonance and Reconciliation: The Haribhadra Story	102
Christopher Key Chapple	
Exemplars of Anekānta and Ahimsā: The Case of the Early Jains of Mathura in Art and Epigraphy	118
Sonya Quintanilla	
Mahāvīra's Teachings in Indian History Textbooks	143
Tara Sethia	
Notes on Contributors	160

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Introduction

TARA SETHIA

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The year 2001-2002 marked the twenty-sixth birth centenary year of Vardhamāna Mahāvīra (529-527 BCE), the twenty-fourth *Tīrthaṅkara* and propagator of Jainism as we know today.¹ Many places in India and around the world celebrated the year as the “ahiṃsā year” to commemorate Mahāvīra’s total adherence to ahiṃsā (nonviolence).²

Such celebrations of ahiṃsā could not have been more timely. In the very first year of this century, we witnessed the unimaginable destruction of life on September 11, which in turn resulted in retaliation, war and loss of more lives. Violence led to more violence. And as the second year of this century is drawing to its close, we see looming large the shadow of war and the threat of biological and nuclear weapons.

Today people are becoming increasingly conscious of their distinctive identity not only in terms of race and ethnicity but also in terms of cultural traditions and religious beliefs. While such consciousness of one’s heritage and a sense of pride in it serves as

¹ The Jain tradition holds that every *Tīrthaṅkara* “reanimates this ever present imperishable tradition.” See Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 2.

² Although the Jains regard ahiṃsā as the virtue of all virtues, “*ahiṃsā paramodharmah*,” the Jain contribution to the origin and evolution of this principle remains underrepresented in the scholarly literature, which makes only occasional reference to the Jain sources. See Christopher Key Chapple, *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions* (New York: SUNY Press, 1993), p. 5.

a positive force at the personal level, it also frequently leads to schisms and strife at the social level. The make-up of families, communities, cities and even nations reflects unprecedented diversity today, and this diversity when not accompanied by a strong spirit of mutual understanding and appreciation, is prone to fuel tensions that result in a variety of violent behaviors. Tragic examples of violence we have witnessed range from mass genocides to school shootings, from civilians killed in the war zones to spectators dying in the game fields, and from the terrorist acts of 9/11 to the recent sniper attacks in the Washington, D. C. area.

Under such circumstances, Mahāvīra's teachings, and in particular two of its core elements, the principle of ahimsā and the philosophy of *anekānta*, appear to have increasing universal relevance as well as great practical significance. Therefore, exploration of these themes was the focus of an international conference, "Celebrating Mahāvīra's Teachings: The Lessons of Ahimsā and Anekānta for Contemporary Life," held on January 19-20, 2002 at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. A group of eighteen distinguished scholars and speakers addressed various aspects of ahimsā and *anekānta* and how these are represented in art and history. This volume presents twelve scholarly papers from that conference.

The papers are grouped in the following thematic order: Ahimsā, its meaning and applicability in addressing violence in our world; Anekānta, its origin and significance; Ahimsā and *anekānta* in art, and the portrayal of these principles and of Mahāvīra in Indian history textbooks.

The first group of papers examine the meaning and significance of ahimsā and its role in dealing with contemporary issues of violence, terrorism, and the question of "just war." In Jain tradition ahimsā is regarded as the highest virtue. It is "a creed in its own right: identified with one's own spiritual impulses and informing all of one's activities, it may truly be

called a way of personal discipline.”³ Drawing upon scholarly works on Jainism as well as the current practices of the Jain community, Kristi Wiley discusses the inter-connectedness of the related concepts of *ahiṃsā*, compassion and *samyaktva* in Jainism. Wiley suggests that Jain view of *ahiṃsā* is based on the proper view of reality (*samyag darśana*) which regards any kind of violence to other living beings as violence to self and, therefore, injurious to one’s spiritual progress and pursuit of *mokṣa*. Nonetheless, the rational expression of this principle, she points out, also results in compassion or “social fellow feeling.” Such compassion has prompted the Jains to speak in favor of vegetarianism, and against certain practices including animal sacrifice and Vedic rituals.

How can Jainism with its commitment to *ahiṃsā*, help one to respond to acts of terrorism and defend oneself and fellow beings from acts of violence and aggression? Is there a justification for war in Jainism? According to John Cort, “while there is a Jain theory of just war, we certainly see no Jain equivalent to a theory of a holy war.”⁴ However, as Nathmal Tatia has pointed out, ‘for Umāsvāti, the author of *Tattvartha Sūtra*, ‘nonviolence is unlimited, tolerance unconditional, and reverence for life supreme. There is no question of “just war.”’⁵ Both Kim Skoog and Padmanabh S. Jaini address this and related issues in their papers.

Kim Skoog formulates a Jain response to terrorism based on Jain philosophy and principles. Although there is no theory of “just war” in Jainism, he contends that the Jain discussion of war comes close to it. The lay Jains who may participate in the war must do so only as a last resort, must be aware of its harmful

³ Padmanabh S. Jaini, “Ahiṃsā: A Jaina Way of Spiritual Discipline,” in Jaini (ed.) *Collected Papers on Jaina Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), pp. 3-19.

⁴ See John Cort, “‘Intellectual Ahiṃsā’ Revisited: Jain Tolerance and Intolerance of Others,” *Philosophy East and West* (Vol. 50, No. 3 July 2000): 324-347, p. 337.

⁵ “Translator’s Introduction” to Umāsvāti’s *Tattvārtha Sūtra* in Nathmal Tatia (ed.) *That Which Is* (San Francisco and London: Harper Collins, 1994), p. xxi.

impact, must not act with passion or emotion, and must strive to remain detached. Such emphasis on calm and detachment, concludes Skoog, can lead to care in the military activity and avoidance of destruction of innocent lives.

Padmanabh S. Jaini examines the question of “just war” in the context of the Jain principle of ahimsā. Violence of any kind results from lack of compassion. However, Jaini points out, in Jain tradition, compassion toward others is possible only when we recognize the value of the self, “the source of all spiritual wisdom.” Therefore, ahimsā is regarded necessary for one’s spiritual progress leading to *mokṣa*. Drawing from insightful stories in the Jain scriptures, Jaini explains that although survival and occupation related violence is an option for lay Jains (unlike the mendicants who must observe total nonviolence), they must fully understand that “nothing short of hell or animal rebirth awaits those who kill or die while entertaining thoughts of violence.” This is quite in contrast to the belief that death on battlefield is equal to martyrdom, or death in a holy war is a gateway to heaven, and even to the “just war” ideology. The Jain dedication to the ahimsā and amity with all living beings, concludes Jaini, is the highest aspiration a Jain wishes to achieve. In this sense nonviolence of the self becomes a precondition of nonviolence for all.

Satish Kumar believes that the foundations for his continuing work toward nonviolence and peace in the world were laid while he was a Jain *muni*(monk). According to him, one of the greatest contribution of Jainism to world peace is its emphasis on human ability to practice silence, and to learn “when to speak, what to speak, and how to speak.” Wars, he suggests, start in human minds and with human speech. Jainism teaches us that nonviolence begins with the self, in one’s thoughts and language, and one’s own actions. A peaceful world based on respect and care for all living beings is possible only when we extend this personal nonviolence to political, social, ecological domains and translate nonviolence for self into nonviolence for all.

The roots of *ahiṃsā* are in the philosophy of *anekānta*, an epistemological tool for understanding the nature of reality. In the Indic context, epistemology (theory of knowledge), is usually connected to ontology (theory of existence) within a given tradition. The Jains not only evolved their own theory of knowledge, including *anekāntavāda* (with twin aspects of *nayavāda* and *syādvāda*) in the context of their metaphysics and ontology, but more importantly, were also concerned about questions, such as what constitutes reliable knowledge and how such knowledge is acquired. Therefore, the value of Jain epistemology, is two-fold. First, it serves as the basis for understanding what constitutes the knowledge of ultimate reality, and second, it serves (separate from the first) as the basis for intelligible day-to-day dialog and discussion on matters of common concern.⁶ Knowledge of ultimate reality within the Jain tradition is believed to be infinite (*kevalajñāna*), and can only be attained by a liberated soul, or soul without matter—the direct seer or knower. In contrast, ordinary human beings can have only limited knowledge in their day-to-day life conditioned by certain perspectives.

The second group of papers in this volume explore both functions of Jain epistemology: (1) explaining the nature of ultimate reality in terms of ontological categories of *jīva* and *ajīva* (soul and matter) in their infinite forms and modes, and (2) epistemology in the context of dialog and discourse in day-to-day human life. The papers in this section also demonstrate the significance of *anekānta* within the Jain tradition, in the history of religious rivalry, and in the context of problems of violence and intolerance in the contemporary world.

Samani Charitrapragya addresses questions such as, How did *anekāntavāda* originate? How is it connected with Mahāvīra and Jainism? Why is it significant within the Jain tradition? She points out that the word *anekānta* was not used by Mahāvīra, but

⁶ Jayandra Soni, "Basic Jaina Epistemology," *Philosophy East and West*, (Vol. 50, No. 3, July 2000): 367-377, p.370.

suggests that its origin can be traced to Mahāvīra's responses to the questions of his disciples as recorded in the *Bhagavati Sūtra*. Being omniscient, Mahavira was the seer of total truth. Yet he could not express this totality due to the limitations of language, and therefore used the language of *naya*. It was in the millennium following Mahāvīra that Jain ācāryas constructed new terminology for explaining the significance of the *nyayas* leading to the evolution of *anekāntavāda*. Its application in the context of the present world, she concludes, can help us understand multiple dimensions of truth, reconcile opposing views, and make us tolerant of others' views.

John Koller advances a logical argument demonstrating the significance of *anekāntavāda*, especially for addressing the problem of growing violence in our society. He argues that violence is rooted in “dogmatic but mistaken knowledge claims that fail to recognize other legitimate perspectives.” *Anekāntavāda*, he suggests, provides us with an alternative epistemology to support dialog among people of diverse viewpoints. Such an epistemology allows us to respect the views of others. Epistemological respect for the views of others, Koller cautions, should not be confused with relativism. It does not mean conceding that all views are equal. It does suggest, however, that logic and evidence determine the validity of a given view.⁷ Such an epistemological approach, explains Koller, allowed the Jain thinkers to maintain the validity of Jain view of reality, and to respectfully criticize the views of others, and their own views in terms of weaknesses. Such epistemological respect for the views of others, Koller concludes, “has a great potential to eliminate violent argument between ideological opponents by methodically both disarming and persuading them.”

Epistemological tool of *anekānta*, argues Anne Vallely, allows us to accept a pluralistic approach to reality without falling

⁷ Jayandra Soni points out that Jain epistemology included a provision to explain error in human cognition, and also the reason for such error. He quotes from Māṇikyanandin's *Parikṣāmukh* and Hemcandra's *Pramāṇamīmāṃsā* to support this point. See his article, “Basic Jaina Epistemology,” *op. cit.*, p. 370.

into the trap of "extreme moral relativism or religious exclusivism." In demonstrating this she draws from her own experiment with *anekāntavāda* while she served as a "teacher of Christianity" for the nuns at Jain Vishva Bharti Institute in India. Her dialog with the nuns over a period of one year convinced her that being open-minded to others' beliefs does not require a break with one's own. Thus, Valley suggests that *anekānta* is a resolution to the problem underlying the debate on pluralism versus exclusivism.

Reflecting on the "multi-dimensional significance" of *anekāntavāda* for day-to-day life, Kamla Jain relates *anekānta* to the functioning of a secular state or a system, which underscores the neutrality and respect toward all religions; to the working of modern jurisprudence which takes into account all perspectives to arrive at a judgment; to the effective functioning of a business organization which succeeds only with the co-existence of various departments; and even to post-modernism and post-structuralism.

While in principle *anekāntavāda* may appear as system to recognize the multiple worldviews, in reality it served, according to Paul Dundas, as a way which could establish the superiority of the Jain worldview over other models of reality. Based on the critical examination of medieval Jain texts and their authors, Dundas demonstrates the tensions and divisions that existed within the Śvetāmbara Jain community where even superiority of a sect became an issue. Taking the example of Yaśovijayaji, he draws attention to a Jain argument which goes beyond *anekāntavāda*. This is the position of being *madyastha* (literally meaning standing in the middle), a position from which it is possible to praise qualities in individuals who may be non-Jains and may even belong to a "false" religious path. However, such inclusive and tolerant approach, Dundas points out, did not mean that the non-Jains were considered equal to the Jains. This approach allowed the Jains to be tolerant of non-Jains without abandoning the superiority of Jainism over other paths.

Christopher Key Chapple argues that *anekāntavāda* allowed the Jains to survive during some of the most hostile and

unfavorable moments in history. The stories of violence associated with ācārya Haribhadra serve only to demonstrate the religious rivalry that prevailed at a given period in Indian history. Juxtaposing stories of violence attributed to Haribhadra, the great author and philosopher, with the actual passages drawn from Haribhadra's writings, Chapple contends that there is no evidence supporting the validity of such stories. The evidence that we do have in the form of Haribhadra's own writings strongly attests to his exemplary tolerance and respect for the views of others and his uncompromising commitment to ahiṃsā and *anekāntavāda*. Nonetheless, Chapple suggests that the story of violence attributed to Haribhadra, though without evidence, and the philosophy of tolerance that in fact characterizes the corpus of his writings, offer two different models to solve the problem of violence in our world today. The first offers violence as a solution to violence, and the second, more in tune with the overall orientation of the Jain philosophy, offers compassion, tolerance and forgiveness as a solution to violence.

The last two papers deal with the representation of ahiṃsā and *anekānta*, of Mahavira and his teachings in art and in history textbooks respectively. Using art historical and epigraphical evidence, Sonya Quintanilla demonstrates that the *ardhaphālaka* Jain monks of early Mathura practiced ahiṃsā and *anekānta* in an exemplary manner. Their adherence to ahiṃsā and *anekānta* helped them create a tolerant, open and inclusive environment in early Mathura. Such an environment facilitated the rise of Mathura as a cosmopolitan cultural center where members of diverse religions peacefully co-existed. The *ardhaphālaka* Jain monks and their followers were, thus, instrumental to the rise of key religious movements and iconographic developments in Mathura affecting the course of Indian history, the future of Jainism and Jain art in significant ways.

My paper examines the problems underlying the portrayal of Mahavira's teachings in Indian history textbooks. A critical review of half a dozen textbooks of Indian history used for undergraduate courses in the U.S. suggests that the coverage of

Mahāvīra and Jainism in majority of these books is inadequate. The information they do provide is sketchy and, at times, confusing. Often the key concepts and teachings of Mahāvīra in these books are misrepresented to the extent that their real essence and wisdom is lost. The emphasis in some of these textbooks on outward appearances without due regard for the principles and values such appearances embody undermines the educational purpose textbooks are expected to serve.

The essays in this volume advance the discussion of ahimsā and *anekānta*; point out their historical and potential significance, make us aware of the gap between these principles and their practice, and underscore the need for appropriate representation of these concepts and teachings of Mahāvīra in the Indian history textbooks. Contributions in this volume will hopefully provide an impetus for further study of Mahāvīra's teachings, and will also serve as a catalyst for translating his teachings into ways of living--where nonviolence becomes a source of strength, differences are viewed with respect, and peaceful strategies are preferred in resolving conflicts.

Views on Ahimsā, Compassion, and Samyaktva in Jainism

KRISTI L. WILEY

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Ahimsā appears to be the central theme of Mahāvīra’s teachings. As Padmanabh S. Jaini has observed, there is a “preoccupation with ahimsā” within Jainism, for no other religious tradition “has carried it [ahimsā] to the extreme of the Jainas. For them it is not simply the first among virtues but the virtue...”¹ Although in most other religious traditions violence is usually associated with causing harm to other living beings, Jaini has noted that “for Jainas, however, it [himsā] refers primarily to injuring oneself—to behavior which inhibits the soul’s ability to attain *mokṣa*.”²

This focus on one’s own spiritual progress as an important motivating factor for observing ahimsā has been mentioned by other authors as well. For example, Ronald Huntington, the late professor of religion and and the co-director of Albert Schweitzer Institute at Chapman University, has written that Jainism “expands Albert Schweitzer’s famous concept of reverence for

¹ Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 167.

² The reasoning is that intentional harm to other living beings is motivated by passions (*kaṣāyas*), which cause the binding of unwholesome varieties (*pāpa prakṛtis*) of karmic matter to one’s own soul. These karmas cause rebirth in undesirable states of existence that are characterized by a preponderance of suffering and prolong the soul’s journey in saṃsāra. Jaini, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

life into reverence for the entire universe" and that it "has affinities with Gandhi's non-violent campaigns of *satyāgraha* (truth-force)" and with the writings of St. Francis of Assisi. He concludes that "it would be entirely wrong, however, to see ahiṃsā in any sentimental light. The Jain doctrine of non-injury is based on rational consciousness, not emotional compassion; on individual responsibility, not on a social fellow-feeling. . . . The motive in Jainism is self-centered and entirely for the purpose of individual *kaivalya*. And yet, though the emphasis is on personal liberation, the Jain ethic makes that goal attainable only through consideration for others."³

In other writings however, a different view of ahiṃsā and compassion in Jainism has been expressed. For instance, in an essay entitled "Environmental Wisdom in Ancient India" L. M. Singhvi describes the "ecological philosophy of Jainism" as being "virtually synonymous with the principle of ahiṃsā." He states:

Compassion and reverence for life are the sheet-anchor of the Jain quest for peace, harmony, and rectitude, based on spiritual and physical symbiosis and a sense of responsibility and restraint. The term ahiṃsā is stated in the negative (a = non, hiṃsā = violence), but it is rooted in a host of positive aims and actions which have great relevance to contemporary environmental concerns. It is a principle of compassion and responsibility. . . . Compassion and non-violence are the basis of the ancient Jain scriptural aphorism *Parasparopagraha jivānām* (all life is bound together by the mutual support of interdependence.)⁴

³R. Huntington, "Jainism and Ethics," www.chapman.edu/schweitzer/huntington.html (December 15, 2001). The essay was intended to be a chapter in a textbook of world religions that he was preparing at the time of his death. It appears on The Albert Schweitzer Institute's website via a link called "Readings on Reverence for Life."

⁴ Singhvi at <http://www.ecomall.com/greenshopping/eastgreen.htm>.

A similar view of ahimsā and compassion is found on a web page of Jain pilgrimages: “Jainism has become synonymous with ahimsā. Ahimsā (non-violence) occupies the supreme place in Jainism. . . . Compassion (*dayā*) is the guiding force of non-violence. It is the positive way of life. It has been assigned an equally high place in Jainism— ‘*Dayā dharma kā mūla*’ (Compassion is the basis of religion).”⁵

These writings are reflective of different views regarding compassion in Jainism. In writing about Jain views of ecology in the West, Anne Vallely has observed that “in the diaspora community . . . asceticism is being de-emphasized so that teachings of compassion and non-violence are no longer anchored to a renunciatory worldview. Jain teachings are being redefined according to a different ethical charter altogether—one in which active engagement in the world is encouraged.”⁶ Is this diversity of opinion indicative of a shift in thought regarding compassion itself? In this regard, it would be instructive to examine views regarding compassion that are found in some classical Jain texts that emphasize renunciation and asceticism.

First, let us examine statements in the *Tattvārthasūtra* (*TS*), a text accepted by both Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras. In *TS* 6.12, compassion (*anukampā*) is listed as one of the causes of the influx of *sātā-vedanīya karma* (the *karma* that causes pleasant bodily feelings), along with giving (*dāna*), asceticism with attachment (*sarāga-saṃyama*), concentration (*yoga*), equanimity (*kṣānti*), and purity or freedom from greed (*śauca*).⁷ Here, and in other

⁵ <http://www.jainpilgrimages.com/general/mahavir.htm> (December 15, 2001).

⁶ Anne Vallely, “From Liberation to Ecology: Ethical Discourses among Orthodox and Diaspora Jains,” in Christopher Key Chapple (ed.), *Jainism and Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 193-216.

⁷ Muni Shri Mishrimal Maharaj (trans.), *Karmagrantha* of Devendrasūri, 6 vols. (Beawar, Rajasthan: Shri Marudharakesari Sahitya Prakashana Samiti, 1974-1976): 1.55. Here compassion is associated with the binding of *sātā-vedanīya karma*.

passages related to compassion, the commentators gloss *anukampā* as “dayā” or “*ghṛṇā*,” “compassion, pity, sympathy, or tenderness towards others.” Compassion is “*maitrī*,” or “friendliness towards others.” A compassionate person is one whose heart is full of the feeling of kindness for the afflictions (*pīḍa*) of others, as if this suffering were one’s own. Another interpretation of compassion, that of giving to others, is offered by the Śvetāmbara commentator Siddhasenagaṇī. “When one gives food, water, clothing, utensils, shelter, and so forth to the afflicted, the poor, and beggars who have not renounced the household life, and to mendicants as well, there are fruits in the form of disassociation of various types of karmic matter. This brings about knowledge, faith, and conduct. Or, giving is showing compassion. It is viewing the suffering of others as if it were one’s own. *Dāna* is giving away with the intent or wish of showing kindness or giving assistance to others.”⁸

Compassion is discussed by the commentators in association with *TS* 1.2, where *samyak-darśana* is defined as “belief in substances as they really are.” Here, four indicative signs of *samyak-darśana* are listed as *praśama* (calmness), *saṃvega* (uneasiness with worldly existence), *anukampā* (compassion), and *astikya* (belief in the existents such as the soul, non-soul, and so forth). Since compassion is associated with a proper view of reality (*samyaktva*), it is not surprising that *kāruṇya* is listed among the contemplations (*bhāvanās*) that strengthen all five vows (*TS* 7.6 = *SS* 7.11). This *sūtra* reads: “Friendliness (*maitrī*) towards all living beings, delight (*pramoda*) in the distinction and honor of others, compassion (*kāruṇya*) for the afflicted (*kliṣyamāna*), and equanimity (*madhyastha*) towards the ill-mannered [should be contemplated].”

⁸ Umāsvatī, *Tattvārtha Sūtra* with *Svopajñā-bhāṣya* and commentary by Siddhasenagaṇī, 2 vols., (Devachanda Lalbhai Jain Pustakodddhar Fund, Series nos. 67 and 76, 1926-30): 6.13.

Here, in the *Sarvārthasiddhī* (SS) the Digambara commentator Pūjyapāda defines *kāruṇya* as “a disposition (*bhāva*) to render assistance (*anugraha*) to the afflicted or those who suffer pain or anguish due to the rise of *asātā-vedanīya karma*. He concludes that “He who conducts himself in this manner is able to practice non-violence and other vows to perfection.”⁹

Thus, according to the commentators on the *Tattvārthasūtra*, compassion may be expressed either passively or actively: by viewing the suffering of others as if it were one’s own or by rendering assistance to those who are afflicted. The definitions for compassion in these commentaries are similar to those in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: (1) Compassion is suffering together with another, participation in suffering, fellow-feeling, sympathy. It is (2) the feeling or emotion, when a person is moved by the suffering or distress of another and by the desire to relieve it; pity that inclines to spare or to succour.¹⁰

Compassion is discussed in a variety of texts in the context of appropriate mendicant and lay conduct. Regarding mendicant conduct, *Ācārāṅga-sūtra* 11.6.5.2 states “A saint, with right intuition (*samyak-darśana*) who cherishes compassion for the world, in the east, west, south, and north, should preach, spread, and praise (the faith), knowing the sacred lore.”¹¹ *Uttarādhyayana-sūtra* 21.13 says that “A monk should have compassion (*dayāṇukampā*) on all beings, should be of a forbearing character, should be restrained and chaste, and abstaining from everything sinful; he should live with his senses

⁹ See S. A. Jain (trans.), Pūjyapāda’s *Sarvārthasiddhī* (Madras: Jwalamalini Trust, 1960, Reprint 1992), p. 195.

¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary, (Clarendon Press, second edition, 1989).

¹¹ Herman Jacobi (trans.), *Jaina Sūtras*, part 1: Translation of the *Ācārāṅga-sūtra* and *Kalpa Sūtra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1884; reprint Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), p. 60.

under control.”¹² In the Digambara *Ātmānuśāsana*, unlimited compassion (*karuṇāpara*) is listed among the fruits of practicing severe austerities.¹³ Here, one is urged to follow the path of compassion, self-control, renunciation, and equanimity.¹⁴ “When the shore of the ocean of the cycle of existence is close by, the fortunate man has aversion to sense-gratifications, has renounced all possessions, subjugates the passions, has tranquility, vows, self-control, practice of self-contemplation, pursuit of austerities, duly ordained mental activity, devotion to the Jinās, and compassion (*dayālutā*).”¹⁵ And in discussing religious virtues in the *Praśamaratiprakaraṇa*, Umāsvāti states, “Compassion is the root of sacred doctrine (*dharma*). A person who is devoid of patience (*akṣamavān*) does not show compassion. Therefore, one who is devoted to patience attains the highest *dharma*.”¹⁶

In some of the Śrāvakācāra texts, which detail appropriate conduct for laity, compassion is listed as one of the qualities of an observant layperson (*śrāvaka-guṇa*), specifically in the context of *samyaktva* and in observing various lay vows.¹⁷ For example, Samantabhadra defines abstention from eating after dark (*rātri-bhojana*) as abandoning food by night out of compassion for

¹² Herman Jacobi (trans.), *Jaina Sūtras*, part 2: Translation of the *Uttarādhyana-sūtra* and *Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1895; reprint Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), p. 109.

¹³ Jacobi (trans.), *Ācārāṅga-sūtra*, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

¹⁴ Jacobi (trans.), *Ācārāṅga-sūtra*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁵ Jacobi (trans.), *Ācārāṅga-sūtra*, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

¹⁶ Yajñeshwar S. Shastri (trans.), Umāsvāti’s *Praśamaratiprakaraṇa*, L.D. Series, 107 (Ahmedabad: L. D. Institute of Indology, 1969), p. 168.

¹⁷ “This *guṇa* . . . is of the very essence of Jainism and needs no comment.” See R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga: A Survey of Mediaeval Śrāvakācāras* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 269.

living beings (*jīva-dayā*).¹⁸ The Digambara author Āśadhara, in his *Sāgara-dharmāmṛta*, declares that “compassion is the root of the whole sacred doctrine.”¹⁹

It is clear from examining selected passages in classical Jain texts that compassion is associated with appropriate conduct for both mendicants and laity. Is it possible, then, for actions undertaken by those who lack *samyak-darśana*, in other words, by those who hold a false view of reality (*mithyādṛṣṭi*), to be informed by compassion, as understood in these textual sources? This question is addressed by the Digambara author Vidyānanda in his commentary on *TS* 1.2. He writes that the qualities of *saṃvega* and *anukampā* are not possible for those who have the wrong views or *mithyādṛṣṭi*. Although I have been unable to locate a similar statement on this matter in the Śvetāmbara commentaries, there is a passage in the Śvetāmbara *Daśavaikālika-sūtra* that reflects a similar point of view: “First knowledge, then compassion, those who observe total restraint [i.e., mendicants] live thus.”²⁰ Therefore, according to these sources, humans, heavenly beings, and five-sensed rational animals who have attained a proper view of reality can have, and do have, compassion for others, as understood in Jainism.

Although the Jain doctrine of ahimsā is based on rational consciousness or a proper view of reality (*samyaktva*), compassion is an appropriate expression of this spiritual progress. While it is true that spiritual progress entails individual responsibility, this does not preclude a “social fellow-feeling” of compassion. And while the ultimate goal may be individual

¹⁸ *Ratna-karaṇḍa-śravakācāra* - v.21, as cited in Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

¹⁹ *Sāgara-dharmāmṛta* i.4, as cited in Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

²⁰ Kastur Chand Lalwani (trans.), *Daśavaikālika-sūtra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), p. 10.

kaivalya, spiritual progress need not be attained through total isolation from other beings in the world.

The objects of one's compassion, or the ways of expressing compassion, undoubtedly have changed over the centuries in accordance with social conditions of the times. But whether acts of compassion are manifested in speaking out against animal sacrifice in Vedic ritual practices of ancient times, or in persuading others to refrain from killing animals for food or sport, or in activities associated with animal welfare and the environment in modern times, this ethical value has been an aspect of *ahiṃsā* throughout the history of Jainism. One of the best expression of this sentiment is in the practice of *sāmāyika*--the attainment of equanimity--which a Jaina aspires to achieve.

Friendship towards all beings,
Delight in the qualities of virtuous ones,
Utmost compassion for afflicted beings,
Equanimity towards those who are not well-disposed towards me,
May my soul have such dispositions as these forever.²¹

²¹ As translated in Jaini , *op. cit.*, p. 224.

The Jaina Response to Terrorism

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History can be portrayed as a temporal line punctuated by key events, such as wars, that shape our lives. World War I served to shape my grandfather's life, World War II and the Korean War impacted my father's life, and the Cold War and Vietnam War influenced my own life. The terrorist acts of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent reactions will no doubt directly influence my son's life. Normally, we learn to come to terms with these momentous events in our lives by approaching these from social, political, moral, and spiritual perspectives, and by often seeking guidance from established traditions. In this paper, I will focus on formulating a possible Jaina response to the terrorist acts such as those of September 11. In order to do this we must first understand what is meant by terrorism, and how terrorist acts are justified.

Understanding Terrorism and its Justification

The key tool of trade for the terrorist is violence—physical and psychological. Such violence is politically or religiously motivated and relies on publicity to bring about the desired effect (e.g., not only political change, consciousness-raising, an end of oppression, but also genocide, disruption of life, and so on). Terrorism arises out of a need either to respond to perceived oppression and injustice, or to establish a new regime based on a political, economic, or religious ideology. For the terrorist, such

acts are the only means to compete and fight against an economically and militarily superior foe.¹

There are two major arguments in justifying terrorism. The first is called the *Utilitarian Terrorist Argument*. Accordingly, terrorism is seen as a key tool for gaining greater good compared to harm it may inflict on some. Some terrorists may even be empathetic to those who they kill or harm, but see it as necessary for the cause they believe in; yet other terrorists argue that civilian casualties are not really *innocent* as they give implicit consent to their government's "oppressive" policies and benefit from them.

The second argument in defense of terrorism is called a *Relativist Argument: Terrorist vs. Freedom Fighter*. It is sometimes argued that all nations at one time or another in their history have conducted "terrorist" attacks and tactics in pursuing their nationalistic goals. According to the victors, individuals who bring about terrorist acts are seen as heroes and martyrs, while according to the vanquished, they are seen as evil villains and cowards who are despised and hated. Consider the Allied attitude toward the 1944 bomb plot against Hitler. To the Allies, it was seen as a great effort of heroic status and even today most would recognize its "positive" epoch-changing status should it have been successful—save 6 million Jews and hundreds of thousands of soldiers by the death of one person, Adolph Hitler, the leader of the Third Reich. However, the Third Reich and Hitler himself, viewed it negatively as an act of terrorism and treason.

Responses to Terrorism

There are three major defensive responses to terrorism: All-out-aggression, Just War, and Pacificism. The all-out-aggression response is based on an "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" mentality

1. For a recent compilation on current thinking on the nature and cause of terrorism in the 20th Century, see Rex A. Hudson et al., *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?* (Washington D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1999).

and employs a quick in-kind retaliation against a terrorist aggressor. Such a response is intended to demonstrate to the terrorists that the cost of their acts is too high to continue them. This expression of aggression, like terrorism itself, does not follow Just-War guidelines, even taking the *Political Realist* stand.² Retaliation is immediate and intensity of aggression is same or even higher as “pay-back” for terrorist acts.

The Just War response attempts to follow accepted protocol in a dedicated military campaign. Such a protocol is usually based on three major criteria: the principles of *self defence*, *proportionality*, and *discrimination*.³ Others employ a “looser” interpretation of Just War by focusing on the *doctrine of double effect*, i.e., allowing for some “bad effects” when striving for an overall good.⁴

2. The *Realist* position on war and international conflict presupposes the view that there are no binding moral obligations among nations (or a nation to a terrorist organization); rather, there are only relations of power between them, unconstrained by moral rules. Often associated with Thomas Hobbes, it identifies *war* as a state of affairs when humanity is operating outside the realm of social order, where innate human aggression take over. While a government is required to uphold its own internal law, there is no overarching international law that it must uphold; hence, war is an instrument of foreign policy and it is restricted only by prudential concerns not justice.

³ *The Principle of Self-defense* implies that any act of war must have its origins in a self-defensive reaction to an aggressor; a preemptive strike against an anticipated aggressor is also permissible. *The Principle of Proportionality* requires that the level of force employed must be in proportion to the good that the action is intended to achieve. *The Principle of Discrimination* requires that force should be used in a way that respects the distinction between combatants and noncombatants—one can use force against the combatant but not the noncombatant. Some interpret the principle of discrimination in a non-compromising way: it is *never* permissible to intentionally kill civilians in a war.

4. This doctrine of double effect has several restrictions: (1) the good but not the bad effect is intended; (2) the good effect is *commensurate* with the bad effect; (3) the bad effect is *not* the means to the good effect; (4) the end must bring about a great good or eradicate a great evil; (5) the act itself (apart from its bad effect) is not *impermissible* and must not be *self-defeating* or *escalate* out of control; (6) terrorism or “Total War” which involves the deliberate harming of the innocent, can only be the act of last resort. As noted in this section, differences abound within those who support this approach or justification to war; not only in regards to the principle of discrimination, but the very purpose of a Just War. For example, Thomas Aquinas contends that a just conflict is not a war of self-defense, but a war to redress wrongs committed by another state; its

Pacifism acknowledges the aggression but does not respond in-kind, rather it seeks a non-aggressive and nonviolent response. The pacifist responses must be distinguished from "no response"—e.g., denial of aggression, uncontested acquiescence to aggressor, "cowardly" fleeing from danger. Pacifism can arise on a personal or institutional level, and be applied universally or only to specific cases. However, all expressions of pacifism are driven by a spiritual and/or moral commitment and the character of reply is always nonviolent response: diplomatic, non-cooperation, demonstration, etc.

Jaina Response to Terrorism

The questions central to this paper are: How a tradition like Jainism is to cope with an unjust and vicious social phenomenon such as terrorism? What is the proper role of Jaina philosophy or theology in helping one to be faithful both to the ultimate goal of liberation and to the inherent themes of compassion and nonviolence that are the very basis of the Jaina tradition itself?

There are two ways that one can go about constructing a Jaina response to terrorism. One can model a response based on historical episodes where an aggressor has threatened a Jaina community and observe how the clergy and/or lay Jaina people sought a solution. Or, one can formulate a "theoretical" response based on Jaina philosophical and religious tenets. Given the space limitations of this paper, I will focus on the latter approach, giving only brief reference to historical facts when helpful.

Emphasis on the principle of ahimsā in the Jaina tradition is well known. However, the lay Jainas realize that it is impossible to live a life totally in accordance with the principle of nonviolence. Historically, the Jaina community cannot be always

purpose is to inflict punishment for wrongs committed by a state that inflicted damage on another state and refused to admit or compensate for the transgression. Perhaps the only principle that avoids scrutiny and disagreement is the Principle of Proportionality within the Just War camp.

identified as simply pacifist.⁵ There were a number of famous Jaina generals and soldiers, none of whom was condemned by Jaina leaders or followers.⁶ However, there does not seem to be a clear stance on how the lay Jaina followers are expected to respond to war and terrorism.

Of the three responses to aggression and terrorism identified above, the lay Jaina position might appear to align mainly with the Just War approach, with its emphasis on restraint and self-defense. Only a few texts (e.g., *Sāgaradharmāmṛtaṭīkā*, *Yaśastilakacampū*, *Nītivākyāmṛta*) make reference to war. According to these texts, one may engage only in a defensive campaign, where one is to acquire *only* a less dangerous variety of karmic matter generated from *virodhī-himsā* or opposing/hindering-based violence.⁷ However, the intent is not to encourage such activity but acknowledge its inevitability in a layperson's life, and is considered best if avoided.⁸ The Jaina

5. See Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 102-103, 193; Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 280-281, 313.

6. One needs to distinguish between Jaina mendicants and Jaina lay followers with the former required to live a much more restrictive life than the latter lay followers. Monks are never to engage in any form of violence, let alone warfare; lay followers, however, are given much more latitude to make their own decisions regarding warfare and are not condemned for war, and in fact can be praised for valor in a just war. For example, the great image of Bāhubali at Shravaṇa-Belgoḷā was commissioned by the greatly adored Jaina General Cāmuṇḍarāya in 948.

7. The goal of life, according to Jainism, is to reach liberation (*mokṣa*) from rebirth and suffering (*saṃsāra*). Accumulation of karmic matter in association with one's soul (*jīva*) "weighs down" the soul and causes it to be reborn. As pointed out here, certain types of violence, while still resulting in the accumulation of binding karma, results in karma that is easier to remove, less of an impediment to one's ultimate goal.

8. For a more detailed description of this case of allowance for war, especially for the warrior/king caste (*kṣatriya*), see Jaini, pp. 170ff. Jaini correctly points out that much of the discussion on *virodhī-himsā* and views on warfare appears in much later works and not in earliest canonical Jaina texts. Perhaps as social difficulties and the inevitable clashes with Hindus and Moslems arose over the centuries, Jaina authors felt compelled to address how one might deal with the need to engage in limited combat when the need

texts, in general, regard acts of slaying—even in the spirit of self defense—to be demeritous, as such acts inevitably lead to the accumulation of *papa* or bad karmic matter. If it is at all necessary to engage in violence or warfare it would be best not to do so on grounds of self-defense.⁹

Initially, then, we can see a marked difference in western and Jaina discussions of warfare and retaliatory violence. Just War discussions in the West focus on the social justification of warfare and take into consideration the impact of violence on society. In contrast, Jaina discussions focus on the effects of engaging in warfare on an individual's spiritual progress and pursuit of *mokṣa*. Yet, ironically, the choice to engage in a justifiable war such as against terrorist, will take one away from this ultimate goal.

Though Jaina lay-followers have engaged in warfare, there has never been any doubt that they were still responsible for their acts, i.e., take rebirth in hell.¹⁰ *Prima facie*, one must question the sanity of the soldier who voluntarily takes on a vocation that not only can likely bring about his untimely death, but also result in an immediate rebirth in hell. Obviously, there are factors that would prompt one to do such an ultimate expression of self-

arose to defend oneself from an unjust oppressor—particularly when the Jaina tradition was under attack.

9. *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, II.ii.5-8. "The first kind of committing sin is prompted by a motive...This is the case when a man for his own sake...does injury to movable or immovable beings, or has it done by another, or consents to another's doing it. Thereby the bad Karman accrues to him...We now treat of the third kind of committing sins, called slaying. This is the case when a man thinking that some one has hurt, hurts, or will hurt him, or one of his people...kills movable or immovable beings, has them killed by another, or consents to another's killing them. Thereby the bad Karman accrues to him." See. Hermann Jacobi trans., *Jaina Sūtras*, Part II, in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 45 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1964), pp. 357-358.

10. Compare with Jaini's work again (p. 314) where he contrasts the Jaina *Rāmāyaṇa* hero Lakṣmaṇa who righteously slays the evil Rāvaṇa, yet both end up in the same hell after death; while Yudhiṣṭhira and Duryodhana in the Hindu *Mahābhārata* go to heaven after engaging in war and slaying others in battle.

sacrifice (or self-destruction). In such an event, the individual strives to “minimize the harm.”

The way to “optimum violence”¹¹ whether engaging in war or responding to terrorism is by observing the following: (i) not kill for the sake of oneself; (ii) do not act with passion or emotion; and (iii) renounce the act or disassociate oneself from it as much as possible. These directives are based on the Jaina explanation of the mechanics of *kārmic* bondage. More intense the passions (*kaṣāyas*) one undergoes, the more intense are the vibrations (*yoga*) in the mind that bring about the influx (*āsrava*) of *karmas* that bind (*bandha*) to the soul. Take for instance the following that can serve to guide the Jaina in such situations.

Taking life away out of passion is violence. (*Tattvārtha sūtra*, 7.8)

One may deprive a creature of his life and not be touched by the act...[if] one has been following the moral code and meticulously observing the religious norm. (*Siddhasenadvātriṃśikā*, 3.16)

A person under the sway of passion kills himself at the outset even though another creature might or might not have been killed as a consequence. (*Pravacanasāra*, 3.16)¹²

Hence, according to Jainism, it is not only *what* actions we do but also *how* we do them that ultimately determines the nature of *karmas* we incur. Accordingly, acting too selfishly, boastfully, or out of self defense in the course of warfare further stirs one’s emotions so as to intensify this influx of *karma* as well as attract a firmer-binding kind of *karma* that is harder to remove.

11. What is meant here by “optimum” is that if one has to engage in violence, one must take into considerations prudential interests—do that course of action that has the *minimum* negative effect both on one’s own spiritual progress and on the surrounding living beings affected by one’s actions; one should particularly direct one’s attentions to avoid harming “innocent” beings that are not the cause of any threat or harm to another.

12. These three passages are taken from Umāsvāti’s *Tattvārtha Sūtra* and summary of commentaries presented in Nathmal Tatia (trans.) *That Which Is* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994), pp. 173-174.

In addition to optimizing one's violent activities done *during* the war or response to terrorism, one must also strive to shed the accumulated *pāpa* through good activities leading to *nirjarā* (removal of *kārmic* matter through austerities) and *saṃvara* (repelling or stopping the inward flow of *karma*). Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to think that all of this "debt" could be removed in one's lifetime. While good deeds and austerities help remove some of the bad *karma* associated with one's soul due to the violence and may, therefore, decrease one's length in hell, one cannot avoid altogether the rebirth in hell that awaits one as a result of killing in war or terrorist actions. Textual passages within the Jaina literature express this ability to lessen the final debt without avoiding responsibility for demerit in a number of ways:

Sinners cannot annihilate their works by new works; the pious annihilate their works by abstention. (*Sūtrakṛtāṅga* I. xv.15)¹³

As a tortoise draws its limbs into its own body, so a wise man should cover, as it were, his sins with his own meditation. (*Sūtrakṛtāṅga* I. viii.16)¹⁴

From the discussion above, it is apparent that the Jaina view of life stresses care and amity in the interaction with all living beings. Jainism, in principle, naturally espouses to nonviolence and, therefore, to some form of pacificism. Yet, as with all traditions, it has to wrestle with the difficulty of what to do with injustice and violence toward others as found in acts such as terrorism. Do we stick firmly to our non-violent principles and simply sit back and watch others suffer unjustly without lending a helping-hand to them?

The Jaina tradition, as is apparent from the following analysis by a contemporary Jaina teacher Muni Shri Nyayavijayajī, has chosen to tip the scales in favor of the need to

13. Hermann Jacobi (trans.), *Jaina Sūtras*, *op. cit.*, Part. II, p. 318.

14. *Ibid.*, p.299.

act with compassion when it comes to preservation of social order and the lives of the innocent. In his work, *Jaina Darśana*, he attempts to give convincing justification for why one *must* help those in need, for to not do so, is itself an act of violence:

One commits violence by not contributing to the efforts of stopping violence or by simply remaining indifferent to violence, just as one commits violence by indulging in positive violent activity. If one who knows swimming does not rescue a drowning man and simply watches him drowning, it is an act of violence. Not to give food to the hungry in spite of one's ability to give them food is also a case of violence. Violence of such type is a result of callous carelessness of the form: "What concern have I? Why should I invite trouble? I cannot afford to give food, etc., to others" Hard-heartedness is opposed to religion and religious practice. Universal love is the foundation of religion. To remain indifferent to other's happiness, comforts, and benefits for the sake of one's own is also a case of violence.¹⁵

In the above passage, Nyāyavijayajī is bringing to our attention the fact that acts of *omission* (avoiding the stoppage of violence) are just as deadly and impious as acts of *commission* (to do violence). One can be viewed as complicit in the violence itself, if one does nothing to stop it. Continuing with the same passage, we see this contemporary exponent of Jainism integrate the Gandhian tactic of passive resistance (*satyāgraha*) as a means to stop violence.

Nonviolence is a spiritual power. Noble bravery or heroism demands self-sacrifice. To sacrifice one's self-interests and even one's life—if need be—while resisting violence and supporting and fostering non-violence is the bravery of high order. In spite of having his courage and strength to fight, the person who controls his passion and excitement on the passion-rousing and exciting occasions and does not yield to violence is the true practitioner of nonviolence....[Bodily strength]...is needed to save the innocent people from cruel attacks of

15. Muni Shri Nyāyavijayajī (trans. by Nagin J. Shah), *Jaina Philosophy and Religion* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), pp. 112-113.

tyrants, rioters and the wicked enemies through brave counterattack and confrontation. For the internal non-violence of the form of keeping the mind calm and unagitated, this strength is as much needed as for the external nonviolence of the form of protecting the people. ...It is the *kṣatriyas* (members of the warrior class/caste) who have taught nonviolence, and those who follow their teachings are the brave men of heroic character.... Where there is weakness and feeling of fear, the practice of non-violence is utterly impossible...¹⁶

In this moving passage we see expressed the kind of intense self-sacrifice that could explain why a Jaina lay-person would forgo or jeopardize his own immediate spiritual advancement so as to protect and serve those in distress. It is hard to envision a nobler act of courage and compassion, reflecting the same kind of unswerving love that leads a *Bodhisattva* to postpone his final liberation till all other sentient beings are brought to salvation. Truly this is the fullest expression of the Jaina ideal of *ahiṃsā*, where one respects and cares for other living beings so much that one is willing to delay one's own spiritual liberation in an effort to protect others from harm. Although Nyāyavijayajī does not advocate violence in the above passage, his reference in this passage to the *kṣatriya* caste demonstrates his recognition of the predominance of the this caste within the Jaina community and leaders. For example, all the *Tīrthaṅkaras* were drawn from *kṣatriya* (warrior) caste. The Jaina tradition, therefore, could hardly deny this obligation of the individual to defend society from aggression and helps explain the "ease" with which a tradition founded on the practice of extreme nonviolence, could readily allow participation in military campaigns. However, as is well noted in Jaina scholarship,¹⁷ there was a concerted effort as time progressed to "internalize" the elements of soldiering from a

16. *Ibid.* p.112.

17. See Dundas, *The Jainis*, *op. cit.*, p. 102; Jaini, *The Jaina Path*, *op. cit.*, p. 67ff; Nyāyavijayajī, *Jaina Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

“fight” against warriors on a battlefield, to a “fight” against ignorance and passions that impede liberation and cause bondage. The valor, courage, dedication, strength, bravery, forcefulness, hardships, and pain that once characterized the great “warrior” *kṣatriya*, now denotes the praised “mendicant” *kṣatriya* who conquerors the causes of suffering and transmigration through great fortitude, misery, and adversity on the part of the “spiritual warrior.” Consider the following passages which typify this shift in focus from the mundane and violent to the sublime and tranquil.

A man who conquers nobody but himself is the greater victor than one who conquers thousands and thousands of valiant enemies. (*Uttarādhyayna Sūtra*), IX.35¹⁸

Fight with your own self; why fight with external enemies? He who conquers himself through himself attains happiness. (*Ācārāṅga Sūtra*, II.iii.77)¹⁹

These passages emphasize not only that there has been a shift in the object of conquest for the warrior, but that the new way is significantly better and more praiseworthy, providing better “spoils” of the victory. One need only consider that Sanskrit verb root of the most revered and central Jaina title “*jina*,” is “*ji*,” (to conquer), to see the deep link between the former role of the *kṣatriya* and the new purpose and direction it has taken within Jainism, i.e., “victor over attachment, passions, etc.”

Jaina thinkers did not articulate a Just War theory as is found within the western tradition. However, many of the elements found in these western accounts are implicitly contained within Jaina thought in terms of general directives about war. As noted above, when war is to be engaged in, Jaina soldiers are never to be the aggressor and are to respond reactively in a self-defense, and to protect innocent life, the Jaina teachings, and the Jaina way of life. Jaina tradition also prohibits violence against

18. *Uttarādhyaynasūtra*, IX.35 in Nyāyavijayajī (trans.), p. 436.

19. *Ācārāṅgasūtra*, II.iii.77 in Nyāyavijayajī (trans.), p. 437.

non-combatants, because one's primary goal in life is to avoid doing harm to all living beings; only those viewed as evil and destructive (combatants) could be the recipients of violence. Anticipating the "doctrine of double effect," Jainism distinguishes between intentional, premeditated violence (*saṃkalpaja-himsā*) and unintentional, accidental violence (*ārambhaja-himsā*); thereby recognizing that some unintentional violence may occur in the process of carrying out one's daily activities, presumably including warfare if necessitated to do so. However, some of the stipulations of the western "looser" interpretation of double effect might not be palatable to the Jaina sensibilities: i.e., the allowance of terrorism or total war and the allowance of "minor infractions" to noncombatants to bring about a greater good and eradicate a great evil.

Looking at the overarching Jaina directive to avoid violence if at all possible, one could presume that the Jainas would support the western principle of proportionality as they advocate the least possible violence to ward off a terrorist threat. Going one point further, perhaps the *real* distinctive Jaina contribution to the philosophical dialogue over warfare and prevention against terrorism is the Jaina emphasis on the "internal" dimension of war. Under such circumstances where a Jaina must engage in war, he is required to remain calm and detached. This emphasis on a cool head will lead to more care in the military activity (hence less careless unintentional destruction of innocent noncombatants), a heightened sensitivity to when and where violence is warranted and when and where it can be avoided (hence, minimizing the use of violence), and a general reduction in the psychological and spiritual damage that the violence of war inflicts on the combatant.²⁰

20. Consider the focus of the criticism directed against U.S. anti-terrorism policies and attitudes after 9-11 and the co-current ultraconservative Israeli stance in regards to the status of the Palestinians. Some feel the highly emotional, nationalistic, and extremely patriotic attitudes that dominate both administrations at this time, blinded them to the real causes of the terrorism and bloodshed in the first place and prevent them from recognizing and implementing any plausible solutions to the upheaval in the Middle

It goes without saying that “ideally” any member of the Jaina community would prefer to resolve any conflict, including terrorism in a peaceful nonviolent fashion and by embracing a pacifist approach to the problem. Such an approach may incorporate the type of passive resistance methods employed by Gandhi and embraced by Muni Nyāyavijayajī, who is quoted earlier in the paper. However, in confronting with a megalomaniac, pathological serial killer like Adolph Hitler of Nazi Germany, Osama bin Laden of al-Qaida, Shoko Asahara of Aum Shinrikyā, or Prabhakaran of the Liberation Tigers, the Jaina may seriously wonder if there is any nonviolent means to arrest such violent and destructive propensity.

Terrorist Arguments and Jaina Response: Conclusion

This paper initially offered two arguments – utilitarian and relativist -- intended to give moral and rational grounds for terrorist acts. We are now in a position to provide a probable response to these lines of argumentation. An analysis of Utilitarian argument from the Jaina perspective would result in finding fault with this line of thinking. Fundamentally, the Jaina would say that an injustice or wrong *cannot* be “fixed” by resorting to the killing of a large number of people, especially innocent noncombatants which are the usual recipient of terrorist attacks. A Jaina position would question whether violence is the only means to reverse injustices and oppression, especially given such world-wide global “overseers” as the United Nations that can be appealed to remedy a bad situation. Clearly, the slaying of thousands of innocent beings can never be the *means* to an end,

East. If these leaders had taken notice of the Jaina prioritization of calming the mind and removing the passions that distort and cause ignorance in their perspective on life, then there might arise a real long-range solution to the tension between the two states which ultimately will reduce if not remove the terrorist threat faced by the United States. No doubt this is easier said than done given the years of dedicated spiritual practices required to progress the mind to this stage, but some effort toward those ends would be a start toward addressing these issues with a cooler mind with a broader perspective on its problems. Even being aware of those distorting psychological influences could help one to be aware of them and try to reduce their dominance in the minds of administration officials.

regardless of what good it is perceived to bring about. Further, in the long history of terrorism it has seldom, if ever, brought about the ends that it was employed to achieve. The Utilitarian attempt to stack up the lives of living sentient beings in some sort of mathematical equation is the most atrocious perversion imaginable against the basic sanctity of all life. The scale of violence and suffering in terrorism is such an *immense evil* that no good consequences can outweigh it. Even if one were to generate a cost-benefit analysis, it is hard to see how the alleged benefits to the perceived "oppressed people" can be weighed in favor of terrorist activities, over the resulting suffering in rest of world. The collective misery, fear, costs, loss of general well-being and happiness of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people directly or indirectly victimized, outweighs the intended "newly gained" happiness of the "oppressed people." This sort of analysis fails to recognize the inherent value in each and every life, whereby no one life or group of lives can negate the value and sanctity of another life, let alone *justify* the deaths of thousands of innocent persons.

In response to the Relativist argument, a Jaina analysis would focus not on which side is right or wrong, who is hero or villain, but rather on the character, purpose, means, and goal of both the undertaker of violence (*hiṃsaka*) and the act of violence itself (*hiṃsā*). If the act intentionally brings about the suffering and/or death of one or more innocent (noncombatant) persons, then it is wrong regardless of the nationality or identity of the agent and the purpose and means used to bring about the action. As noted above, it is not obvious that previous acts of terror have exhausted all other means to resolve the "alleged injustice or oppression" before unleashing their heinous acts of mass destruction. If one has properly subdued one's passions and emotions, then a Jaina mediator could objectively determine what injustices (if any at all) have been committed or continue to be committed and propose appropriate remedies to resolve the tensions and return society back to a stable condition. If violent

activities persist, then a Jaina position would require that a policy of “optimum violence” be adopted so as to reduce the threat posed by the irrational aggressor.

While the Jaina lay population felt the need to occasionally engage in war to defend themselves and their fellow citizens, the monks were totally forbidden from such acts. The Jaina monk is instructed to remain passive even when under attack, to make no effort to fight back or later retaliate—instead to remain calm and detached. Take for instance the following passage from *Ācāraṅga Sūtra* which shows a clam and totally nonviolent Mahāvīra under extreme violent circumstances.

In his resting place...crawling or flying animals attacked him; bad people or lance bearers attacked him...foul smells and sounds...always well controlled, he bore the different sorts of feelings...persevered in his meditations, free from resentment.²¹

As a living model of total compassion and nonviolence Mahāvīra preached the same to his followers as is clear from the following passages.

As I feel every pain and agony from death down to the pulling of my hair; in the same way, be sure of this, all kinds of living beings feel the same pain and agony...For this reason all sorts of living beings should not be beaten, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor deprived of life.²²

All creatures who commit sins will, suffer, and tremble. Considering this, a wise monk who has ceased to sin...should abstain from violence with regard to moveable and immovable beings.²³

And yet the Jaina lay people cannot follow this total nonviolence. This apparent contradiction between mendicant and lay Jaina approach to terrorism and violence has generated some criticism among scholars. As a postscript to this paper, I wish to

21. Hermann Jacobi (trans.), *Jaina Sūtras*, op. cit., Part I. viii.2, pp. 83-85.

22. *Sūtrakṛitāṅga* II.i.48. See Hermann Jacobi (trans.), *Jaina Sūtras*, Part II., p. 351.

23. *Sūtrakṛitāṅga* I.vii.20. See Hermann Jacobi (trans.), *Jaina Sūtras*, Part II, p. 295.

address such criticism. At the outset let us be clear that the lay Jaina followers do not complain about this difference. Nor do they see themselves as "used" by the mendicants as the "first line of defense" so that the monks can avoid accumulating bad *karma* or risk dying on the battlefield.

As a starting place, let us note that the *samsaric* world by definition is a world of suffering and there is little chance that one—in and of oneself—can bring an end to this terrible state of affairs. Second, by reaching liberation or climbing closer to it, one *does* make a significant improvement in the overall "spiritual atmosphere" around oneself. According to Jainism, being in the presence of a *Jina* (spiritual conqueror) is said to have an extremely positive influence on a person in terms of their overall attitudes, emotions, and preoccupations in life—hence reducing one's stress, anger, and hostility toward others in the world. Third, once one has taken the great vows of a mendicant (*mahāvratas*) he or she is placed in a special role in the Jaina community, that is, one of great reverence and support because this person has taken on a life of total renunciation (*sarvavirati*). This is an extremely difficult life of severe austerity and discipline, denying all the wants and desires that plague ordinary persons. The members of the Jaina community take it upon themselves freely to support this most precious undertaking even if it, at times, exerts demands on their own lives. Fourth, all laypersons believe that eventually they will enter upon this path (either later in this or a future lifetime); hence, they can hope that just as they support the monks now, later the Jaina community will support them when they have taken on the great vows.

So we see that in the Jaina community, the mendicants take on a special status that removes them from worldly obligations and duties so that they may dedicate themselves fully to the spiritual quest. It may be noted that this is not a unique phenomenon to the Jaina community as most, if not all, societies have recognized and supported certain individuals who have taken upon themselves to seek final truth or a reclusive lifestyle.

To expect that such individuals violate some of their vows and highly restrictive principles for a momentary threat or problem posed against a local community would be to break the trust between the lay and mendicant members of the community as well as undermine the greater good that is expected to be generated from the monks' efforts toward liberation.

Mahāvīra taught ahimsā to all. As more people reach the state of true vision (*samyak-darśana*) and move to higher *guṇasthānas* (stages of spiritual awakening), the chances of greater world peace will increase and overall sentiments of aggression and suffering will decrease. One might postulate that the mendicants work on a different, more fundamental level in dealing with aggression as expressed in terrorism. To reduce terrorism in the world, they operate at the spiritual level of purifying the general atmosphere, calming aggressive passions and changing selfish attitudes.

Finally, it should be noted as a point of clarification that Jaina mendicants are not oblivious to problems in the world nor do they turn their back on the changing needs of the lay community that supports them. The only real difference is that they cannot and will not intentionally hurt another living being, regardless of how evil and despicable a terrorist may be. Nevertheless, there is nothing that would prevent the mendicant from participating in nonviolent, passive-resistant demonstrations against tyranny or injustice; but, ultimately they have to stop just short of the option of violence in stopping aggression.

Ahiṃsā and the Question of “Just War”

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The image of the Jainas throughout their long history has been associated with the doctrine of ahiṃsā, and the Jainas themselves have ardently adhered to the observance of the practice in their day-to-day life. The fact that even in contemporary society where material culture is all-pervasive, Jaina mendicants, who scrupulously adhere to their vow of nonviolence, still number over 2000 monks and 5,000 nuns, a large number indeed considering the very small size of the Jaina community, testifies to the continued total dedication to the ideal of ahiṃsā. Lay Jainas as well abjure all forms of intentional violence and reduce the necessary amount of violence associated with their occupations to the absolute minimum. Without such dedication, ahiṃsā itself would remain either a fond memory of a lost golden age or an unachievable future goal.

Fundamental to Jain principle of ahiṃsā is the belief that each living being possesses an individual soul. This soul is characterized by consciousness, undergoes continuous changes between various grades of purity and impurity, ignorance and omniscience. The Jainas conceive that a soul takes up a new body after death of its present body according to its volitional activities. This is accomplished by the soul drawing toward itself a subtle kind of matter (*karma*), which then envelops it and defines for the soul the new kind of body it will receive. The volitional force driving the soul is what determines the state in which the soul finds itself. If the soul becomes subject to

attachment and aversion, the soul gets tainted by himsā and thus becomes harmful to itself and others. If the soul maintains detachment and compassion, the soul is characterized by ahimsā and thus non-injurious to others around itself.¹

The orientation of the Jaina discussion on ahimsā, therefore, proceeds from the perspective of one's own soul and not so much from the standpoint of the protection of other beings or the welfare of humanity as a whole. The Jainas rightly claim that compassion toward other living beings is not possible without realizing the value of self, the source of all spiritual wisdom. That is why the Jainas uphold the maxim, "First knowledge then compassion. Thus does one remain in full control. How can an ignorant person be compassionate when he cannot distinguish the good from the evil?"²

The Jainas seem to be unique in believing that even animals, like humans, possess mind and the five senses, and are capable of spiritual sensibilities. A beautiful story about an elephant narrated in the Jaina scriptures illustrates the awareness and moral capacity ascribed to animals by the Jainas. This is the tale of an elephant, who was the leader of a large herd that was caught in a huge forest fire. All the animals of the forest ran from their haunts and gathered around a lake so that the entire area was jammed with beings, both large and small. After standing there for quite sometime, the elephant lifted his leg to scratch himself, and immediately a small hare ran to occupy the spot vacated by his raised foot. Rather than trampling the helpless animal, however, the elephant's mind was filled with great compassion for the plight of his fellow creature; indeed his concern for the hare's welfare was so intense that he is said to have cut off

*'aprādurbhāvaḥ khalu rāgādīnām bhavaty ahimseti/
teṣāṃ evotpattiḥ himseti jīnāgamasya saṁkṣepaḥ//*

(Assuredly the nonappearance of attachment and other passions is ahimsā, and their appearance is himsā. This is a brief summary of the Jaina doctrine.) See *Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya* of Amṛtacandra Sūri, v. 44. Sanskrit Text and English translation by Ajit Prasada (Lucknow: 1933).

² *paḍhamam nānam tao dayā, evam citṭhai savvasamjāe.* See *Daśavaikalika Sūtra*, iv.

forever his associations with future animal destinies. The elephant stood with one leg raised for more than three days until the fire abated and the hare was able to leave. By then, however, the elephant's whole leg had gone numb and, unable to set down his foot, he toppled over. While maintaining the purity of his mind, he finally died and was reborn as prince Megha, son of King Śreṇika, the ruler of Magadha. Subsequently, he became an eminent Jain monk under Mahāvira.³ This story is a perfect example of the choice that one may make in understanding a good or evil act. The elephant had the option of simply trampling the hare but refused to do so, preferring to act as would a morally and non-violently inclined human. Such non-violent behavior was crucial to the spiritual progress of the elephant's soul in its subsequent life.

In Jainism the awareness of ahiṃsā is a constant concern for the individual, involving total mindfulness in mental, oral and physical activities. Ahiṃsā, therefore, is a creed in its own right; identified with its own spiritual impulses and informing all of one's activities. It may truly be called a way of personal discipline.

This discipline is followed to varying extents by the members of the Jaina community as expressed by two explicit schemes of vows and restraints called major vows (mahāvratā) and minor vows (aṇuvratā) applicable to the mendicants and the lay people respectively.⁴ The commitment of Jaina mendicants to the principle of ahiṃsā is absolute since they are required to renounce their social involvement and rely for their legitimate needs on the voluntary support of the laypeople. The mendicants thus became embodiment of ahiṃsā and the exemplars of that ideal for the lay people—who accept a great many grades of

³ S. Bharilla (ed.), *Jñātādharma-kathāḥ*, Prakrit Text (Pathardi, 1964), chapter 1, pp. 180-187.

⁴ For a detailed description of the Jaina vows, see P. S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 157-185.

nonviolence allowing them to gradually progress toward the state achieved by the mendicants. However, there are certain basic expectations of them. In order to be considered as Jaina, they must refrain from *saṃkalpaja himsā*, that is engaging in intentionally planned and carried out violence or injury, such as the intention with which a hunter might stalk his prey; uphold their commitment to vegetarianism;⁵ and adopt a proper means of livelihood so as to restrict the extent of himsā. The Jaina lawgivers drew up a long list of professions that were unsuitable for the Jaina lay person.⁶ Certain Jaina texts forbade, for example, animal husbandry and trade in alcohol or animal byproducts, leaving only such professions as commerce, arts and crafts, clerical and administrative occupations. In all these activities, some degree of violence was inevitable. The Jainas could engage in such activities provided they behaved with scrupulous honesty and utmost heedfulness. Injury done while engaged in such activities was considered *ārambhaja-himsā* (occupational violence), which could be minimized by choosing a profession like business that was reasonably free from causing harm, as indeed, Jainas have traditionally done. Military service, for example, was not generally expected of Jaina laymen, a fact that allowed them to observe their precept of ahimsā and follow it within the narrow sphere as laid down in their religious law.

It is apparent that Jaina lawgivers defined the meaning of intentional himsā with great care and expressly forbade it to all Jaina believers but gave Jaina laymen dispensation with regard to certain types of violence associated with their legitimate

⁵ Jainas extended their dietary restrictions to various types of vegetable life as well. In their attempts to categorize those types of plants that could be consumed with relatively less harm, the Jainas developed a whole science of botany that was unique in Indian religious history. For a list of plants and substances forbidden to devout Jainas, see R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga: A survey of Medieval Śrāvakācāras* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 110-116.

⁶ For a list of occupations forbidden to Jaina layman, see R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga: A survey of Medieval Śrāvakācāras*, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-122.

occupations. There remained, however, a certain grey area that could not be so explicitly characterized as either expressly evil or provisionally acceptable. This is the area known as the "just war" or violence in defense of one's property, honor, family, community, or nation. In this matter, the individual had to take into account not only the duties to himself but to society as a whole. The duty of Jaina mendicant in this case was quite clear: he must not retaliate in any way and must be willing to lay down his own life in order to keep his vow of total nonviolence. For a Jaina layman, however, appropriate conduct is not so clear cut. There were always situations in which violence would be a last resort in guiding the interests of himself and his community. The Jaina lawgivers of medieval times accorded with customary Hindu law in these matters. Somdeva (c. tenth century), for example, stipulated that "only a king should strike down those enemies of his kingdom who appear on the battlefield bearing arms, but never those people who are downtrodden, weak, or who are friends."⁷

For a religion that expected so much from its followers in terms of keeping the vows of ahiṃsā, such perfunctory advice on the legitimacy of Jaina participation in warfare must be considered a serious oversight. Nevertheless, there are indications both in canonical scriptures (some portions of which may go back to 500 BCE) and in much later narrative literature that the Jaina lawgivers were concerned about this problem and recognized the contradictions inherent in the expression, "just war."

One attempt to resolve this problem is indicated by the term *virodhi-himsā*: that is, countering violence with violence. The Jainas allowed that such violence could be justified, albeit as a final resort, for the Jaina layman whose conscience demanded that he defend his rights or for one who was called upon to fight by his king. However, as the following narrative will show, the

⁷ *Yasastilaka-campū*, (Bombay: Nirnaysagara Press, 1903), pp. ii, 97.

Jainas neither glorified the bravery involved in such violence nor held forth the prospect of birth in heaven to the protagonists, whether winner or loser.

The first story is the tale of Bāhubali, who is placed by the Jainas at the beginning of the present time-cycle, which ushered in human civilization.⁸ During this golden age, Ṛṣabha, the first of the twenty-four *Tīrthaṅkaras*, had just appeared in the world and introduced both the secular laws legislating the conduct of society as well as the monastic laws governing the pursuit of salvation. When Ṛṣabha renounced the world to become the first Jaina mendicant of this age, his eldest son, Bharata, claimed kingship over his entire domain. But the younger son, Bāhubali, claimed title to a share of the kingdom and refused to submit to the rule of his elder brother. Disregarding the principle of ahimsā, he challenged his brother to face him and his army on the battlefield. Bharata recognized that his duty as a king compelled him to force the submission of his insubordinate brother, and war seemed unavoidable.

The king's advisors, alarmed at the prospect of mass carnage, proposed single combat between the two brothers as a means of settling the dispute. The brothers agreed. In a wrestling combat that followed, Bāhubali defeated his brother Bharata and attained a decisive victory. At this point, one would have expected that Bāhubali would cap his triumph by proclaiming himself king. But the Jaina texts maintain instead that he was overcome by great remorse for having humiliated his brother and instantly awakened to both futility of sovereignty and bonds of possessions, which have blinded him to the true nature of the soul. To the great astonishment of the spectators and the defeated king, Bāhubali discarded his royal insignia and renounced the world and declared himself a Jaina monk. The storytellers relate

⁸ For accounts of Bāhubali and Bharata, see Pannalal Jain, ed. *Ādipurāṇa* of Jinasena (Varanasi:1963): chapter 36; Helen M. Johnson trans., *Triṣaṣṭīśalākāpuruṣacaritra* (*The Lives of Sixty-three Illustrious Persons*) by Hemacandra, vol. I (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1962).

that Bāhubali stood steadfast in meditation at that very spot for so long that creepers grew over his body and anthills formed at his feet. Bāhubali thus became omniscient and continues to be revered by the Jaina community as the first man of this age to have attained emancipation from the cycle of birth and death; colossal images of him in meditational posture are worshipped to this day.

The Jainas drew several morals from this story that are relevant in guiding Jaina laymen in determining their proper duty when confronted by an adversary in battle. First, it was maintained that valor was preferable to cowardice: Bāhubali was right in standing up for his familial rights to a share of the domain, but Bharata was also correct in attempting to maintain the territorial integrity of his realm. The king's ministers were also right to reduce the necessary violence to an absolute minimum by proposing single combat between the two brothers rather than involving both armies in the dispute. But the Jainas ultimately maintained that the victory of Bāhubali would not have truly settled anything for, had he succeeded to kingship as he was entitled, a new cycle of violence would certainly have ensued on the part of the loyalists of the vanquished monarch. This would have proved the truth of Jaina maxim that all possessions are evil, for true nonviolence cannot be practiced either by an individual or by a society that craves possessions and must therefore fight to acquire, augment, and protect its wealth. Total nonviolence is possible only when possessions are relinquished, as was so admirably demonstrated by Bāhubali's renunciation of the world after his victory. Thus, again is upheld the Jaina belief that only the valiant and the self-denying can pursue nonviolence to its fullest extent, not the cowardly or the covetous.

For the layman who was unable to forsake all possessions but was nevertheless keen to minimize his hiṃsā, the Jainas introduced a precept called *parigraha-parimāṇa* (voluntarily setting a limit on one's possessions) and included it as the last of the five *aṇuvratas* (minor vows). A Jaina layman wishing to take

this vow was asked by a mendicant to set specific limits on his possession of such temporal items as gold and silver, real estate, grain, and furniture, and to vow not to acquire amounts in excess of this limit. He was further encouraged to lower these limits by a certain amount each year in emulation of total non-possession (*aparigraha*) of the mendicant. In demanding that an advocate of *ahimsā* should renounce all properties in excess of one's legitimate needs, the Jainas were showing great insight into the possibility of building a society that practiced minimal *hiṃsā*. It must still be said, however, that the Jainas lacked either the vision or the organization to translate this precept into a general social philosophy. It is much to the credit of Mahatma Gandhi, who was undoubtedly influenced by several devout Jainas,⁹ that he espoused a philosophy founded upon *ahimsā* and *aparigraha*.

A second memorable story appears in the canonical *Bhagvati-sūtra*, which purports to preserve the words of the last Jaina *Tīrthāṅkara*, Mahāvīra. There Mahāvīra was asked about a war between Koṇika, the emperor of Magadha during Mahāvīra's time, and a federation of eighteen independent kings that had reportedly left 840,000 men dead. Mahāvīra's disciple specifically wanted to know whether it was true that all those men would be reborn in heaven because they had perished on the battlefield. In answer to this question, Mahāvīra declared that only one man out of this large army was reborn in heaven, and only one reborn as a man, all the rest ended up in hell or in the animal realms.

Contrary to the widely held belief that death on the battlefield is almost equal to holy martyrdom, the Jaina answer as put in the mouth of Mahāvīra shows extraordinary courage of their conviction that death accompanied by hatred and violence can never be salutary and must therefore lead to unwholesome rebirths. Mahāvīra's answer to this question is truly memorable

⁹ See correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and a revered Jaina saint Śrīmad Rājacandra as given in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Government of India Publications: 1958-75) Vol. 32, pp. 601-602.

and departs drastically from the traditional belief of Hindus, as recorded in *Bhagavad-Gītā*, where Kṛṣṇa, the incarnation of God Viṣṇu tells Arjuna, who was hesitant to participate in the war, that death in battle leads to heaven:

Hato vā prāpsyasi svargam, jitvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm/
tasmād uttiṣṭha Kaunteya, yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ//¹⁰
(Slain, you will attain heaven, conquering you will enjoy earth.
Therefore, rise, O Arjuna, resolved to do battle.)

To return to our narrative, Mahāvīra then proceeds to tell the story of two fortunate soldiers.¹¹ The man who ended up in heaven was a Jaina named Varuṇa, who had taken the *aṇuvratas* of the layman before he was drafted by his king and sent to the front. Prior to his departure, however, Varuṇa vowed that he would never be the first one to strike anyone; he would always wait until he was struck first before attacking. Armed with bow and arrow, he took his chariot into battle and came face to face with his adversary. Varuṇa declared that he would not take the first shot and called on his opponent to shoot. Only after his opponent's arrow was already on its deadly flight did he let fly his own arrow. His enemy was killed instantly, but Varuṇa himself lay mortally wounded. Realizing that his death was imminent, Varuṇa took his chariot off the battlefield and sat on the ground. Holding his hands together in veneration to his teacher, Mahāvīra, he said:

Salutations to Mahāvīra, wherever he may be, who administered to me the layman's precepts. Now the time has come for me to face my death. Making Jina Mahāvīra my witness, I undertake the total renunciation of all forms of

¹⁰ *Bhagavad Gītā*, ii, 37.

¹¹ See *Bhagvatī-sūtra (Viyāhapannatti)*, VII, 9 (#302 ff). Summary by Jozef Deleu, Tempelhof (Rijks University of Gent), 1970.

violence, both gross and subtle. May I remain steadfast in maintaining absolute detachment from this body.¹²

Saying thus, he pulled out the arrow and, his mind at peace, died instantly and was reborn in heaven. The second man, a friend of Varuṇa, was himself severely wounded in the battle. Even so he followed after Varuṇa in order to help him in his resolve and witnessed his peaceful death. He died soon afterwards in the same fashion and was reborn as a human being.

Thus, the Jainas are clear in their belief that a wholesome rebirth is assured only to those who die a peaceful death and who renounce all hostility and violence. Without achieving these qualities, no amount of valor on the battlefield guarantees even true temporal victory, let alone improvement in one's spiritual life. This does not mean that the Jaina lay adherent is a total pacifist, however. A layperson, as we saw above, is given the option of countering an armed adversary in kind, with the reminder that it is proper for a Jaina not to be the first to strike. The combatant would also be asked to bear in mind the Jaina doctrine of *anekāntavāda* (multiple perspectives), which allows the Jaina to recognize the validity of his adversary's point of view as well. By enabling him to recognize an area of common ground between himself and his opponent, a Jaina would, therefore, be able to avoid confrontation and try reconciliation, and resort to warfare only out of dire necessity. The Jainas thus appear to have outlined a path of nonviolence that would allow the lay adherent to conduct his daily life with human dignity while permitting him to cope with the unavoidable reality of the world in which violence is all-pervasive.

The Jainas would be the first to admit in accordance with their own doctrine of *syādvāda* (qualified assertions) that other religions too might discuss some of these same issues. But what distinguishes the Jaina conception of nonviolence from that found in other world religions is that it is truly a personal way of

¹² *Bhagvatī-sūtra*, VII, 9, #302 ff. (Suttāgame, ed. by Pupphabhikkhū. Gudgaon-Delhi, 1953).

religious discipline.¹³ It forbids the taking of all life, however, that might be justified or excused in other religions and warns that nothing short of hell or animal rebirth awaits those who kill or who die while entertaining thoughts of violence. Killing, even in self defence or for the "right cause" would lead to rebirth in hell. For example, in the Jaina *Rāmāyaṇa*, the "good brother" Laxamaṇa goes to the very same hell as does the wicked Rāvaṇa, whom he "justifiably" destroyed in an heroic manner.¹⁴

Jaina commitment to ahiṃsā and a desire for a peaceful world may be measured by the following lines from the religion's most solemn prayer which every Jaina hopes to uphold while breathing his or her last moments of life:

khāmemi savva-jīve, savve jīvā khamantu me/
metti me savva-bhūesu, veraṃ majjha na keṇavi//¹⁵
(I ask pardon of all creatures, may all of them pardon me.
May I have friendship with all beings and enmity with none.)*

¹³This perspective, however, does allow the Jaina to sacrifice his own life in order to guard and nurture his soul. This is technically known as *sallekhanā*, literally meaning "thinning one's own body and passions." The basic justification for *sallekhanā* is that a person who has conscientiously led a holy life has earned the right to die in peace in full possession of his faculties, without any attachment, including attachment to his own body. In this way, the soul may remain unaffected by the injuries (hiṃsā) inflicted upon it by attachment and aversion and may meet its corporeal death in perfect peace with itself and the world. For further discussion about *sallekhanā*, see P. S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*, op. cit., pp. 227-233.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.314, fn 62.

¹⁵ Quoted from *Pratikramaṇa sūtra*, 49, in R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 207.

*The above is excerpted from "Ahiṃsā: A Jaina Way of Spiritual Discipline," published in *Collected Papers on Jaina Studies* by P.S. Jaini (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000).

Nonviolence for All

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When I was an eighteen year old Jain monk, I read the autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi. I felt that as a monk I was concerned with personal nonviolence. But Gandhi had made personal nonviolence go a bit further and extended it into social, political and ecological nonviolence. Of course the roots of social, political, and ecological nonviolence are all there in the Jain philosophy. But in practice we Jains have become too centered on personal nonviolence. Influenced by Gandhi, I wanted to extend nonviolence in to social, political and ecological spheres. So I remain a Jain, although no longer a monk and I continue my quest on the path of holistic nonviolence. I do so because I believe that the Jain philosophy is dynamic rather than static dogma.

My life as a monk was only a beginning, not the end of the journey. For example, you put a small seedling in a little container because a small seedling cannot withstand the cold weather, the wind, and the storm outside in the fields. So as a good gardener you put the seedling in a small pot. When the seedling becomes a big and strong plant then you need to put the plant in the field to become a tree. If you always keep the plant in the pot, it will never become a full tree. May be it will remain as a bonsai tree but if you want a dynamic and natural tree you have to put the seedling out in the field.

I am deeply grateful to my Guru and teacher, ācārya Tulsī. The foundation of my life was laid out by him under a protective

and secure environment. From him I learned the basic principles of Jainism. But then an urge came into my heart and I felt it was time to go in the wilderness—go out in the field and out of that beautiful, secure, loving, caring and protective environment of the monastic order.

A Jain monk is called a "*muni*." The word "*muni*" means a person who keeps *maunam* or silence. It is believed that when Mahāvīra gave his first sermon sitting under the tree, he sat in silence. Animals, birds, angels and humans – all came for this great event, and they all understood the message of Mahāvīra in their own language. Mahāvīra was not using any words since he was the "*mahāmuni*." So *munis* keep silence and communicate their message through living and through setting example. The lay people, in Jain tradition, are called *Śrāvakas* (male) and *Śrāvikas* (female). The word "*Śrāvaka*" means a person who listens. Isn't this a wonderful situation: the teacher is silent and the student is listening. So, when we go for *darśana* of our guru, we don't have to talk to him, we just go to see him. *Darśana* means seeing – not merely through the two eyes which see things superficially but seeing through the eye of the heart, the eye of imagination, which we call the "third eye." We go to the temple for *darśana* and sit there in the presence of the sacred image. This is one of the finest examples of nonviolence where even words are unnecessary, because there is risk that the words could be misunderstood or may hurt someone.

As a *muni* you keep a *mukhapattikā* (a cloth strip covering the mouth). This is to remind you that you need to speak only when you must, speak as little as you can, and think three times what you want to say and speak only if it is appropriate. Or your words may fall on a barren ground. You do this because you want to avoid violence, and the worst kind of violence is the violence of speech. The language of the politicians is often violent. Such language causes wars. Wars start in our minds and in our speech. Only later we send the big bombers to the battlefields. So politicians should learn to practice silence, and they should learn

what to speak, how to speak and when to speak. This is a great contribution of Jain religion to the world.

I am reminded of a story. One day the Mughal emperor Akbar asked his prime minister, Birbal, What is the sweetest thing in the world? Birbal replied: My lord, words are the sweetest and the words are the bitterest. Akbar did not believe this. How can words be sweet or bitter, he thought and dismissed the idea. A few days later, to prove his point, Birbal invited the empress for dinner at his house. When she was leaving his house, after a sumptuous dinner, Birbal instructed his servants to clean off after the queen, using swear words and bad language. The empress overheard the words of insult and was shocked to learn that Birbal thought of her in such a negative way. She felt deeply wounded. When she returned to her palace she complained to the emperor about the abusive incident. This was very hard for the emperor to believe. The next day, he summoned the prime minister. When Birbal arrived, Akbar asked him: How dare you insult my wife using swear words? Birbal replied: My lord, you said words are neither sweet nor bitter, so how can they cause harm or discomfort? How can words hurt the empress?

Nonviolence, therefore, begins with our words and in our minds. The words are the first external expression of our thoughts. When we write books and articles we are told that we should be honest and critical. We should say what we think of other people and their works. But in the Jain tradition we think otherwise. We put nonviolence of thought and speech on top of our practice. If you want to practice nonviolence in your family, with your colleagues or business associates then making the use of appropriate language would be a good start. Imagine the violence language can cause. The breakups of marriages leading to bitter court cases always start with violent language. If we examine carefully, we will find that all quarrels are rooted in the breakdown of communication and/or use of abusive language. Therefore, if we can practice nonviolence of speech, then many of our family quarrels, disputes among nations and conflicts among parties and religious sects will be considerably reduced, if not

disappear altogether. So let us practice nonviolence in our speech: speak less, think what we are going to say, and how we are going to say it. This may be the first step toward a nonviolent world order.

I speak about nonviolence because I personally witnessed the events of September 11, 2001. That evening I was due to give a public lecture in New York Open Center. I was staying close to the twin towers of the World Trade Center in Greenwich Village. That morning I was woken up by the loud noise of emergency vehicles. We could not figure out what was going on. Then we got a call from my friend's wife asking us to put the television on, which we did. We could not believe what we saw on the television screen. So we went outside. We were only a 10-15 blocks from the location. As we stood there on the Seventh Avenue, we saw a plane come over the second tower, went around the tower and then pierced through it. We were shocked. Lots of people gathered on the street. The traffic stopped. We were all speechless. People were hugging each other. We saw people jumping off from the windows of the twin towers. A few minutes later, we saw the two towers collapse. I went to the Open Center that afternoon. Of course the meeting was cancelled. We decided to put a notice outside as a gesture of nonviolence. The notice invited those who needed help or counseling. About 25 people came and we talked.

I tell you this story in the context of nonviolence. As a Jain, who has dedicated his whole life to nonviolence. First as a monk, and later going around the world for peace, walking like a Jain monk from India to America without a penny – totally without money. Just going from door to door and village to village and depending on the goodwill and hospitality of the people. I walked, along with a friend, about 8000 miles to promote the principles of nonviolence. Then witnessing the criminal violence of September 11 was devastating. You can imagine my situation. My entire body was saturated with feelings of nonviolence. Seeing such catastrophe made nonviolence even more urgent. I feel that September 11 has changed or should change our lives.

The question is, In what ways are we going to change? Are we going to create a culture of nonviolence where violence, attack, wars and killings become a taboo, and where we are never prepared to take the route of violence?

If we analyze history, we will recognize the fact that events are never isolated. September 11 did not happen out of the blue, without any cause or reason. Why this happened here? Are there seeds of this event in the Gulf war or in some other war? America is the most powerful country in the world. It is now the only Super Power. America is strong not just militarily but also financially. America is also blessed with intelligence and cultures, with science and technology, with literature and poetry. There is so much wisdom in this country. America is also blessed with tremendous landscape: forests, desserts, animals, flowers, rivers and mountains. What a wonderful country it is. Can this country show a new way? Can America show the way of nonviolence? Remember, nonviolence is the way of the brave and the strong, not of the cowards and the weak.

America cannot stand alone. We have to move from “I” to “Us” and “Me” to “We.” We live in the same one world, on the same planet Earth – our home. If ever there was an urgent message it is the message of one earth. If Americans were to stand together with the world, then we can create a beautiful world, a world without violence.

We must recognize that hunger is also violence, starvation is also violence. If people are dying of starvation, the world cannot be at peace. In Jain tradition we say there are 8.4 million species (*Jiva yoni*). We humans on this earth are only one of the 8.4 million species. This is the humility of the Jains. The 8.4 million species minus the humans live and die, and they never try to wage wars. Therefore, we have to thank them. We humans wage wars, not they. Elephants, snakes, tigers or any of the other 8.4 million species except humans, have never produced the nuclear bomb. So we must be humble. We must try not to be too clever. Our cleverness may be our weakness. Our humility may be our strength.

Jain tradition is a non-dualistic tradition. We are all connected and we stand together in relation to one another. We cannot exist by ourselves. So America and rest of the world cannot stay separate. "The West and the Rest" has been the slogan of some western thinkers, business leaders and politicians. The superior West and the inferior rest. They are trying to globalize western values: everyone must drink coca cola, eat MacDonald's, wear blue jeans, watch Hollywood films showing naked bodies in the bed with sex scenes and then tell a Muslim that this is the culture of liberty which you should be adopting. This is not the globalization we want. What we do want is the globalization of love, of nonviolence, of peace.

The title of my new book is "You are therefore I am." This is in contrast to Rene Descartes, the French philosopher, who said: "I think, therefore, I am." "I" not "We." I think in my head in isolation and therefore I am. So America stands alone. My family stands alone. I stand alone. This is the cult of individualism. It is this cult which gives birth to consumerism and selfishness.

In nonviolence we all live together and depend on each other. When we are violent to others, we are violent to ourselves. When we are attacking others, we are attacking ourselves. Nonviolence is not a matter of convenience. I will talk to my friend – but can I talk to my enemy? Can I listen to people who are in disagreement with me? Can I ask them, Why are you so angry? What have I done to you my brothers and sisters that you are ready to kill yourself? Have I damaged you in anyway? Have I offended you? It is very easy for a strong country like the United States to go and bomb a weak country. But talking to an enemy requires real strength and courage.

In the Jain tradition we have a figure of Mahabahu, who is regarded great symbol of power and strength. He was fighting with his brother Bharat with a sword. So angry was he that he lifted his arm with the naked sword to kill Bharat. Then he paused and asked himself, What am I doing? Is this my real strength? What satisfaction will this give me? Then and there he

stopped. He killed his ego and anger instead of killing his brother. He removed hair from his head and renounced the world. The event transformed his life. Near Bangalore there is a big statue of Bahubali. We should celebrate his legacy of great courage not to kill but to overcome ego and anger.

Mahāvīra is a super example of nonviolence. He grew up as a prince. He had all the power, wealth and comfort. But he decided to leave these behind and go with a begging bowl. There is a great message in this renunciation of power and affluence for us and for the world. The modern democracies encourage us to seek power. It is believed that only through acquisition of political power we can help others. Therefore, individuals and parties spend millions of dollars to gain power. But Mahāvīra was born to rule. He was given the opportunity to do good by governing and controlling others. Yet, he renounced power, wealth and the material world. Goodness, virtues, service, compassion and peace cannot be imposed from top down. These qualities have to grow from the bottom of our hearts, every one's hearts. So Mahāvīra advocated spiritual democracy. He worked for social change through personal purification and transformation of the soul. By renouncing political power he gained spiritual power. There is a powerful lesson here for modern democracies which have become power hungry and corrupt. So much is their concern for power that it must be maintained at any cost and defended with weapons of mass destruction and other violent means. Mahāvīra teaches us to serve rather than to rule.

Now the Jains need to wake up. We have been sleeping for too long and keeping nonviolence to ourselves as if it is too precious so keep it confined. We need to communicate the message of nonviolence actively in political, social, ecological domains. In Jain tradition, *ahimsā* (nonviolence) and *anekānta* (multiple truths) go together, like two legs of a human being. There is no one truth but many truths. It is like the great garden of Eden, the humanity and the world are diverse—we have the black people, the white people, the yellow people, the dancing

people, the singing people, the tall people, and the small people. Similarly, there are other living beings who walk, crawl, swim or fly. This is biodiversity. Twenty-six centuries ago, Mahāvīra celebrated the diversity of life—diversity of truths and diversity of philosophy. We must not narrow it down in some kind of dogmatic ideology.

Let us move forward. Let us see how *ahiṃsā* and *anekānta* can be a guiding principles for the twenty-first century, not just a luxury for the few, but guiding principles for all.

Mahāvīra, Anekāntavāda, and the World Today

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The canonical literature (*Āgama*) of the Jains is the primary source for the teachings and philosophy of Mahāvīra following his attainment of *kevalya* (infinite knowledge). One of the forms in which Mahāvīra's teachings and philosophical insights are presented in the *Āgama* is his response to the questions frequently posed to him by his disciples, mendicants and the householders. A series of such questions and responses appearing in the *Bhagvatī Sūtra* later on became the basis for the evolution of what has come to be known as *anekāntavāda* (the Jain doctrine of many-sided reality).¹ Take for instance Mahāvīra's responses to the following questions posed by Indrabhūti Gautam—one of the twelve *Gaṇadharas* and the principal disciple of Mahāvīra; Jayanti—a devoted and inquisitive śrāvikā and sister of King Shatānika; and Somil—a dedicated and learned śrāvaka.

Gautam: Is the soul permanent or impermanent?

Mahāvīra: The soul is permanent as well as impermanent. It is permanent with respect to its substance (*dravya*), which is

¹ The word "Anekānta" was not used by Mahāvīra and does not appear in the *Āgamas*. Siddhasena Divākara may have been the first Jain ācārya to use this word. See Ācārya Mahāprajña, *Anekānta: Reflections and Clarifications* (Ladnun: JVBI, 2001), p. 9.

eternal. It is impermanent with respect to its modes (*paryāya*) or forms which originate and vanish.²

Jayanti: Of the states of slumber and awakening, which is desirable or better?

Mahāvīra: For some souls, the state of slumber is better, for others the state of awakening. Slumber is better for those who are constantly engaged in sinful activities, and awakening or consciousness for those who are engaged in meritorious deeds.³

Somil: Are you one or many?

Mahāvīra: I am one, two as well as many. I am one in respect of substance. However in respect of knowledge and intuition, I am two. I am many in respect of ever-changing states of consciousness.⁴

Several thousand questions were asked of Mahāvīra. Questions pertained not only to the nature of soul (*jīva*), but also to the nature of matter (*ajīva*). Take for instance the following.

Gautam: Is the nature of matter eternal or changing?

Mahāvīra: It is eternal as well as changing. From the perspective of substance, it is unchanging and eternal. From the perspective of its attributes and modes it is constantly changing as manifested by the different colors, smells, tastes, etc.⁵

Gautam: Does being change into being? Does non-being change into non-being?

Mahāvīra: Exactly so.

Gautam: Does such a change occur owing to some effort or spontaneously?

² *Bhagavati Sūtra* (Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati, 1994): 7/58, 59.

³ *Bhagavati Sūtra*, *op. cit.*, 12/53, 54.

⁴ *Bhagavati Sūtra*, *op. cit.*, 14/4/3.

⁵ *Bhagavati Sūtra*, *op. cit.*, 19/219, 220.

Mahāvīra: It is effected by effort and also occurs spontaneously.⁶

What do we learn from the above conversations, especially from Mahāvīra's responses to the various questions? Through his responses, Mahāvīra demonstrated the complex and multiple aspects of reality. A definitive or a simple response of choosing the "either" "or" would not have allowed him to explain the complex nature of reality with many sides to its existence. As an omniscient being--with infinite knowledge at his disposal--Mahāvīra recognized that truth or reality can be experienced but cannot be expressed in its entirety through the medium of language. Moreover, it is important to note that Mahāvīra did not propound the truth. Rather, he was interpreting it through his infinite knowledge and omniscience. Even the *kevalīn* or omniscient do not have the capacity to express in words the reality in its myriad dimensions due to the limits of language. Elsewhere, Mahāvīra underscored this fact, "Where there is truth, from there language returns, neither intellect, nor thoughts nor even the mind goes there."⁷ For example, we can experience the sweetness of sugar, but we cannot totally express the sweetness through language.

While operating within the limits of language and seeing the complex nature of reality with its multiple aspects, Mahāvīra used the language of *naya*. *Naya* (partial expression of truth) enables us to comprehend the reality part by part. There are two kinds of *naya*—*nīśchaya naya* and *vyavahāra naya*. *nīśchaya naya* enables us to understand the reality from the view-point of the substance without denying the existence of modes. *vyavahāra naya* allows us to comprehend the reality from the perspective of its attributes and modes but doesn't deny the existence of

⁶ *Bhagavati Sūtra*, op. cit., quoted from Ācārya Mahāprajña, *Anekānta: Views and Issues* (Ladnun: JVBI, 2001), p. 21.

⁷ *Savve sarā nīyattanti! Takka Jatha na vijjayi! Mayi tattha na gahiya! Ayāro Sūtra* (Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharti, 1981): 5/123-125.

substance. Take for instance a gold necklace. From the perspective of *nīśchaya naya*, it is matter in the form of gold. From the perspective of *vyavahāra naya*, it is a necklace. Both statements are true because relative to the necklace, gold is the substance and necklace is its mode. However, from the perspective of substance the gold necklace is matter and gold is its mode. Therefore, to have an overall view of reality it is essential to understand the co-existence of both the *nayas*. In other words, to recognize the many facets of the reality we must consider it both in terms of the eternal and unchanging substance and in terms of modes which are infinite, transient and changing. Thus, reality is both permanent and changing.

The millennium following Mahāvīra was known as the age of canonical texts and literature. This was followed by a period of philosophical writings during which Jain ācāryas felt a serious need to construct new terminology for explaining the significance of the *nayas* to contemporary world. In large part such an initiative was inspired by the necessities of the time, which was characterized by ongoing philosophical and logical debates about the nature of reality often giving rise to competition and engendering conflicts among the debaters. In such an environment, major Indic traditions attempted to explain the efficacy and validity of their own points of views about the nature of reality. For example, Vedantins accepted that Brahman is absolutely unchangeable and eternal whereas *māyā* is unreal and changing. According to Buddhists, whatever is real is momentary, just as the cloud. Nothing is permanent. So according to the Vedantins, the Buddhists were wrong, and vice versa.

During the first century of the Common Era, Ācārya Umāsvātī (also known as Umāsvāmī) undertook the task of defining the reality in the *Tattvārtha Sūtra* (*That Which Is*) on the basis of Mahāvīra’s teachings. He articulated three levels for the

understanding of reality: permanence, origination, and cessation.⁸ Advancing on this idea further, Ācārya Siddhasena Divākara came up with the new terminology, *anekanta*, to help reconcile the apparently opposing perspectives on the nature of truth and reality. He connected this with Bhagavāna Mahāvira's conversations with his disciples in the *Bhagvatī Sūtra*. His major works on the explanation of *anekānta* and *naya*, which continue to inspire Jain practitioners and scholars today, are *Sanmati Tarka* and *Nyayāvātara*. In these magnificent treatises, he provides a critical assessment of several systems of thought with references to different *nyayas*. He observed, "I bow to Anekāntavāda because without this we cannot understand the reality."⁹

The term *anekānta* consists of two words "*anek*" (more than one) and "*anta*" (qualities, attribute or ends). When we say that an object has infinite attributes, we are actually saying that an object is capable of undergoing infinite modifications. *Anekānta* signifies the interdependence of substance and modes.¹⁰ It is not possible to have the existence of only substance or only mode. Reality is made up of both substance and mode, permanence and change. Therefore, every mode is as much a part of reality as the substance is. Thus substance and modes cannot be separated from one another. In fact, the two cannot exist without one another.¹¹ Modes and qualities reside in substance and we recognize the substance because of its qualities and modes. *Anekāntavāda* allows us to overcome the apparent internal contradictions between eternal and non-eternal, substance and mode and helps us recognize their interdependence on one

⁸ "utpāda-vyaya-dhauvyayktaṃ sat" Tattvārtha Sūtra 5/29. (Gujarat: Sri Jain Sahitya Samati, 1977).

⁹ Sanmati Tarka, 3/69 (Bhartiya Gyan Peeth, 1971).

¹⁰ Sanmati Tarka, 1/14, op. cit.

¹¹ Sanmati Tarka, 1/12, op. cit.

another for existence. Ācārya Umāsvāmī, Siddhasen Divākara, Śāmantabhadra and Akalaṅka were some of the pioneers in the application of the *nayas* to the different philosophical problems of their time. Subsequently, this process was carried further by many ācāryas, including Vidyānandin, Haribhadra, Mānikyanandin, Vālideva sūri and Hemachandra.

The application of *anekāntavāda* to our day-to-day life can allow us to reconcile the multiple views of reality. At any given point of time, it is not possible to explain or express the infinite attributes and modes that an existent (*sat*) has. Following Mahāvīra, Jain ācāryas used the language of "*syat*." The word "*syat*" is not an expression of doubt or skepticism. Rather, it stands for multiplicity or multiple possibilities.¹² It allows us to logically express or determine the nature of modes from different perspectives. That is why the term *syādvāda* includes the manifestation of the substance and modes in conditional dialectic form. The format of conditional dialectic is three dimensional- existence, non-existence, inexpressible. For example, X is X from the perspective of its own existence. X is not Y from the perspective of Y's existence. Y's existence shows X's non-existence. Now if we have to talk about X's existence and non-existence simultaneously, then we have to use the expression "inexpressible." It shows that existence and non-existence are both real but it is not possible to express them together. Ācārya Akalaṅka held that an affirmation of one's own nature and the denial of alien nature are very essential to recognize and understand every individual's existence. Such an approach helps us to recognize the other individual from the point of his or her nature. This perspective is central to *anekānta* which enables us to understand reality in a deeper sense--the same person has his/her own existence and non-existence on behalf of his/her multitude qualities. For instance, a person who is a good teacher is also a good piano player. When he is teaching

¹² See Akalaṅka, *Tattvārtharājavārtika*, 4/42 (Bhartiya Gyan Peeth, 1999).

the class he is a teacher not a musician but when he plays his piano he is a musician but not a teacher. However, a person has many qualities but it is not possible to identify and express all the qualities at the same time. At any given time, one specific quality becomes primary and rest are considered secondary. Therefore, existence (being) and non-existence (not being) are often comprehended in terms of their varying and changing qualities.

According to Jaina philosophy no new substance will originate and no substance will terminate completely. In the beginning less and endless notion of time, there are infinite substances undergoing infinite modes. Substances goes through constant change. What we see with the naked eye are multifacets of modes that a substance undergoes. Therefore, reality cannot be expressed in just one way (*ekānta*) there are multiple aspects to it. The application of the philosophy of *anekānta* enables us to understand the various dimensions of truth, to reconcile sometimes seemingly contradictory views, and facilitates an attitude of respect for other peoples' point of views.

Today we live in a world which is highly diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, culture and language. Similarly, peoples' approaches to understanding reality are very varied. The approach aided by *anekānta* allows us to be more understanding of other peoples' views. Understanding, however, does not always mean agreeing or compromising with one's own values and beliefs. Therefore, an *anekāntika* (a person who recognizes multiple aspects of reality) is by nature more tolerant than *ekāntika* (a person who understands reality from only one perspective and sees things in an absolutist way) individual and is able to maintain his or her values. Imagine the impact of the philosophy of *anekanta* on the world we live in today. If all people begin to show tolerance for other people's views (even if they do not agree with them), the possibility of conflicts will reduce, tensions will not occur, and wars may be avoided.

The very recognition of and respect for others will help us envision and create a nonviolent world order. To conclude with

the view of Ācārya Mahāprajña, *anekānta* is not only a philosophy but also a manual for good life.¹³ Such an approach to reality encourages us to keep our minds open, and discourages us from adopting an absolutist thinking. This in turn helps us in overcoming the egotistic thoughts which usually originate in an environment where one considers one’s view superior to those of others. An approach imbued with *anekāntavāda* spawns tolerance, equanimity, fraternity, love and compassion—all essential for a nonviolent world order. Thus, in this sense, *anekānta* is also an essential precondition of *ahiṃsā*. Conversely, a person of compassion and nonviolence alone can practice *anekāntavāda*. In the latter sense then, *ahiṃsā* becomes a precondition for *anekāntavāda*. The application of the philosophy of *anekānta* to the larger world will help us advance toward a peaceful, harmonious, and nonviolent world. Such attitude will certainly decrease enmity toward others and promote increasing degree of amity among human beings.

¹³ Ācārya Mahāprajña, *Anekānta –The Third Eye* (Ladnun: JVBI, 2001).

Why is Anekāntavāda Important?

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As the events of September 11, 2001 so tragically attest, we live at a time in global history when violence threatens to destroy all life on our planet. If we are to prevent violence from destroying ourselves and our whole world, it is imperative that we seek nonviolent solutions to our problems. From a Jain perspective, the threat to life that we face arises from a faulty epistemology and metaphysics as much as from faulty ethics. The moral failure to respect the life of others, including life forms other than human, is rooted in dogmatic but mistaken knowledge claims that fail to recognize other legitimate perspectives. Such one-sided perspectives result in destructive actions and violent behaviors. Because existence itself is complex, subtle and many-sided, unless the knowledge on which our actions are based reflects this many-sidedness of reality it will produce actions that are destructive of existence. As Umāsvāti noted, “A person with a deluded world-view is like an insane person who follows arbitrary whims and cannot distinguish true from false.”¹

The most important underlying philosophical question about preventing violence, according to Jainism is, how are we to avoid the destructive violence that results from courses of action based on one-sided ideological dogmatism? The ideological dogmatism underlying violence is grounded in knowledge claims that,

¹ Umāsvāti, *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, 1.33. See Nathmal Tatia (ed. & trans.), *That Which Is* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 23.

though limited and only partially true, are mistaken for absolute truth. Therefore, to avoid violence, one key step is to find an alternative theory of knowledge, an epistemology, that can support dialogue and negotiation among people of diverse perspectives and claims. Such an epistemology, that includes the truths of multiple perspectives, is made possible by the Jain philosophy of *anekāntavāda* (non-absolutism).²

Recognizing that everything can be known from variety of perspectives leads naturally to a more balanced and less dogmatic understanding of reality. This understanding encompasses the insight that other beings are not 'other' to themselves; that they are themselves just as much as we are ourselves. It is this insight that enables us to see the 'other' on its own terms, from its own side, rather than as merely the 'other' that is opposed to us. And this ability to see the other person as no longer the 'other,' but as identical to our own self, underlies the capacity for empathy and sympathy with the other that operationalizes *ahiṃsā*. Because one-sided, fanatical views, especially when joined to political ideologies, lead to terrible violence, commitment to *ahiṃsā* requires epistemological respect for all points of view. This respect, based on the *anekāntika* nature of reality itself, allows dialogue and reconciliation in the quest for truth, a quest that makes it possible for holders of false views to see for themselves the falsity of their views. Perhaps, this is why Umāsvāti introduces his classic work explaining Jain philosophy with the words: "The enlightened world-view, enlightened knowledge, and enlightened conduct are the path to liberation."³

Because enlightened conduct is the way of nonviolence or *ahiṃsā* and because the latter is implied by *anekāntavāda*, it is

² For a fuller discussion of ecological applications of Jain metaphysical and epistemological view, see John M. Koller, "Jain Ecological Perspectives," in Christopher Key Chapple (ed.), *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of life*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard university press, 2002) pp. 19-34.

³ Umāsvāti, *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, 1.1, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

important to first discuss briefly the principle of *ahimsā*. The term *ahimsā* is negative, but the principle is entirely positive. *Ahimsā* embodies the realization that all life belongs to the same global family and that to hurt others is to destroy the community of life, the basis of all sacredness. Thus, *ahimsā* requires not only that we avoid hurting other living beings, but that we must endeavor to help each other.⁴ Indeed, Umāsvāti defines the purpose of life-forms as helping each other: “Souls exist to provide service to each other.”⁵

Jainism embraces a very strict and far-reaching concept of *ahimsā*. Unlike others who claim that unless a person intended the violence which follows an act the person is not guilty of performing a violent act, the Jains claim that if an act produces violence, then that person is guilty of committing a violent act even if the violence was not intended. For example, if a monk unknowingly offers poisoned food to his brethren and they die from the poisoned food, in the Jain view the monk would be guilty of performing a violent act, but in the Buddhist view the monk would not be guilty. The crucial difference between the two views is that the Buddhist view excuses the act, categorizing it as non-intentional because the monk did not know that the food was poisoned, whereas the Jain view regards the act as intentional because the monk is responsible for his ignorance, and, therefore, for any act that follows from this ignorance. Thus, according to Jainism the moral imperative to practice *ahimsā* includes the requirement to remove the ignorance that prevents a person from seeing the violence embodied in his or her actions.

From a metaphysical perspective, Jainism can be viewed as transforming the principle of *ahimsā* embodied in the respect for the life of others, into epistemological respect for the views of

⁴ See John M. Koller, *Asian Philosophies*, (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), pp. 39—40. For a fuller discussion of the Jain view of life see also John M. Koller, *The Indian Way* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1982), pp. 108-132.

⁵ Umāsvāti, *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, 5.21. *op. cit.*, p. 131.

others, thereby establishing a basis for reconciling conflicting ideological claims. To see what "epistemological respect for the views of others" means we must first understand that *anekāntavāda* is essentially an ontological principle. It was developed to maintain the Jain view that substance--*jīva*(soul) and *ajīva*(matter)--are both eternal and changing.⁶ As a principle of non-dogmatism, *anekāntavāda* rejects both the view that existence is only inherently enduring, and the view that it is only constantly changing, because each of these views is *ekāntika* or one-sided, and, therefore, only partially true. However, *anekāntavāda* respects the partial truth in each view, and recognizes that when seen as partial truths, these views can be combined so that the point of view from which each is true is preserved.

"Epistemological respect for the views of others," however, is not relativism.⁷ It does not mean conceding that all arguments and all views are equal. It means that logic and evidence determine which views are true in what respect and to what extent. It does not mean that Jain thinkers who were committed to the truth of the Jain view could not, as scholars, be committed to explaining and defending their view by means of argument. In fact, it allows Jain thinkers to maintain the correctness of their own view, to recognize the inferiority of other views, and to criticize both their own views and other views in terms of their weaknesses, but to do so respectfully, recognizing their partial correctness. This is a middle way between absolutism and relativism, allowing Jain thinkers, in the words of Christopher Chapple, to maintain an "outlook toward the ideas of others [that] combines tolerance with a certainty in and commitment to

⁶ This can be shown, at least in part, by tracing the development of *anekāntavāda* out of the earlier method of analysis and resolution called *vibhāṅgyavāda*, as I have done in a forthcoming paper entitled "*Avyakata* and *Vibhāṅja* in Early Buddhism and Jainism." Forthcoming in the Lund University Conference Volume on "Early Buddhism and Jainism."

⁷ See Jayendra Soni, "Philosophical Significance of the Jaina Theory of Manifolddness," in *Studien Zu Interkulturellen Philosophie*, Vol. 7, p. 285.

Jaina cosmological and ethical views.”⁸ For example, Haribhadra showed “remarkable willingness to evaluate rival intellectual systems on the basis of their logical coherence alone.”⁹

How is epistemological respect for the views of other is established in Jainism? Most fundamentally it is through the use of the epistemological theory of viewpoints (*nayavāda*) and the sevenfold scheme (*saptabhaṅgī*) of qualified predication (*syādvāda*). *Nayavāda* recognizes that ordinary, non-omniscient, knowledge claims are always limited by the particular standpoint on which they are based. Consequently, claims from one perspective must always be balanced and complemented by claims from other perspectives. *Syādvāda* recognizes that all knowledge claims need to be qualified in various ways because of the many-sidedness of reality and the limitations of any given standpoints of knowledge.

Let us first turn to the following questions: What are the *nayas*? How do they contribute to the reconciliation of opposing viewpoints in the search for truth? The *nayas* or standpoints may be thought of as different points of view taken by someone searching for the truth. According to Akalaṅka, in the *Sanmati Tarka*, the standpoints are the presuppositions of inquirers, embodying the points of view from which they are investigating the thing in question.¹⁰ In ordinary cognition, as opposed to omniscient cognition, the knower necessarily sees the thing from a particular point of view. Consequently, the nature of the thing that is revealed to him is necessarily conditioned and limited by this particular point of view, enabling him to have only partial, incomplete knowledge of it. As Siddhasena says: “Since a thing has manifold character, it is [fully] comprehended [only] by the

⁸ Christopher Key Chapple, *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 85.

⁹ Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 196.

¹⁰ Akalaṅka, *Sanmati Tarka*, 3.47. Edited by S. Sanhhavi and B Doshi. Ahmedabad: Gujarat Paratattva Mandira Granthavali, 1924-31.

omniscient. But a thing becomes the subject matter of a *naya*, when it is conceived from one particular standpoint."¹¹ Thus, the *nyayas* serve to categorize the different points of view from which reality might be investigated. *Nayavāda* also encourages investigators to assume other perspectives, including the important perspective of the other as a persisting, but constantly changing, entity entitled to the same respect for life and happiness as oneself. For example, when one assumes the perspectives of other life-forms, such as animals or plants, it is possible to see and feel their connectedness to us and to feel their suffering when they are injured. Knowing how much like us they are and knowing that they are as dependent on their environment as we are, we have incentive to not injure them and to not destroy them or their environment.

With regard to the number and character of standpoints from which something may be investigated, it is generally agreed that although theoretically there are an unlimited number of them, two opposing standpoints are fundamental. On the one hand, things can be viewed in terms of their substantial being, emphasizing their self-identity, permanence and essential nature. This standpoint regards *sameness* as fundamental. As an extreme view, it is exemplified by the *Advaita* teaching that Brahman alone is truly real. On the other hand, things can be viewed in terms of process, emphasizing the changes that they undergo. This standpoint emphasizes *difference*. In its extreme form it is exemplified by the Buddhist teaching of interdependent co-arising (*pratitya samutpāda*) as the nature of existence, a teaching that insists that everything is selfless (*anātman*) and impermanent (*anitya*).

When the differences within each of the two fundamental standpoints of sameness and difference are taken into account we get the standard set of seven standpoints, namely: the ordinary, or undifferentiated; the general; the practical; the clearly manifest; the verbal; the subtle; and the "thus-happened." The first three,

¹¹ Siddhasena, *Nyayavatara*, 29. Edited by A.N. Upadhye. Bombay: Jaina Sahitya Vikas Mandal, 1971.

the undifferentiated, the general, and the practical, are standpoints from which to investigate the thing itself, as a substance, whereas the remaining four are standpoints from which to investigate the modifications that things undergo.¹²

Thus, we see that each *naya* or standpoint allows the investigator only a partial and, therefore, limited view of the object in question. The principal value of recognizing that a *naya* affords only a partial view of the object is that it enables one to distinguish between the limited view that results from a *naya* and the genuine knowledge that a valid means of knowledge, a *pramāṇa*, provides. This distinction, in turn, makes it possible to recognize when knowledge claims are excessive or one-sided (*ekāntika*) because they confuse a *naya* with a *pramāṇa*. As one perceives the object from a combination of standpoints one comes closer to seeing the object as it really is. But only by seeing it from all standpoints would one actually attain the kind of valid cognition that *pramāṇas* alone can provide.

Let us now turn to the question, What is meant by *Syādvāda*? *Syādvāda* is so named because it embodies a theory about how the logical operator “*syāt*” is used in all the seven varieties of a particular predication. To understand the philosophical use of *syāt* we must distinguish between its ordinary use and its logical function in Jain epistemology. In ordinary Sanskrit, “*syāt*” is often used to mean “maybe,” as an alternative lying between “yes” or “no,” both of which are rejected as an appropriate answer to a question. Thus, in its ordinary usage, “*syāt*” transforms a categorical statement into a conditional statement. But the Jains used this particle in a very special epistemological sense to indicate the many-sided nature of a proposition. The uniqueness of the Jain approach to an epistemological middle way lies in its use of the “*syāt*” particle in predication. Indeed, this uniqueness is why the seven-fold

¹² For a detailed discussion of the seven *nayas*, see John M. Koller, “*Syadvāda* as the Epistemological Key to the Jaina Middle Way Metaphysics of *Anekāntavāda*,” in *Philosophy East and West* (Volume 50, Number 3, July 2000):400-407, pp. 401-403.

predication is called *syādvāda*. Its epistemological use transforms an unqualified categorical statement not into a conditional statement, but into a qualified categorical statement. Thus, "*syāt*" encapsulates the appropriate conditions that qualify a given statement, enabling the categorical statement thus qualified to have a truth value determined in accord with its correspondence with what is actually the case.

Since becoming is the negation, the "is-not" of being, and since being is the negation, the "is-not" of becoming, Jain logic insisted on the middle ground between the extremes of "is" and "is not" in order to predicate both being and becoming of the same existent. Maintaining this middle ground led to the Jain development of *syādvāda*, a theory of predication that recognizes not only the predicates "is," and "is not," but also the predicate "inexpressible," a predicate that combines "is" and "is not."

Combining the theory of standpoints or *nayas* with the above three predicates leads to the famous seven-fold template for expressing important claims. These seven forms of predication as qualified by the expression "*syāt*" are also referred to as the *saptabhangi*, explicitly identifying *syādvāda* with the seven-fold formula of qualified predication. Although Umāsvāti and other early thinkers do not refer to this point, the later Jain philosophers agreed that all important philosophical statements should be expressed in this seven-fold way in order to remove the danger of dogmatism (*ekāntavāda*) in philosophy.

Of the seven-fold predication, we see that the four basic forms of predication are those of affirmation, denial, joint but successive affirmation and denial, and joint and simultaneous affirmation and denial. The third form of predication allows statements about things that change, for before something arises it does not exist, but after it has arisen it does exist, and after it has decayed it will again not exist. But this third form is not really a unique form of predication, for it merely first predicates "is," and then, later, predicates "is not," thus simply successively affirming and denying the same predicate. The fourth form of predication is called "inexpressible," because there is no way that language can

adequately express simultaneous affirmation and negation. But because the fourth form is neither affirmation nor denial it constitutes a distinctly third kind of predicate, different from either affirmation or denial.

From these three primary predicates, affirmation, denial and inexpressible, the seven-fold formula of predication is easily reached by using each of these three predicates units either by itself, or in combination with one of the others, or in combination with both of the others.¹³ Taking the example of a pot the seven kinds of predication may be applied as follows:

1. Seen under certain conditions, the pot exists.
2. Seen under certain conditions, the pot does not exist.
3. Seen under certain conditions, the pot exists but seen under certain (other) conditions, the pot does not exist.
4. Seen under certain conditions, the pot is inexpressible.
5. Seen under certain conditions, the pot both exists and is inexpressible.
6. Seen under certain conditions, the pot both does not exist and is inexpressible.
7. Seen under certain conditions, the pot exists, does not exist, and is also inexpressible.

As we have noted, the first two kinds of predication in the above formula, affirmation and denial, are unproblematic conditions of being able to describe things in ways that differentiate between them. The third kind, successive affirmation and denial, enables us to explain change in the sense of attributing contrary predicates, such as arising and decay to the same thing but at successive times.

The fourth kind of predication, the inexpressible, is both more problematic, and from the Jain perspective, more important. It is intended to reconcile what might appear to be exclusive, or contradictory, opposites, but which are, from the Jain perspective, merely partial, one-sided statements that from a higher perspective are actually complementary. For example, the

¹³ For a detailed discussion of the seven-fold predication, see Koller, “*Syādvāda* as the Epistemo-logical Key to the Jaina Middle Way,” *op. cit.*, pp. 403-406.

Advaitins deny the reality of change, giving it merely the status of *māyā*, while affirming only the reality of the unchanging Brahman/Ātman. On the other hand, the Buddhists deny the reality of the unchanging, declaring the unreality of Ātman (*anātman*) and affirms only the changing as real. From the Jain perspective, if there were no unchanging substance to undergo the modifications that involve arising, endurance, and decay, there could be no change. But since we experience change it cannot be denied that substances actually undergo change. Thus, in some way, both the Buddhists and the Advaitins must be right. Within the Advaitin's conceptual scheme, however, the Buddhists cannot be right because their contradictory claims are excluded by the claimed truth of the unchanging as the real. Similarly, from within the Buddhist conceptual scheme, the Advaitins cannot be right for their contradictory claims are excluded by the claimed truth of the changing as the real. Indeed, if taken at the same level and from the same perspective, even the Jains would see the Advaitin and Buddhist claims as contradictory and mutually exclusive. However, from the perspective of a higher, inclusive, level made possible by the ontology and epistemology of *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda*, their claims can be seen as *ekāntika*, or partially true, and therefore not mutually exclusive contradictory claims.

In conclusion, *Nayavāda* supports the metaphysical doctrine of *anekāntavāda* as a way of thinking about existence as simultaneously both being and becoming. It demonstrates how opposing views are one-sided and limited because they are based on only one, or a limited number of, standpoints. In this way the use of *nayas* help us in avoiding the one-sided errors of identifying existence with either the permanence and sameness of being on the one hand, or with the ever-changing process of becoming on the other. *Syādvāda* grounds and supports *anekāntavāda* in the sense that it explains how a statement about something that is permanent, remaining identical with itself over time, and that is simultaneously impermanent, becoming something else, can be true. *Syādvāda* is essentially a theory of predication

Thus, relying on the principles of *nayavāda* and *syādvāda*, *anekāntavāda* has the great potential to eliminate violent argument between ideological opponents by methodically both disarming and persuading them. Here we see the importance of *anekāntavāda* in fostering a sense of nonviolence or attempting to reduce violence. It is neither a thesis about skepticism or uncertainty nor a formulation of probability, but a thesis about non-exclusive predication based on the recognition that a given thing includes a potentially unlimited number of characteristics. It is, thus, a method of reconciling opposites, and making it attractive for persons holding opposing views to enter into dialogue and negotiate their differences, thus avoiding violent confrontation.

Anekānta, Ahimsā and the Question of Pluralism

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Jainism embraces the philosophy of *anekānta* as staunchly as it espouses the righteousness of ahimsā. *Anekānta* and ahimsā are customarily discussed in terms of how each presupposes the other. The acceptance of the partiality of knowledge is an expression of non-violence; and a commitment to non-violence necessitates a pluralistic outlook. The two are seen essentially as different aspects of the same ethical orientation. But can we treat ahimsā as a normative ethical ideal, and accept as morally just the view (and practice) of others who repudiate it? It has been argued that a truly pluralist approach is a logical impossibility--that some criteria of truth is essential to all worldviews. Pluralism, therefore, *becomes either a form of moral relativism, or another form of religious exclusivism.*¹ In this paper, I suggest the possibility that *anekānta* is a way out of this epistemological quagmire, and that a genuine pluralist view is possible without lapsing into extreme moral relativism or exclusivity.

An Experiment with Jain Pluralism

As I entered the western gates of the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute (JVBI), the spiritual base of the Terāpanthī Jains in India, there was a large sign post indicating the rules of conduct that must be observed while in the JVBI. Although these rules include

¹ Gavin D' Costa, "The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions," *Religious Studies*, 32 (June 1996): 223-232, quote from pp. 225-26.

matters of decorum (e.g., proper attire, no smoking), they are essentially guidelines for ahimsā. For instance, the consumption of meat and alcohol are strictly forbidden. These are not timid recommendations; they are unapologetic and uncompromising edicts rooted in a bold moral charter that upholds nonviolence as the highest ideal. And yet, despite this unambiguous ethical stance, I was immediately struck by the recognition given to other paths: placards with words of wisdom from other, non-Jain traditions are prominently displayed throughout the JVBI. For instance, next to the guest house where I stayed was a placard with a saying attributed to Jesus, emphasising the importance of humility in the context of charity. It read: “the left hand should not know what the right hand has given.”

Can one be a strong defender of one’s own beliefs and also accept as true other-ways-of-being, especially those that may be diametrically opposed? Critics of pluralism argue that such a thing is a logical impossibility; that to be consistently relativistic about knowledge claims would require one to be a relativist about one’s relativism, which rapidly leads to an epistemological dead end. Because of this, critics assert, whether or not we want to accept it, we are all essentially exclusivists; we cannot help but judge others by some criteria arising from our own worldview.²

The Jain doctrine of *anekānta* may, however, offer an alternative. It grants that epistemological neutrality is an impossibility for ordinary humans, but the doctrine does not require it. *Anekānta* does not predicate its pluralism on epistemological neutrality. Instead, it asserts that the holding of even an uncompromising position on truth (as Mahāvira did with respect to nonviolence) *can* coexist with a celebration of conceptual, philosophical and moral diversity.

The Raising of Lazarus: the Fall of Anekānta?

Soon after I arrived at the JVBI, for what would be a year’s sojourn, Gaṇādhīpati Gurudeva Tulsī (the ninth ācārya of the

² See G. D’Costa, “The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions,” *op. cit.*; and Nicholas Rescher, *Rationality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Terāpanthī order) assigned me the job of "Teacher of Christianity" for the *samaṇīs* (nuns). He explained that the nuns pursue studies in other branches of Indian philosophy at the JVBI, but that they know little of non-Indian faiths. He considered it important that they take this opportunity to learn. And so began our experiment with *anekāntavāda*.

A small group of *samaṇīs* and I began to meet thrice a week for our lesson. The first few weeks went smoothly. I talked about those things I knew best, focusing on Jewish and Christian history. The nuns were excellent students, eager to learn and curious about events with which they had little knowledge. I enjoyed our inter-religious dialogues and putting into practice the principles and pleasures of *anekānta*.

But soon the nuns grew weary of the focus on historical detail. Familiar with the narratives form of religious learning, they wanted to hear moral stories about the life and teachings of Jesus. It was here that I eventually came up against, what seemed at the time, intransigent hurdles to a pluralistic approach.

My repertoire of New Testament stories was sketchy. However, I selected those stories that I thought best resonated with the Jain vision of things: I told them about how Jesus helped the poor, the destitute, the outcasts. I recounted the time when he chided his community for condemning a prostitute, declaring that "only he who has not sinned should cast the first stone." I interpreted this narrative as a lesson in human frailty and humility; as a message about seeing all human beings as equal in the eyes of God. The nuns liked the story, and recounted parallel incidences of courage in the life of their leader. They explained that when he, too, challenged many social conventions, he likewise encountered resistance because of his radically egalitarian beliefs.

I continued with the story of Jesus' forty-day fast in the desert. This was a fortuitous choice. Even before I could suggest an interpretation, the nuns had formulated their own. "*Tapas*" (austerities), they said assuredly. While it was not quite the way a priest would explain it to his congregation, Jesus could also be

considered an ascetic in that he had few possessions and was celibate. I felt a sense of accomplishment. My ‘students’ were learning stories of another tradition that were meaningful to them.

My success, however, was short-lived. The nuns had heard bits and pieces of other stories and wanted to know their religious significance. In particular, two stories puzzled them: Of what religious significance were the stories of turning water into wine, and of raising a man from the dead? I considered these to be good questions. But other than the most obvious point of telling them that Jesus was special, that he was able to perform miracles, did the stories have spiritual significance?

“Well, let’s start with the story of Lazarus,” I said, “Lazarus was a beloved friend of Jesus who fell ill once when Jesus was away from his village. A message was sent for Jesus to return, but he received it too late. By the time he returned to the village, Lazarus had been dead for four days. Everyone in the village was distraught. Jesus went to the cave where Lazarus was buried, and called upon him to come out. To everyone’s astonishment, he emerged! Jesus had raised him from the dead.”

“But why? Why did Jesus bring him back to life?” a samaṇī asked.

“Jesus wanted to help the family that was suffering.” I answered.

“But everyone loses someone to death; why help *this* family,” the samaṇī duly persisted.

I had no profound answer for the nuns; but maintained my teacherly stance: “I believe he tried to help whoever was in need. This was a very tragic situation, and because he was able to help, he did.”

“But we all must die. This man, Lazarus, too must die, yes? So why help in a *physical* way? Why not help his soul? Or help his family to understand death?”

I had no answer. This had always struck me as an odd miracle, and I could not expound on its theological import.

“And the *wine* story?” another samaṇī asked, hoping I might better explain this one.

“Just as in the story of Lazarus, the most significant thing about the story is that it reveals Jesus to be unlike other men,” I waffled, “He was able to perform miracles. The fact that he could do these miraculous things is evidence, for Christians, of his divine status...”

“But if he was god, *why* would he do *that* miracle? Why not something more important?” one of the samāṇīs asked.

“And why just for one wedding party?” asked another.

I knew immediately that I was on less than solid ground when I tried to explain that alcohol was not prohibited, irreligious or *himsā* from within the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In fact, wine plays a significant role on special occasions in both Jewish and Christian celebrations. Then, when I added my own Epicurean interpretation of the significance of a blissful life, I had all but lost my audience. From a Jain point of view, the miraculously supplying of intoxicating beverages for a wedding party hardly seemed a pious narrative worthy of passing down from one generation to another for nearly two thousand years. In fact, the more we talked about it, the more ridiculous it appeared, and eventually we succumbed to a fit of laughter.

Rather than being an instrument for the glorification of *anekāntavāda*, I felt I was helping to undermine it. Rather than convincing the nuns that Christianity had a corner on truth (just like Jainism), I felt I was setting it up as an example of *mithyādarśana*, a deluded view of reality. I sat back, half bemused, and half frustrated with my inability to evoke some appreciation of the teachings of Christianity. It was not as though I expected the nuns to be rapturous over the Biblical stories, but I knew I was not doing the tradition justice. These stories meant so much to so many people; why was I so poor an emissary? I regrouped my thoughts and took a third stab at it.

“If you think about it,” I began, “these are really stories about compassion and universal friendliness (*karuṇā* and *maitrī*). This is the Golden Rule – to treat others as you would have them treat you.” I continued, “Imagine the power of his actions – that a

person capable of such greatness would concern himself with our mundane needs proves his boundless compassion.”

The nuns considered my words. They were not greatly impressed with the explanation. But it was one that at least made sense to them. A form of compassion and friendship that focused on the material well being appeared very crude and not very inspiring. They reckoned, however, that perhaps this ‘blunt’ compassion was what was most suitable for those on the low rungs of the *guṇasthāna* (stages of spiritual progress) “Perhaps this was all the people could understand,” one samani proposed. Another agreed by adding, “Later the people could be taught that true compassion is concerned with the soul, not the body.” I was uneasy with their rendition, but felt that I did not have the tools or ability to convey an alternate, more ‘profound’ interpretation.

The Limits of Pluralism

Back in my room that evening, with time to reflect, I became doubtful about the promise of pluralism. Had not today’s exchange revealed its weakness? Rather than truly engage in a suspension of criticism, and an appreciation of the “other” on its own terms, we had sought to translate Christianity into a Jain idiom. I had attempted to tailor Christianity to fit what I believed was my audience’s worldview, and the nuns accepted as significant only those aspects that did not deviate from their already held beliefs.

But could it be otherwise? Not according to Gavin D’Costa who argued that the idea of pluralism is misconceived and that, in essence, it is nothing more than a form of exclusivism. He wrote:

[T]here is no such thing as pluralism because pluralists are committed to holding some form of truth criteria and by virtue of this, anything that falls foul of such criteria is excluded from counting as truth (in doctrine and in practice). Thus, pluralism operates within the same logical structure of exclusivism and in this respect pluralism can never really affirm the genuine autonomous value of religious pluralism for, like exclusivism, it can only do so by tradition specific criteria for truth.³

³ G. D’Costa, *The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions*, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

It is interesting to note that the philosopher Nicholas Rescher and the anthropologist Richard Shweder anticipated many of D'Costa's critiques of pluralism. They argued, from their respective disciplines, that our celebrations of conceptual diversity fall short of true pluralism; that although most of us pay lip service to the idea of pluralism, we refuse to accept its logical outcome. The pluralist platform states the following.⁴

1. We the members of our group (religious or otherwise) are rationally justified in our conception of things.
2. They, the members of some other group, have a different conception of things.
3. They, the members of that other group, are rationally justified in their conception of things.

And yet these points, inevitability, lead to a fourth and final proposition – a proposition that most people repudiate:

4. If others are rationally justified in their conception of things and that their conception is different from ours, then we cannot be rationally justified in our conception of things, and vice versa.

An unwillingness to entertain this fourth proposition, however, results in the incoherence of the entire platform. As a result of this, critics of pluralism assert that pluralists give an account of the 'other' against a backdrop of their own worldview – every bit as much as do exclusivists. If we accept that, epistemologically, pluralism is a no-man's-land, we are left – it would seem – with few options: either we must 'grow up' as some critics would have, and acknowledge our inherently exclusivist ways-of-knowing (i.e., accept that we cannot avoid imposing our own standards on others) or retreat to a position of philosophical and moral subjectivism, which claims the source of truth to reside within the individual subject alone.

Contemporary society is characterised by these opposing positions--we are simultaneously plagued by intolerance and

⁴ This platform is paraphrased from R. Shweder, *Thinking Through Cultures*. (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. See also Nicholas Rescher, *Rationality*, *op. cit.*

ethnocentric smugness, and weakened by radical subjectivism and moral relativism. Ironically, the latter (moral relativism) is commonly seen as the progressive response to the former (ethnocentrism). In rejecting the view that all peoples should be judged by a single standard, many leap to the conclusion that standards, as such, do not exist at all. However, locating the criteria for truth within the thinking subject alone denies the social basis of knowledge as much as it denies the possibility of a transcendent reality. The Jain doctrine of *anekānta* suggests another possibility.

Anekāntavāda: A Way Out?

So basic is *anekānta* considered to be to a non-violent way-of-knowing, that it is considered an intrinsic element of the ethic of *ahimsā*. Mahāvīra is attributed as saying:

“Those who praise their own faiths and ideologies and blame that of their opponents and thus distort the truth will remain confined to the cycle of birth and death.”⁵

Anekāntavāda asserts that no viewpoint is to be taken as the final, definitive viewpoint because reality itself (and not just our human perception of it) is many-sided. Herein lies its strength and its divergence from other pluralist positions, which tend to focus on epistemology alone. Although *anekāntavāda* does have an epistemological component – especially in its related principle of “*syādvāda*” (“doctrine of maybe”), which states that truth is predicated on one’s condition or context, its support of pluralism is bolstered by its metaphysical contention that reality itself is not singular.

Padmanabh Jaini explains, “In its wholeness, any reality is the co-existence of contradictory elements, such as eternity and transience, or unity and multiplicity.”⁶ Different ways-of-being

⁵ This quote from Mahāvīra comes from the Sutrakṛtāṅga, 1.1.2.23, as quoted in J.B. Trappnell, “Indian Sources of a Pluralist View of Religions,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (35:2, Spring 1998), p. 219.

⁶ P.S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) p. 91.

and of knowing are understood as "*nayas*", that is, as logically distinct viewpoints, each coherent and true to its context, but ultimately partial.

Jainism, thus, recognises that no one tradition has a monopoly on truth and that, in fact, other *nayas* should be explored in the search for truth. This is a different expression of pluralism than the one typically encountered (and critiqued). The standard pluralist position claims that various religious phenomena are culturally conditioned diverse responses to the Transcendent. The Transcendent is singular, but manifests itself (or is differently constructed) according to different cultural traditions. Therefore, the aim of pluralism and relativism is to give permission to diversity and difference; to see in others diverse signs of our 'divinity'. *Anekāntavāda* goes beyond this. It does not merely give 'permission' to diversity; it (ideally) mandates an encounter with it. It is only through exposure to other ways of being, will a fuller picture of reality emerge.

All the *nayas*, therefore, in their exclusively individual standpoints are absolutely faulty. If, however, they consider themselves as supplementary to each other, they are right in their viewpoints...[I]f all the *nayas* arrange themselves in a proper way and supplement each other, then alone they are worthy of being termed as "the whole truth" or the right view in its entirety.⁷

A re-visioning of our view of reality as *not* "one sided" might allow us to accept the four propositions of a pluralist platform, enumerated above. Unlike eliminative or nihilistic strains of relativism that assert there is no reality beyond appearances, *anekāntavāda* accepts an existent reality. Yet accepting the existence of reality does not mean it can be understood singularly; reality is understood to be 'many sided' and thus reveals itself in manifold ways simultaneously. Therefore, in opposition to both the 'equivocal pluralists' and the critics of pluralism, *anekāntavāda* does allow us to affirm the

⁷Quoted from Siddhasena Divākara's *Sanmati Tarka* as cited in J.B. Trapnell, "Indian Sources of a Pluralist View of Religions," *op. cit.*, p. 220.

fourth proposition of the pluralist platform, namely that “If others are rationally justified in their conception of things and that conception is different from ours, *we too can be* rationally justified in our conception of things, and vice versa.” If reality is accepted as manifold, this is no longer illogical.

Anekāntavāda can, perhaps, help redress the epistemological muddle in which we post-moderns find ourselves. The fact that there is no singular uniform standard of truth does not mean there are no standards or no truths; because there is not a single uniform reality, does not mean that reality does not exist.

Lazarus Revisited: Conclusion

Putting the doctrine of *anekānta* into practice is a huge challenge. And in hindsight, I believe that my stumblings in Ladnun were not so much evidence of failure, as they were evidence of this challenge. I had made the pluralists’ mistake of believing openness to the other required a break from one’s own beliefs – a temporary suspension in epistemological limbo. This view is futile and full of inconsistencies. But Jain pluralism does not require it and therefore the possibility for a honest and creative acceptance of diversity can exist.

The Jain nuns of Ladnun uncompromisingly maintained ahimsā to be an eternal and unchangeable moral law. Other views or practices that would contradict these beliefs would certainly be challenged, and ultimately rejected. But what is significant, I believe, is that both the retention and rejection of views is tempered by the belief that our perception conveys only a partial reality, that reality itself is manifold, and that to assume that one particular point of view is final is to hold a limited picture of reality.

The doctrine of many-sidedness comes close to obligating its adherents to become familiar with other ways-of-knowing. My appointment in Ladnun as “Teacher of Christianity” is a testament to that. And, in so doing, it goes a long way towards accomplishing the goal at the very core of pluralism, that is, recognition of autonomy and legitimacy of diversity of human existence.

Multi-dimensional Significance of Anekānta in Present-day Social Life

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The problems our society is facing are far too many, notwithstanding scientific and technological advancement and an excellent communication system. The world is getting smaller and smaller. Today, we think of the world as a 'global village' not only in the sense of an advanced communication system, but also in the sense of inter-racial co-existence. We have vast networks of rapid surface communication and information systems but we have a very disappointing communication system at the social and emotional level. One often wonders whether our society will be able to solve these problems even if there is more growth and development in economic and technological spheres. Our society has become a curious mixture of advanced technology and backward psychology(mind-set). We are witnessing blind barbaric religious fundamentalism, a mad display of anti-secular forces, which reflect the disturbed mental state of the people. There appears to be no limit to the extent of fanaticism. In the name of religion the creed of intolerance is pursued and nurtured. A fundamentalist outfit of Lashkare-Jabbar in Kashmir promulgates its coercive diktat for the dress code of Kashmiri Muslim women. Young women were attacked with acid bulbs for appearing in public without covering their faces. In Pakistan a teen-ager expressed his anguish and frustration by hoisting an Indian flag. The police in Islamabad arrested him and implicated him on the charge of treason, which could amount to

as high a punishment as death. Deepa Mehta's film 'Water' ran into troubled water in Varanasi, and the 'Miss World' beauty contest invited violence in the city. The creed of intolerance is mushrooming to such an extent that acceptance of the views of others has become rare and the pressures of obscurantist and communalist forces are getting stronger and stronger.

In this paper, I suggest that the Jaina tradition may offers a solution to the above mentioned problems. The essence of Jaina philosophy may be captured in the following three terms: *ahimsā*, *anekānta* and *aparigraha*. Most significant of these is *anekānta* since it has the benefit of *samyak-darśana* (right-attitude). *samyag-jñāna* (right knowledge) both are pre-requisites to *samyag-cāritra* (right conduct). *Ahimsā* and *aparigraha* both rightly come in the category of *samyag-cāritra*. The three--*samyak-darśana*, *samyag jñāna*, and *samyag-cāritra*--together are called triratnas (three-jewels), and constitute the path of liberation as stated in the opening sutra of *Tattvārtha Sūtra* by Umāsvāti(*samyag- darśana-jñāna-cāritrāṇī mokṣamārgaḥ*). Only with right attitude and right knowledge are we in a position to tread the path of supreme ethical principles of *ahimsā* and *aparigraha* in our life.

Anekānta emphasizes the basic attitude of mind in the understanding of reality or truth, which has infinite number of aspects (*anantadharmātmakamvastu*), and thus very complex in nature. Reality, therefore, can be seen from different points of views. One point of view reveals one aspect and another point of view reveals another aspect. The story of six blind men getting different images of an elephant and accordingly giving their own impressions explains this well. None of the pictures given is incorrect but it is not complete either. Therefore the predications about these pictures are not absolute but are only relative. *Anekānta* helps in comprehending a fuller picture, absorbing numerous aspects of reality. Thus, reality is "eternal" and "non-eternal." Neither of the two alternatives is true or false absolutely. An existent (*sat*) is real in relation to its four-fold qualities (*svabhāva*) i.e. substance, place, time & nature (*dravya*,

kṣetra, kāla and bhāva); it is non-existent (*asat*) in relation to otherness (*parabhāva*). In other words, *anekānta* is an attempt to overcome extreme views or one-sidedness. One can say, this is the operation of 'Rashomon effect'. This expression conveys the idea that all facts and events are subject to multiple interpretations. Thus, the attitude of *anekānta* could work as the starting point of eliminating or, at least, reducing religious social, political, familial conflicts, which often culminate in intolerance at all levels national and even international. In more general sense *anekānta* is the true spirit of *ahiṃsā*, which does not remain confined to the individual's code of conduct alone but reaches metaphysical and more importantly societal plane.

Anekāntavāda with its corollaries of *nayavāda* and *syādvāda* serves a complete and exhaustive philosophy of life. *Anekāntavāda* is the metaphysical outlook of Jainas as it posits the multi-dimensional aspect of reality. However, it is essentially a social philosophy of relevance which can make our social existence meaningful and peaceful. Human existence could be truly enriching with an attitude of tolerance of others and their points of view. It would be contextually relevant to briefly touch upon the corollaries of *ānekāntavāda*, that is *nayavāda* and *syādvāda*, which together reveal the functional dynamics of *anekāntavāda*. *Naya* refers to systematic thought process of understanding and analyzing every object or concept in its varied aspects and distinctions. The analysis of every object or concept takes place with the help of *Naya*. Jaina texts give a list of seven *nayas* covering all the possibilities of thought related with reality. This doctrine highlights how Jaina thinkers have gone into abstruse details of thought about reality. These *nayas* are : *Naigama naya*, *Samgraha naya*, *vyavahāra naya*, *Rjusūtra naya*, *Śabda naya*, *Samabhirūdhā naya*, and lastly *Evambhūta naya*. *Naigama naya* refers to ways of understanding an object in its dual sense i.e. in both its general and specific sense. *Samgraha naya* refers to the tendency to find unity in diversity. *Vyavahāra naya* deals with particularity and focuses on diversity, it is the

empirical and practical approach. *Rjastūtra naya* aims at presenting the aspect of reality from the point of view of momentary present. *Śabda naya* emphasizes the function of word and focuses on its meaning (as different words may mean the same object). *Samabhirūdha naya* refers to the etymological meaning of the word and emphasizes that every word has some different meaning in accordance to its roots. This *naya* throws light on differences amongst synonyms. *Evaṃbhūta naya* emphasizes on the specific situations and context in which a particular meaning is ascribed to a word. (e.g. a servant is a servant only when he is serving). Thus, these *nayas* take note of different possibilities of analytic thought processes with reference to varied aspects and distinctions of the objects or of reality.

The other significant corollary of *anekānta* is *syādvāda* which takes note of these *nayas* or number of possibilities of thought and gives a logical and verbal expression to it in its predication form of *Saptabhaṅgī* (seven-fold predication) incorporating affirmation, negation and also inexpressibility along with their combinations. These are (1) *syāt-asti* (2) *syāt-nāsti* (3) *syāt-asti-nāsti* (4) *syāt-avyaktavyam* (5) *syāt-asti-avyaktavyam* (6) *syāt-nasti-avyaktavyam* (7) *syāt-asti-nāsti-avyaktavyam*. All these predication forms show that from a particular point of view a thing is and from another point of view it is not and from a third point of view it is inexpressible and so on. These predications are complementary because affirmation implies the negation of its opposite and negation implies the affirmation of its opposite. Further, there is also room for inexpressibility as all these predications relate only to finite or limited ability of expressions of those who are not omniscient. Thus, in common parlance, *syādvāda* is an expression of thought in a cultured and civilized way that does not hurt those who hold a different point of view. *syādvāda*, thus, promotes an outlook of a many sided approach to the knowledge of reality. It is an anti-dogmatic approach respecting diverse points of view. Thus, from basic attitude to systematic thought and from thought to its logical verbal expression incorporating essential relativism, *anekānta* is

the foundational principle of Jainas, which provides a rationale of coherence where different systems of philosophy present different aspects of reality.

It needs to be clarified that *syādvāda* or seven-fold judgments are not figments of imagination, they are only expressions of many-faceted reality for its fullest comprehension. It should also be noted that *syādvāda* should not be seen as a theory of doubt or that the term '*syāt*' means 'may be' or 'perhaps' which would amount to a form of skepticism. A comprehensive description of varied nature of objects is not an expression of doubt or skepticism. Rather, it underscores a number of possibilities for understanding reality.

In modern social context there cannot be a better interpretation of *anekānta* than secularism. It is the modern social philosophical definition of *anekānta*. Secularism is generally characterized by (i) decline of religious belief (ii) separation of church and state (iii) respect for all religions. It is this last meaning which is most relevant in the Indian context. A secular state protects all religions equally and favors none at the expense of others. The state recognizes equal rights and privileges and duties as belonging to all citizens irrespective of their religion or caste. It does not mean indifference to religion nor does it mean opposition to religion. It only means that the state as such does not identify itself with any particular religion and not only tolerates but appreciates every religion. Under no circumstance does it mean rejection of relevance of religion or that it eulogizes irreligion. In simplest terms it means 'equal respect for all religions' It does not mean abandoning spirituality from the life of people or even from the affairs of the state. It should only mean elimination of religion - based conflicts and confrontations that destroy the social fabric of our society and exhaustion of energies of nation. The talk of separation of religion from politics should be read as separation of communalism from politics. True religion is a part of life which is nothing but universal values. Jawaharlal Nehru once said that the use of the word 'secular' to describe Indian State was 'perhaps not a very happy one' and that it was

used for want of better word'. However, in so far as it conveys the meaning it is intended to convey it should be fine. When we look at modern urban society, an example of cultural pluralism, which characterizes a life style of "anonymity, mobility, pluralism, pragmatism and even profanity" to use Harvey Cox's words (*The Secular City*), we find that the above meaning of secularism is more significant in this kind of society. The individual's roots become weak and fragile in this society and where he needs to cultivate a sense of respect or tolerance for changing situations around him. (This may however, pertain more to American society but Indian society is speedily moving towards this situation). A closer look would reveal that it is in essence nothing but *anekānta*.

This exhaustive philosophy is reflected not only in philosophical deliberations or religious catechism, it is reflected in so many area of our social life. In our judicial system in which lies the core of human dignity in society, the greatest contribution to the cause of justice is the concept to natural justice, which is based on two fundamental principles (i) no one should be his own judge for his own cause and that a judgment should be unbiased and impartial (ii) both sides of the case should be heard and that no one should be condemned unheard. On close analysis both these principles implicitly refer to the attitude of *anekānta*. If, for example a judge looks at the problem from one angle he would be labeled as prejudiced and biased or one holding *ekāntika* views. Further, if he gives hearing to one party and leaves the other party unheard his approach would be *ekāntika* again. Thus, *anekānta* is the essence of both these principles. A person accused of murder could be hanged, could be given life sentence and could also be acquitted; this underlines *anekāntika* approach.

In a successful business organization management uses *anekānta* in a subtle manner as an important technique. A good business executive brings together various departments and makes them function in coexistence. Such a leader understands human psychology, the strengths and weaknesses of human nature and creates his own dynamic personality with his multi-

dimensional approach, perspective and vision of getting the job done with maximum output by various kinds of people with different aptitudes and potentials. Further, even for personal management and growth the *anekāntika* approach produces better results by sharpening one's analytical ability, objectivity, a sharp grasp of others and above all, an unbiased attitude with a sense of empathy and belongingness for others.

Today, medical practitioners have begun to rely on an integrated approach in medicine rather than rigidly adhering to their particular school of medicine. Allopathic practitioners have started to recommend well-tested *ayurvedic* medicines which they think are less prone to side-effects. This expresses a synthesis of diverse approaches on the basis of 'complementarity' principle. This again is a reflection of *anekāntika* attitude.

Anekāntika outlook is not only good for our day-to-day life, but it also has a great intellectual appeal. Post-modernism and its related theory of post-structuralism widely used in literary criticism are of very recent origin. Post-modernism strongly contends that every field of ideas is a field of contending forces. Lyotard, a French philosopher succinctly puts it and says, 'a post-modern condition refines our sensibility to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable'. Post-modernism emphasizes that no representation can capture the subject completely and that it is only a representation. There may be, in this thesis some kind of a tilt towards Buddhist view of momentariness or *Rjusutra naya*, but it definitely throws light on differences and tolerance of differences. This is the true *anekāntik* approach of unity in diversity and diversity in unity. It is a matter of great intellectual satisfaction to see that the rich Jaina tradition could sow the seeds of post-modern thought.

Concept similar to *anekānta* can be seen in other religions and philosophies of the world. Take for instance the following: *Isavasya Upanishad* describes *ātman* as a substance which moves and does not move, which is near and far and which is inside and outside. In spite of being absolutistic, *Vedānta* reflects relativism in its philosophy of explaining reality from three standpoints and

in three stages viz. *pratibhāsika*, *vyavahārika* and *pārmārthika*. *Mahabharata* exhorts people by saying, ‘Regard all religious faiths with reverence and ponder their teachings but do not surrender your judgement’. Buddhist philosophy of *vibhāgyavāda* and *mādhyama-mārga* also reflects the tone of *anekānta*. Buddha himself believed in *vibhāgyavāda* and not in *ekāntavāda*. He rejected both ‘*asti*’ and ‘*nāsti*’ and emphasized that he believed in the middle path. *Quran* very clearly suggests, ‘to you your religion and to me mine’. This is truly the ‘live and let live’ philosophy of religion.

In conclusion, *anekāntavāda* is, in fact, a protest against the one-sided, narrow, dogmatic or fanatical approach to the problems of life and reality not only metaphysical but societal and even familial problems of present day life. This approach can significantly reduce the intellectual chaos and help overcome social conflict.

Beyond Anekāntavāda: A Jain Approach to Religious Tolerance

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A popular modern symbol of Jainism includes a representation of the *loka*--the universe as envisaged in Jain teaching--and the motto “*parasparopagraho jīvānām*” (there should be mutual support between all living creatures). An alternative image representative of the ethical ideals of Jainism might equally well be the *samavasaraṇa*, the assembly place magically created by the gods where, according to Jain tradition, every *jina*, after attaining enlightenment expounds the eternal teachings of nonviolence and compassion for the first time. The universal applicability of Jain doctrine is demonstrated by the fact that this sermon is listened to by a gathering of humans, animals and gods gathered in concord within an extensive circular network of corridors encompassed by jewelled balustrades which surrounds the dais from where the *jina* preaches.

Who is eligible to enter this religious amphitheatre and attend the great event? This question was raised in the *Senaprasāna*, a collection of responses made by Vijayasena Sūri, chief ascetic of Śvetāmbara subsect, the Tapā Gaccha, in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, to a variety of inquiries posed by lay and monastic members of his sect. Subsequently, these questions and answers were compiled by monk Śubhavijaya Gaṇin.¹ More

¹ In this, for example, Vijayasena Sūri is represented to point out that while listening to the *jina*'s sermon, female humans and divine beings stand and the male human and

pertinent to the theme of this essay, however, is the following question posed to Vijayasena: Do the 363 types of heretic (*pākhaṇḍika*), traditionally established by the time of early medieval Jainism, physically stand outside the *samavasaraṇa* or remain within it? As a rule, replied Vijayasena, they remain outside but occasionally enter the *samavasaraṇa*.²

This slightly equivocal judgement appears to indicate a possible tension within Jainism to which I intend to draw attention. The questions central to my inquiry are: What is the status of those who are not formally members of the Jain religion? Can they be in some way accommodated by the Jains? If not, are they fated to stay outside the *samavasaraṇa*, noses metaphorically pressed against the soteriological window? In other words, to what extent is Jainism tolerant in its approach to other religious traditions?

Based on its philosophy of *anekāntavāda*, Jainism is frequently thought of having an innate sense of tolerance for other religious paths. Such a tolerance is regarded as a reflex of the religion's deep preoccupation with *ahimsā*. However, concentration on *anekāntavāda* as presenting non-Jain teachings as partial versions of the truth and thus constituting a type of inclusivist sectarian tolerance has tended to deemphasize the extent to which Jainism has also consistently seen itself in exclusivist terms as the one true path. Recent scholarship has confirmed that *anekāntavāda* functioned in classical times as a technique which could promote the superiority of the Jain analysis of the world over other models of reality.³ Jainism's apparent inclusivism and tolerance as supposedly resulting from

divine beings sit as a token of the traditional superiority of their gender. See Śubhsvijaya Gaṇin compiled, Vijaysena Sūri's *Senapraśna* (Bombay: Devacand Lalabhai Series, 1919): 80a.

² *Ibid.* p. 61a.

³ Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 229-33.

anekāntavāda can in fact equally be interpreted as indices of its exclusivism. Indeed, the ancient scriptural evidence suggests that Jainism from the very beginning saw alternative religious paths as inadequate. For example, the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* 23. 63 states, "The heterodox and the heretics have all chosen a wrong path; the right path is that taught by the Jinas; it is the most excellent path."⁴ Therefore, it is not surprising to find that the Jains in general never, until the ecumenical twentieth century, subscribed to the possibility of all religions being in some way equal. Indeed, the classical texts generally excoriate such apparent liberalism as a specific form of false belief (*mithyādr̥ṣṭi*) called *vainayika*, a general, indiscriminating reverence towards objects and personages of worship in other sects which has been rendered by one translator as "misguided egalitarianism."⁵

However, there is another strand of opinion in Jainism which can most clearly be located in the writings of Ācārya Haribhadra. The dating of this figure is problematic but for our purposes the writings attributed to him can be said to fall between the late 6th and the mid 8th centuries CE.⁶ Haribhadra occasionally does not accept the possibility of any sort of approval of or accommodation with those who fail to conform to the ethical commands of the Jinas, even though they perform fierce austerities which Jainism claims are integral to genuine spiritual advancement.⁷ He also denies that those who are outside the command of the Jinas can have any sort of religious restraint in

⁴ Hermann Jacobi (trans.), *Jaina Sutras*, Pt II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), p. 126.

⁵ Nathmal Tatia (trans.), Umāsvāti's *Tattvārtha Sūtra, That Which Is* (San Francisco/London / Pymble: HarperCollins 1994), pp. 189-90.

⁶ See Paul Dundas, "Handbook on Giving," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 30, 2000, pp. 8 and 30.

⁷ Haribhadra, *Pañcāśaka* 11. 39. Pannyās Śrī Padmavijayajī Mahārāja Gaṇivarya (ed.), *Pañcāśakaprakaraṇa* (Hastināpur: Śrī Nirgrantha Sāhitya Prakāśan Saṃgha, 1999).

the first place.⁸ Elsewhere, however, Haribhadra allows for the possibility of other non-Jain sectarian leaders and teachings in conformity with Jainism.⁹ Furthermore, in his so-called yoga works, Haribhadra explicitly regards inner calm of any sort as a guarantor of a general orientation towards that one path which leads to mokṣa.¹⁰

It must, however, be said that Haribhadra was no simple apologist for other faiths or tolerant irenicist. His writings appear as harbingers of the tensions which surfaced in an extended argument which preoccupied the Śvetāmbara Jain community during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here, I will eschew any reference to *anekāntavāda* as it is not relevant to the question, whether there is any possibility of correct moral behaviour on the part of those who do not follow the Jain path.

Perhaps, the best way to introduce this issue is by reference to a text which was written some time in the late 13th or early 14th century when the Śvetāmbara Jain community was fragmented into a variety of rival sub sects seriously divided over issues relating to lineage, ritual and the sacred calendar. It is against this background that one Nayaprabha Gaṇin, a teacher of the subsect known as the Tapā Gaccha produced the *Gurutattvapradīpa*. This work's alternative title, certainly the one by which it was known in the sixteenth century, was *Utsūtrakandakuddāla*, literally meaning, "A Spade to Dig Up the Roots of Heresy." The title clearly conveys the purpose of the text which, in fact, was the first Tapā Gaccha text to engage in serious intra-Śvetāmbara sectarian polemic.

In this text, the objects of the author's wrath range from opponents such as the Digambaras and the temple-dwelling

⁸ Haribhadra, *Upadeśapada* v. 810 (Bhuleshvar: Śrī Jinaśāna Ārādhana Trust, 1989).

⁹ Haribhadra, *Upadeśapada*, *op. cit.*, v. 639.

¹⁰ Haribhadra, *Yogaśṛṣṭisamuccaya* v. 128 in *Haribhadrayogabharatī* (Mumbai: Divyadarśan Trust, 1989).

monks since the beginning of the common era, to sects which emerged after the eleventh century and are still in existence today, such as the Kharatara Gaccha and the Tristutikas. However, before categorising and denouncing these opponents, the author of *Gurutattvapradīpa* considers the typical standpoint from which a Jain should approach alternative intellectual positions, namely that of being *madhyastha*, literally meaning, "standing in the middle." According to the historian of religion, Peter van der Veer, there is no word in any Indian language corresponding exactly to the English word "tolerance," which has its origins in the European Enlightenment and the decline of the universal authority of the Catholic Church.¹¹ However, this term might well be taken as indicative of the supposed basic Jain virtue of intellectual irenicism and respect for other religions which modern apologists have presented as being one of Jainism's main characteristics. But on further examination it appears to be slightly more nuanced than this would suggest.

Although the author asserts that his work, *Gurutattvapradīpa*, has been written in the spirit of *mādhyasthya*--remaining between the two extremes of strong attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*)--he goes on to argue that there are two types of this quality of "being in the middle," which are as different from each other as spiritual deliverance is from rebirth. The first type of *madhyastha* is an individual who has no attachment or hatred when considering issues relating to divinity, teacher or doctrine and, crucially, evinces the quality of right view or faith (*samyagdr̥ṣṭi*). Consequently, he loses all possible doubt when he realises that the statements of the Jain scriptures and the direction of the path to liberation are one and the same.¹² The second type of *madhyastha*, however, cannot abandon attachment and dislike

¹¹ Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 66-7.

¹² *Gurutattvapradīpa*, vv. 3-8 with autocommentary. Edited by Muni Lābhasara (Kapaḍvaṃj: Mithabhāi Kalyāṇcand Pīṭh, 1961).

and lacks the ability to discriminate between good and bad positions on the grounds that he doubts whether in fact he is genuinely *madhyastha*. Such a person consequently goes along with every idea, statement and mode of practice and his supposed neutrality or “tolerance” is rather a lack of intellectual discrimination as a result of which he cannot distinguish between substance (*tattva*) and non-substance (*atattva*). As the *Gurutattvapradīpa* puts it, professional connoisseurs of jewels would not adopt a position of neutrality when forming their conclusion (*samānubandhaḥ*) in the case of judging both glass and a genuine precious stone.¹³ Following such excoriation of any sort of mealy-mouthed tolerance, the author of the *Gurutattvapradīpa* embarks upon a lengthy exposure of all non-*Tapā Gaccha* types of Jainism as being *utsūtra*, heretical and representations of false beliefs.

Few manuscripts of the *Gurutattvapradīpa* have survived. Like some other controversial Śvetāmbara Jain texts, it has had a slightly nebulous and marginal existence. Indeed, at the beginning of the seventeenth century the *Gurutattvapradīpa* was publicly banned by the senior monastic leadership on the grounds that it was a source of factionalism. Its adoption by Dharmasāgara¹⁴ led to sectarian debates as well as polarization within the Tapā Gaccha. Dharmasāgara’s writings were extension of the *Gurutattvapradīpa*’s concerns. They represent a strongly and subtly argued supremacist perspective on Jainism and are fiercely exclusivist in their refusal to accept the validity of any religious path different from Dharmasāgara’s own sect, the Tapā Gaccha. Furthermore, they remained a significant issue in the Śvetāmbara community well into the second half of the seventeenth century. While I do not intend to pursue Dharmasāgara’s arguments here, their existence should not be disguised by those who would wish to present Jainism in exclusively irenic terms and as promoting a

¹³ *Gurutattvapradīpa*, *op. cit.*, v. 11.

¹⁴ Dundas, *The Jains*, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-64.

general intellectual tolerance based on the principle of *anekāntavāda*. Instead, I would turn here to an opponent of Dharmasāgara's ideas and one of Jainism's greatest intellectuals, Yaśovijaya (1624-88).

Yaśovijaya has become a near talismanic figure for the contemporary Śvetāmbara monastic community and is, in particular, identified with the quality of *mādhyasthya* or neutrality. A commemorative sign which invokes this can be glimpsed today through the dust and fumes in the old city of Ahmedabad at Yaśovijaya Chauk at the Relief Road end of Ratan Pol where Yaśovijaya lived for many years. Although Yaśovijaya's scholarly reach extended over the entire range of Jain literature, his frequent reference to Haribhadra suggests that he considered the latter as his real and only intellectual equivalent in earlier Śvetāmbara tradition, and he saw himself as Haribhadra's successor. It was the Haribhadra's reputation for being influenced only by the logical cogency of doctrines and viewpoints (*anekāntavāda*) that appears to have shaped Yaśovijaya's irenic but also critical attitude towards other sects and traditions.

Yaśovijaya's broad perspective on the status of members of other religious paths was expressed in the *Dharmaparīkṣā*, "An Examination of the Jain Religion," a lengthy Sanskrit auto-commentary on 104 Prākṛit verses produced in 1669. In this text, in which no serious reference is made to *anekāntavāda*, Yaśovijaya argues that it is pointless to take a negative stance towards a position found in another soteriological path if it is effectively no different from Jainism. Unquestionably (and Yaśovijaya quotes Haribhadra to this effect) the principled non-Jain derives his positive qualities precisely from his loyal adherence to his own scriptural tradition, this being in itself indicative of a morally upright position. The Jain, however, can take a *madhyastha* position, devoid of partisan passion, because Jainism is universalist in that it combines and encompasses all possible viewpoints. Here, then, at the outset Yaśovijaya's ostensibly irenic approach can also be seen to reflect a view of

Jainism as inherently superior to those sectarian and religious paths which do not adopt such a perspective.

Yašovijaya's initial technique in confronting Dharmasāgara's position is to assess the various types of false belief which have been traditionally identified in Jainism. These include not merely wrongheaded attachment to what is incorrect but also an indiscriminate attachment to all views as being true (*anābhigrahika*), effectively a kind of misconceived relativism. Individuals in thrall to such intellectual dysfunctioning should not be accommodated in any way. However, Yašovijaya makes the general point that even those who through the power of delusion subscribe to false intellectual and religious positions may nonetheless have that quiescence or calm characteristic of the Jain path. This positive view of non-Jains is bolstered by reference to Haribhadra who had claimed that Hindus such as Patañjali, the author of the *Yoga Sūtras*, could be incorporated into the lower stages of the Jain path by virtue of possession of yogic insight (*yoga-dr̥ṣṭi*).

This gives rise to an inevitable question, how non-Jains can be in possession of the necessary moral qualities in the first place without direct participation within the Jain path? Yašovijaya attempts to address this by discussing Jainism in terms of its inner (*bhāva*) and outer (*dravya*) characteristics. Non-Jains, even though lacking totally correct discrimination, can reach Jainism in the inner, spiritual sense simply through being servants of the *jinas*. As a purely internal perspective, however, this might be regarded as having the unwelcome result of doing away with the necessary socio-religious distinction between Jain and non-Jain, so Yašovijaya insists that such individuals must be "free of the fault of attachment to what is untrue" (*galitāsadgrahadoṣa*). In other words, acknowledgement of the authority of the *jinas* is worthless if it still involves promotion and advocacy of views contrary to their teachings (a standpoint which, it must be admitted is slightly at variance with what Yašovijaya has stated before). Yašovijaya invokes once again the centrality of

mādhyasthya as not so much a neutral quality as the *sine qua non* for Jainism: those whose minds are purified by it are Jains in terms of their internal, spiritual perspective and thus cannot disagree with the teachings of the *jinas*.

A community consisting of genuine Jains and those who are Jains in spirit, non-Jain Jains as it were, linked by a shared faith in the teachings and authority of the Jinas might be theoretically possible, but this still fails to address the issue that the latter group do not conform to outward visible Jain practice which, as Yaśovijaya points out, is necessarily interrelated with "inner" Jainism. In fact, while it may on the face of it be impossible for non-Jains to conform to the external obligations of Jainism because they follow the behavioural requirements of their own particular path, it is nonetheless sufficient that all these requirements relate to a morally upright person who does no evil and conforms to a morally appropriate mode of behaviour (*akaraṇaniyama*). In other words, following the actions prescribed by one's own religious path does not preclude being on the Jain path. For Yaśovijaya the obvious example of such an individual is, once more, Patañjali, the author of the *Yoga Sūtras*, who as just mentioned was accepted by Haribhadra as having the necessary neutrality (*mādhyasthya*) and absence of delusion and as having experienced the yogic "flash" characteristic of all genuine holy men. Such an individual thus falls into the category of what Jainism has styled since scriptural times as *deśārādhaka*, which is to say a "partial adherent," following the Jain path but lacking completely developed knowledge and faith. However, there has to be purity of intention: even acts of compassion are worthless if they are still permeated by intense false belief.

Apparently, Yaśovijaya willingly accepts the possibility of the spiritual commitment of members of other religious paths coinciding with the requirements of Jainism and avoiding the cardinal fault of one pointed perspective (*ekāntika*). If this were not the case, then the references in the Jain scriptures to members of other sects who had actually achieved liberation

(*anyalingasiddha*) could not be correct. It must therefore be concluded, claims Yaśovijaya, that individuals such as Patañjali follow a code of behaviour approved of both by their own path and that of the Jains. To advance on a religious path, one must have positive qualities and if another path does happen to concur with one's own in that respect, then that merely strengthens it.

According to Yaśovijaya, the Jain teachings are multifarious in as much as they instil various qualities in different types of individuals who have differing responses to such teachings. However, at the same time these teachings are founded on the solid unifying basis of watchful moral behaviour (*apramāda*). Thus, any statement occurring in another tradition which promotes a genuine spiritual stance and is at the same time in accord with Jain teaching must in actuality be interpreted as deriving from Jainism. What must be regarded as disbaring another view from accommodation within Jainism is not so much the view itself as some sort of passionate attachment towards it. Yaśovijaya, following Haribhadra,¹⁵ refers to the possibility of what seems to be a general category of religion (*sāmanyadharmā*) which transcends sectarian boundaries:

Those others who [broadly] conform to the [Jain] path cannot be deemed to be heretical simply on the grounds that they do not understand ontological categories such as the soul in the manner approved by the Jains, for their position [does actually] end up in their understanding these categories correctly, provided there is abandonment of partiality towards any disputed part [of the doctrine]...This is not just a question of accidental resemblance to the Jain path...These individuals are in fact involved in *sāmanyadharmā*.¹⁶

However, perhaps predictably, it is clear that *sāmanyadharmā* in its basics corresponds to Jainism. Buddhism, for example,

¹⁵ See Haribhadra, *Yogabindu* v. 2, in *Hārībhadrāyogabhārat*, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Yaśovijaya, *Dharmaparīkṣā* (Mumbai: Śrī Andherī Gujarātī Jain Saṃgha, 1986) p. 119.

cannot as an institutionalised and supposedly nonviolent religion, participate in this "general religion" because it claims an independent source of authority which only the *jinas* can have. Similarly, there can be no question of Jainism, which is the origin of all philosophical standpoints, incorporating morally inappropriate teachings such as Vedic injunctions about sacrificial killing. Jainism can be the source of all intellectual views only in the sense that it makes clear what its own teachings are and what are the teachings of others.

What I have been drawing attention to is a Jain argument not couched in terms of *anekāntavāda*, possibly unparalleled in Indian thought up to this time, which concentrates on the qualities and the validity of praising upright individuals, even if they belong to a different and manifestly false religious path. As discussed in this paper, there is one side of this argument, as represented by Dharmasāgara, which is unwilling to acknowledge the possibility of mitigating qualities in non-Jains and Jain sectarians. Yaśovijaya, on the other hand, is more open to the positive qualities of non-Jains, no doubt as befits an individual who himself attempted in practical terms to smooth over sectarian differences within the Śvetāmbara community. Yet in his inclusivism Yaśovijaya never abandons a sense of the superiority of Jainism and can thus be seen to be applying the same sort of ranking perspective as found in Hinduism. It is Yaśovijaya's image of Jainism which has become the dominant one today.¹⁷

¹⁷ A full treatment of this subject will appear in my forthcoming study, Sudharman's Heirs: History, Scripture and Controversy in a Medieval Jain Sect.

Religious Dissonance and Reconciliation: The Haribhadra Story

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During this somewhat unsettled period following the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 and the real possibility of a catastrophic show down between United States and Iraq, it is interesting and perhaps instructive to review how Jains have grappled with their alterity, their difference, their otherness. From the non-Jain accounts found in the early Buddhist records, the Jains appear to be stand-apart people, distinguished by their eating habits, their lay occupations, and the austere life-style observed by members of their mendicant orders. Yet, rather than being reviled and suppressed, Jains for the most part have managed to survive with respect to their non-Jain colleagues except for occasional calamitous outburst of hatred against them for their difference.¹ In this essay, I will examine how throughout their history the Jains have defined themselves as distinct from competing religious groups, hence avoiding the pitfall of being absorbed into the mainstream, which happened

¹ One instance of suppression would come during the eleventh century in Tamil Nadu where Tirujnanasambandar, a Hindu king, reportedly slaughtered many Jains, as depicted at the Minakshi Temple in Madurai. See Bhaskar Anand Salatore, *Mediaeval Jainism: With Special Reference to the Vijayanagara Empire* (Bombay: Karnatak Publishing House, 1938), pp. 278-279. Another instance is the death of Todar Mal (1719-1766), who, as noted by Paul Dundas, “seems to have been executed as a sectarian leader in the aftermath of what would today be described as a ‘communal disturbance’” [for being a] “denouncer of both Hinduism and Islam as false religions.” See Paul Dundas, “Jain Perceptions of Islam in the Early Modern Period,” *Indo-Iranian Journal*, Vol. 42, 1999, pp. 35-46, p. 42.

with the Buddhists.² Then I will turn to a troublesome story about Haribhadra that attributes to him horrendous acts of violence. I will examine select writings from the Haribhadra corpus that address the issue of religious plurality in a conciliatory fashion. I will also offer some observations regarding the workability of a theory of nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*) as suggested by Haribhadra and pacifism in light of the contemporary situation.

Jainism, since at least the fifth century B.C.E., has existed within a pluralistic context. Many of the early converts to Buddhism hailed from the Jain faith, as can be seen in the collection of poems about women, the *Therigāthā*, which developed shortly after the Buddha's passing.³ These poems indicate that the majority of Jains were prosperous merchants, and their mendicants followed highly rigorous discipline that continues to characterize the Jain community even today. From their original homeland in northeast India, Jains spread through all parts of India, particularly in the south (Karnataka and Madhyapradesh) and the west (Gujarāt and Rājasthān). With the exception of the near-mythical account of the Hindu blood-letting of Jains in medieval Tamil Nadu, Jains seem mostly to have avoided persecution without overly compromising their core religious practices and identity.

One source for understanding the survivability of the Jains can be found in their philosophical approach to pluralism. On the one hand, Jainism contains perhaps the world's most plural and individualistic theology. Numerous souls, present from beginning less time, countlessly reincarnate, taking on new forms depending upon the action or *karma* in their prior births. No god created these souls. No god or person controls these souls. Each

² See Padmanabh S. Jaini, "The Disappearance of Buddhism and the Survival of Jainism in India: A Study in Contrast" in *Collected Papers on Buddhist Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000).

³ Susan Murcott, *The First Buddhist Women: Translations and Commentaries on the Therigatha* (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 1991).

individual forges his or her own course and determines one's degree of happiness or sorrow in this life and the lives to come. Jainism is both individualistic and voluntaristic. Ultimately, one can only be concerned with one's own *karma*. Some of the most individualistic Jains state that to interfere with the *karma* of another would be fruitless and inappropriate, and would most likely bring harm to oneself. This philosophy, in addition to emphasizing personal responsibility, also acknowledges that there are many paths pursued by different people, according to their *karma*. Eventually, given the right karmic circumstances, a person might eventually be born as a Jain. Consequently, Jainism tended not to seek converts, though it did actively promulgate its teaching regarding nonviolence (*ahimsā*).

Jains did not espouse relativism. Throughout its long history, Jain identity has been maintained by clearly delineating Jain beliefs as distinct from the views and practices of others. In this regard, Jains have been consistently clear about what distinguishes them from people of other faiths, not just in regard to vegetarianism and occupation, but in terms of theological confession. The *Ajīvaka* faith, which has since disappeared, has been closely associated with Jainism as recorded in the early literature. It promulgated a form of fatalism that the Jains disdained because it de-emphasized the need to practice nonviolence and countered the Jain insistence on personal responsibility. From an early period the Jains criticized the Brahmins, both for their practice of bloody sacrifice and for their belief in a single (*eka*), underlying, immutable (*anitya*) soul. The Jains criticized the Buddhists for their non-belief in the soul (*anatman*). These arguments can all be found in the early literature of the Jains, particularly the writings of Siddhasena Divākara (fifth century), Akalaṅka (eighth century), and Vidyānanda (ninth century).⁴

⁴ See Padmanabh Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1979), pp. 83-85 and 91-93.

In the medieval and modern period, three new traditions came under close scrutiny. The great scholar Haribhadrasūri (700-770 C.E.) developed an elaborate critique of *Tantra* in his *Yogaḍṛṣīsamuccaya*, claiming that it leads people into delusion and causes harm to them. Various Jain theologians presented critiques of Islam, including Devavimāla Gaṇin within the *Hīrasaubhāgya*, his hagiography of Hīravijaya Sūri (1527-1595) and the *Mokṣamārgaprakāśaka* of Todar Mal (1719-1766). Both discount the notion of a creator God and condemn the killing of animals allowed within the Islamic tradition.⁵ Similarly, the early contact of the Jains with the Christians was unfriendly with Vijayadeva Sūri (1577-1656) suggesting that the Portuguese Catholic "never approves of another religion except his own."⁶ Like their objections to Hindu and Muslim theologies, Jains would disagree with Christian notions of God and their derision of dietary restrictions.

Religious Intolerance: Stories Attributed to Haribhadra

Unlike the western world where dissenters from the theological mainstream did not fare so well and heretics were often harassed and even killed,⁷ the commitment to ahiṃsā allowed the Jains to remain in relative harmony with others who did not share their theology. Their philosophy of "live and let live" made the Jains unique even within the context of the Indian subcontinent which too had been often plagued by religious

⁵ See Paul Dundas, "Jain Perceptions of Islam in the Early Modern Period," *Indo-Iranian Journal*, Vol. 42, pp. 35-46, 1999.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁷ In mediaeval Europe, Inquisitions were established to search for heretics and punish them. Seven kinds of punishments were used for this purpose. For detailed treatment of the Cathars and the Waldensians – both of whom rejected the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, see Albert C. Shannon, *The Medieval Inquisition*, second edition (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), pp. 67, 133. Even Protestants in America were not free from persecution within their own ranks. Quakers who had fled to colonial Massachusetts to escape religious persecution in England were killed by hanging in Boston Commons because of their unorthodox beliefs.

intolerance.⁸ However, stories in which terrible violence is attributed to a Jain scholar, Haribhadra--noted otherwise for his tolerance and commitment to nonviolence--presents an odd and intriguing case. I will analyze these stories in the rest of this paper.

Haribhadra lived in India during the time of great philosophical diversity. The period following the Guptas and prior to the rule of Delhi Sultanate was characterized by the proliferation of *Purāṇas*, the flowering of *Śaiva* and *Vaiṣṇava* philosophy, the *Bhakti* movement in the south, the dawn of *Tantra* including emphasis on goddess worship, and the ongoing observance of the Vedic sacrificial system.⁹ Buddhism and Yoga, both of which had a strong presence in India at the time, offered the most direct competition to Jainism since all three systems shared an emphasis on self-effort in the quest toward spiritual uplift and liberation. Haribhadra, according to an account, was the son of Śankarabhaṭṭa and his wife Gangā, born into the Brahmin caste. He lived either in Brahmapuri or in Citrakūṭa, which is identified with Chittor, the capital of Mewar in

⁸ For example, Aurangzeb, unlike his more liberal predecessor Akbar, sought to accomplish mass conversions to Islam during his reign. He first made peaceful overtures, then offered money. If people would not convert, he would punish them and sow dissent to divide the non-Muslims. Eventually, he resorted to forcible conversions. His treatment of the Sikhs, in particular, and the subsequent gross killings of three Sikh followers and the beheading of their Guru, Tegh Bahadur are examples of grave religious intolerance. For a detailed discussion of this see No author, *Sikh Religion* (Detroit, Michigan: Sikh Missionary Center, 1990), pp. 174, 178.

⁹ Traditionally, the Jains have placed his dates from 459 to 529 C.E., which fits within the post-Gupta, pre-Islamic time frame. However, in 1919 Muni Jinavijayaji, a Jain monk and scholar, published an extensive critique of these dates, noting that Haribhadra had quoted prominent authors who flourished after his supposed dates. As a result of this essay, Jain and western scholars alike have accepted later dates for Haribhadra, also known as Haribhadrasūri, from 700 to 770 of the Common Era. However, R. Williams contends that in fact some of the texts attributed to Haribhadra could have been written in the sixth century, and suggests that in fact there were two Haribhadras, with the eighth century Haribhadra, whom he calls Yākinī-putra, imitating the style of an earlier master. See R. Williams, "Haribhadra," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. XXVIII (1965), pp. 101-111.

Rajasthan.¹⁰ He eventually became a Jaina monk of the Vidyādhara Gaccha headed by Jinabhaṭa, and wandered throughout Western India as a member of the Śvetāmbara order. Several traditional authors recorded legendary tales about the life, adventures, misadventures, and work of this prodigious scholar. Phyllis Granoff has summarized many such primary stories about Haribhadra.¹¹ In these stories, two primary themes remain constant: his conversion to Jainism and his conflict with the Buddhists.

The first set of stories reveal a man possessed of both brilliance and arrogance. In his early years, Haribhadra, a member of the Brahmin caste, achieved a great degree of learning. He became quite boastful about his academic accomplishments and tied a golden plate around his belly to prevent it from bursting from the weight of all his knowledge. In another version, he also carries a "twig from the jambu tree to show to all that there was no one his equal in all of Jambudvīpa, that is in all the civilized world. He also carried a spade, a net and a ladder in his desire to seek out creatures living in the earth, in water and in the ether in order to defeat them with his great learning."¹²

Thinking he had learned all that could be known, he proclaimed that if anyone could tell him something new, he would devote his life in its pursuit. It so happened that he

¹⁰ R. S. Shukla, *India as Known to Haribhadra Suri* (Meerut: Kusumanjali Prakashan, 1989), p. 1.

¹¹ She draws from a variety of works that begin to appear in the twelfth century, including Bhadrēśvara's *Kahāvali*; Sarvarājamuni's commentary on Jinadatta's *Gaṇadharārdhapaṭaka*, Prabhācandra's *Kathakośa* (1077 C.E.), a collection of stories known as the *Purāṇanprabandhasaṃgraha*, the *Prabhāvakacarita*, also attributed to a scholar named Prabhācandra, but at a later date (1277 C.E.), and Rājaśekarasūri's *Prabandhakośa* (1349 C.E.). See Phyllis Granoff, "Jain Lives of Haribhadra: An Inquiry into the Sources and Logic of the Legends," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1989, pp. 111-112.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

overheard a Jain nun called Yākinī reciting a verse he could not understand. Having been humiliated, he turned first to her and then to her teacher, Jinadatta, for instruction in the Jain faith, which he then embraced. After a period of study, he was granted the title Sūri or teacher and began to promulgate Jainism. In several of his treatises, the colophon or final verse describes himself as Yākinī-putra, or Yākinī's son, indicating the influence of this Jain nun on his life and thought.

The second set of stories include a dramatic and grisly tale of espionage, murder, and revenge. The *Prabhāvakacarita* of Prabhācandra (1277 C.E.) and the *Prabandhakośa* of Rājasekharasūri (1349 C.E.), building on earlier accounts, narrate the tragic story of two brothers, Haṃsa and Paramahaṃsa—who were both nephews and students of Haribhadra.¹³ They go to Mahābodhi to learn about the teachings of the Buddha. The brothers are exposed as spies after uttering an invocation to the Jina when awakened by suspicious Buddhists in the middle of the night. They use umbrellas to escape from the monastery. Buddhist soldiers catch and kill Haṃsa. Paramahaṃsa takes refuge with King Sūrapāla,¹⁴ who proposes a debate between

¹³ These nephews seem to be styled after two Jaina brothers, Akalaṅka and Niśkalaṅka, whose story is told in the *Kathakośa* (1077 C.E.) two centuries before a variant story about Haribhadra occurs in the *Prabhāvakacarita*. In the *Kathakośa*, the two brothers are put to a Buddhist loyalty test, fail, and beat a hasty escape. Niśkalaṅka is captured and put to death. Akalaṅka is sheltered by a Jaina queen and bests the Buddhist goddess Tārā in debate (Granoff, 114). The Haribhadra story, which occurs in several accounts, changes the names of the brothers to Haṃsa and Paramahaṃsa. In the *Purāṇanaprabandha-saṃgraha*, Haribhadra does not encourage the two students to enter the monastery. In this account, Haṃsa dies fighting Buddhist soldiers and Paramahaṃsa is killed after losing the debate. A bird takes Paramahaṃsa's bloodied path-clearing broom to Haribhadra, who, in a rage, "makes a cauldron of boiling oil and magically causes the Buddhists to fly through the sky and land in his boiling pot, where they [700 Buddhists] are scalded to death" (Granoff, 117). The mayhem stops when one of Haribhadra's students, sent by the teacher Jinabhadra, interrupts this process. Out of continuing despair (which would not be acceptable within the Jaina faith), he then fasts to death. For a complete investigation of these stories, see the excellent and intriguing article by Phyllis Granoff cited above.

¹⁴ No records can be found that confirm the existence of this king.

Paramahaṃsa and the Buddhists. The goddess Tārā secretly assists the Buddhists. The Jain goddess Ambā advises Paramahaṃsa about how to trick Tārā by asking her to repeat what she said the prior day, an impossibility for the gods who are unable to keep track of time. Paramahaṃsa won the debate. However, the Buddhists still intend to kill him. He hides as a laborer who washes clothes and then escapes to rejoin his uncle. As he tells the story to Haribhadra, Paramahaṃsa dies from the grief that he suffers due to the death of his brother. Haribhadra is outraged. King Sūrapāla arranges a debate between Haribhadra and the Buddhists. One by one, the Buddhists are defeated and sent to their deaths in boiling oil as arranged by the King. Out of great remorse for the killing of so many monks, Haribhadra then composes his many religious treatises; according to Rajaśekhara Sūri, each of the 1440 texts that Haribhadra wrote served as expiation for the 1440 Buddhists who died. However, according to the Purāṇanaprabandhasangraha, this violent outburst occurred after he had written all but his final text.

Intolerance or Respect for the Views of Others?

The stories of violence alluded above are completely at variance with the tremendous body of literature created by Haribhadra himself. Having worked closely with his *Yogaḍṛṣṭisamuccaya* and *Yogabindu*, I find it very odd that these tales of violence came to be associated with Haribhadra. Both texts extol the virtues of good people in all faiths, and are particularly solicitous toward the Buddhists. Phyllis Granoff observes:

Even at his most disputatious, in a text like the *Śāstravārtāsamuccaya*, which is written with the sole intent of refuting rival doctrines, Haribhadra makes clear at the very onset of the text that his motives are not to stir up hatred and dissent, but to enlighten his readers and bring them the benefits of ultimate spiritual peace. Haribhadra's respect for the Buddha is unmistakable when he calls him *mahāmuni*, "the great sage" and one is left with the general impression that Haribhadra's

respect for his Buddhist opponents is unchanged by his philosophical differences with them on specific points.¹⁵

His *Saḍdarśanasamuccaya*, a brief text of 87 verses, is used even today in India and the United States as a textbook for summarizing the major strands of Indian thought.¹⁶ His *Aṣṭakaparakaraṇa* lists eight qualities that can be universally applied to the faithful of any tradition: nonviolence, truth, honesty, chastity, detachment, reverence for a teacher, the act of fasting, and knowledge. Paul Dundas observes:

The remarkable scholar Sukhalal Sanghvi, who overcame the handicap of blindness contracted very early in life to become one of the most incisive of recent interpreters of Jain philosophy, described Haribhadra in a tribute as a *samadarshi*, 'viewing everything on the same level,' and his eminence derives not just from the breadth of his intellectual command but from his willingness to articulate more clearly than any of his predecessors the full implications of Jainism's main claim to fame among Indian philosophical systems, the many-pointed doctrine.¹⁷

Through his extensive writings, Haribhadra demonstrates his commitment to understand and respect the views of others, while maintaining his commitment to the core Jain beliefs in nonviolence and the need to purify oneself of the influences of *karma*.

Haribhadra's concern for respecting the views of all people of good faith can be seen throughout the *Yoga-drṣṭisamuccaya* (YDS). First of all, he always refers to good action in the most general terms, recommending that people

¹⁵ Granoff, "Lives of Haribhadra," *op. cit.*, p. 108.

¹⁶ For a recent translation of Haribhadra's *Saddarsanasamuccaya* by Olle Qvarnstrom in "Haribhadra and the Beginning of Doxography in India" in N.K. Wagle and Olle Qvarnstrom, editors, *Approaches to Jaina Studies: Philosophy, Logic, Rituals and Symbols* (Toronto: University of Toronto Centre for South Asian Studies, 1999), pp. 169-210.

¹⁷ Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 197.

follow the holy books (*śāstras*) but without specifying which books ought to be followed. He emphasizes that although one may become omniscient (*sarvajña*), each person will remain different and distinct (*YDS* 103).¹⁸ The content of experience is not shared; rather, the content less or purity, which cannot be quantified in any way, is the only common element within the experience of liberation or omniscience. He uses the metaphor of a king’s servants: “Just as a king has many dependents, divided according to whether they are near or far, etc., nonetheless all of them are his servants (*YDS* 107).” He states that even though they may have different names, the core, purified essence of the liberated ones remains constant (*YDS* 108). Although acknowledging a difference between those who have achieved liberation, nonetheless he regards all of them to be grounded in a common truth. Haribhadra further emphasizes that truth, though expressed differently, is not essentially different. Making references to Śaivites, Vedāntins, Yogins, and Buddhists, he states:

Eternal Śiva; Highest Brahman;
Accomplished Soul, Suchness.
With these words one refers to it,
Though the meaning is one
in all the various forms (*YDS* 130).

He goes on to state that this highest truth, by whatever name, frees one from rebirth (*YDS* 131). Demonstrating his commitment to a plurality of perspectives, Haribhadra comments that a variety of teachings are needed because people need to hear things in their own way. Different seeds yield different plants; one cannot expect all things to be the same:

Perhaps the teaching is one
But there are various people who hear it.
On account of the inconceivable merit it bestows,
it shines forth in various ways (*YDS* 136).

¹⁸ These summaries and translations are from a co-translation by myself and John Casey that will appear in *Reconciling Yogas: Haribhadra’s Collection of Views on Yoga* by Christopher Key Chapple (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

Haribhadra makes a plea for tolerance, writing that “various perspectives on conduct” can arise (YDS 138), but that these should not be criticized, as one cannot be apprised of all the circumstances (YDS 140). He advocates a stance of reconciliation and insists that it would be improper to refute or revile well-intentioned people:

Hence it is not proper to refute
words of reconciliation.

Refuting or reviling noble people, it seems,
would be worse than cutting one’s own tongue (YDS 141).

He advocated that even if one disagrees with another person’s ideas, one should always strive to be helpful to the other. He criticizes the notion that logic alone can set one free as can be seen from the following passage:

With effort, even a position inferred
through the proper establishment of premises
may certainly be approached in another way,
being assailed by opponents (YDS 145).

If the meaning of those things beyond the senses
could be known through a statement of reason,
then by now it would have been ascertained by the scholars (YDS 146).

In other words, thoughts alone cannot set one free; in contrast, the arrogance associated with logic and scholarship can be a great impediment to one’s liberation. He says that liberation requires a loosening of attachment to all things (*dharma*s), including argumentation and logic. Haribhadra concludes this section with an appeal to be kind and generous to all people. For instance, he writes:

Even the slightest of pain to others is to be avoided with great effort.

Along with this, one should strive to be helpful at all times (YDS 150).

This verse echoes a recurrent theme found in Jaina texts. He then takes on a theme akin to the bodhisattva ideal of Mahāyāna Buddhism:

Even in regard to those with excessive sin
who have been cast down by their own actions,
one should have compassion for those beings,
according to the logic of this highest dharma (*YDS* 152).

The task of the philosopher of nonviolence and of the Jaina is to extend compassion toward other living beings.

Reconsidering the Stories of Violence

In the light of the above passages from *YDS*, the stories about Haribhadra's violent acts against Buddhists seem implausible in several regards. First, stories surfaced five hundred years following his death. Second, by the time these particular Haribhadra stories reached currency, Buddhism was on the wane, if not already largely demolished by the sacking of Buddhist monasteries and libraries by Islamic invaders. Third, the violent actions attributed to Haribhadra seem quite inconsistent with the professed Jain nonviolent values he adopted and professed. His critiques of Hindu sacrificial violence are well known, found in several of his texts, both in Sanskrit and Prakrit. But the Buddhist tradition shares this disdain for violence in the name of religion and Buddhists make unlikely candidates for Haribhadra's challenge and assault.¹⁹

Hence, if we look at the stories in terms of their historical *sitz-im-leben*, another story might be told. The religious challenge in northern India in the 13th century came not from the Buddhists but from the Muslims. The Jains faced the difficult prospect of becoming an oppressed minority and needed to develop new strategies for being the "other" in a new context. In the Hindu-dominated world, their food observances gave them

¹⁹ Phyllis Granoff suggests that the reason that Haribhadra so wanted to distinguish Jainism from Buddhism lay in the fact that as Jainas sought patronage from Hindu kings, it might have been beneficial to clearly separate their own tradition from that of Buddhism, which had waned and become unpopular by the eleventh centuries. See the article by Granoff cited above, p. 123.

prestige, their marriage patterns formed no threat to and, in fact, largely reflected Hindu family practices, and their success in business as colleagues with other Vaisya merchants allowed the Jains to co-exist in relative peace with their neighbors. However, the emergence of Islamic theology required new, more creative responses to ensure survival and self-protection. By telling stories of Haribhadra, the exemplar of conversion and the author of several texts that argue the supremacy of Jaina doctrine, a new strategy emerges. Inverting the violence committed by others and attributing it to one's own community might have been a method for strengthening one's own self image, girding for continued confrontation. It would also have brought renewed attention to Haribhadra's work on pluralism, and provided a philosophical ground for remembering Haribhadra's techniques for establishing the value and practice of openness and tolerance which had helped their survival through the centuries.

By examining the actual writings of Haribhadra, no evidence can be found that he harbored or manifested violent tendencies. Because of the late date of the nephew stories and because they seem to be patterned on earlier stories told in the *Kathakośa*, a text unrelated to Haribhadra, I would like to suggest that these tales in fact were a veiled reference to contemporary situation, reflecting Jain difficulties in the presence of Islam. What lessons can be learned from this suggestion by the 13th and 14th century story tellers that people under duress can learn from the life of Haribhadra. What do these stories of Haribhadra convey to us? What can be learned about surviving in a climate of religious hostility from the wisdom of Haribhadra?

Human cruelty to other human beings knows no bounds. Even well intentioned, upright people (in the stories told by Prabhacandra and Rajaśekarasūri, even Haribhadra himself) can be prompted into violent acts of hatred and revenge. A fascinating recent work by John Conroy, *Unspeakable Acts: Ordinary People*, tells how Irish, Israelis, and Kosovans were

coerced out of their human heartedness to become torturers.²⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh, in his poem "Call Me By My True Names" reminds his readers and listeners that one can be a victim, such as the defenseless boat girl raped by a pirate that he describes. But one can also become a perpetrator. Thich Nhat Hanh writes "I am [also] the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving."²¹

Haribhadra of lore and Haribhadra the author left two legacies. Though clearly without historical basis, the Haribhadra stories have indicated that he staged espionage, sent his innocent nephews into the camp of the "other," and in his rage when they were discovered and punished, put to death hundreds of Buddhists. Haribhadra the philosopher and theologian promulgated a style of thinking that fosters a quest for self understanding and respect for the views of others. His gentle message, as we have seen, urges one not to be aggressive in one's views but to teach by example, always striving for greater purity and truth. The first Haribhadra seeks and obtains revenge. The second Haribhadra attempts to work for reconciliation, or at least peaceful co-existence. Martha Minow, in a comprehensive survey of contemporary attempts at conflict resolution, outlines the approaches to overcome the pain of wrongs committed:

Responses to collective violence lurch among rhetorics of history (truth), theology (forgiveness), justice (punishment, compensation, and deterrence), therapy (healing), art (commemoration and disturbance), and education (learning lessons). None is adequate. Yet, invoking these rhetorics, through collective steps such as prosecutions, truth commissions, memorials, and education, people wager that social responses can alter the emotional experiences of individuals and societies living after mass violence. Perhaps

²⁰ John Conroy, *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2000).

²¹ Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (eds.), *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 339.

rather than seeking revenge, people can come to desire to rebuild.²²

For Haribhadra the philosopher, his desire to be of a friendly mind to people of all faiths most likely stemmed from a process of self-reflection prompted by his atoning for his youthful hubris. His approaches to philosophical pluralism mirror, at least, two of the ideas put forth by Martha Minow: he attempts to truthfully present rival views and he works to educate. One might also find therapeutic aspects of his way of thinking and find art and beauty in his elegant use of language. The violent Haribhadra of lore does not fulfill any of these qualities; even his attempt at justice falls short of adequate or ethical.

The Jain tradition does allow its lay adherents to protect themselves and perhaps use violence as a last resort. However, the best of self-protection entails advance thinking, alertness, and an unwillingness to place oneself in a potentially harmful situation. Furthermore, *karma* theory prompts any person committed to nonviolence to first engage in an honest process of self-reflection. What cause underlies any occasion for violence? Does the faulty lie within oneself? What further disturbances will be caused by a violent response? By understanding the complex net of karmic repercussions, the thoughtful Jain will, rather than acting from a place of anger, will attempt to apply an analysis that takes into account some form of introspection, forgiveness, and reconciliation. A cultural expression of this can be found in the ritual of asking forgiveness for even unintended wrong that characterizes Jain ritual life.

In the context of increasing occurrence of violence in our world, the Haribhadra story of violence and the Haribhadra philosophy of tolerance offer two distinct types of solutions. One could respond in kind, as in the U.S. bombing in Afghanistan and in the alleged description of Haribhadra luring Buddhists to their

²² Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), p. 147.

death. Conversely, one could examine the root sources of discontent, examine if one finds oneself totally free of guilt, and explore one of the many avenues suggested recently by Martha Minow, and earlier by Haribhadra, the medieval philosopher through his writings.

How can one guard against the infinite varieties of human cruelty and violence including assent to "retributive justice"? What practice can serve as an antidote for a human being's descent into inhumanness? I would like to suggest that remembrance and mindfulness of one's own humanity and the humanity of the other even in times of difficulty must be maintained. In his grief and rage, Haribhadra is, in the telling of his story, said to have tortured 700 or even 1440 Buddhists to the point of death. The scale of Haribhadra's mythic revenge reminds us that even with the best of intentions human beings are capable of violence because of firmly held religious convictions. Vigilance is needed to keep to the precept put forth by Haribhadra, the philosopher and author, that "one must maintain compassion even toward those with excessive sin." Only by adhering to this most difficult measure of forgiveness can one break the cycle of violence.*

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Exemplars of Anekānta and Ahimsā: The Case of the Early Jains of Mathura in Art and Epigraphy

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The earliest surviving representations of Jain monks in art are found in the stone sculptures produced as early as the second century B.C.E. at Mathura, a city located about one hundred miles southeast of Delhi. The Jain monks depicted in these early works belonged to a special sect, whose members can be identified by the broad piece of pleated cloth draped over the left forearms of the otherwise nude monks. (See especially Figures 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, and 14).^{*} In inscriptions carved on works of art in which these monks appear, they called themselves *nirgranthas*,¹ a term found

^{*} All figures referred to in the text appear at the end of the article, pp. 133-142.

¹ An example of an inscription in which the term Nirgrantha occurs is on a stone plaque carved with two flying Ardhaphālaka monks venerating a *stūpa* (Figures 5 and 6). It reads as follows:

1. *namo ārahato vardhamānasa ādāye gaṇikā-*
2. *ye loṇaśobhikāye dhitu śramaṇasāvīkāye*
3. *nādāye gaṇikāye vasuṇe ārahato devik[u]la¹*
4. *āyāgasabhā prapā śil[ā]paṭo patisth[ā]pito nigatā-*
5. *na(m) ārahatāyātane sah[ā] matare bhaginiye dhitare putreṇa*
6. *sarveṇa ca pariṇanena arahata pūjāye*

(Translation: “Adoration to the *arhat* Vardhamāna! A shrine of the *arhat* (*ārahato devikula*), an assembly hall for an object of worship (*āyāgasabhā*), a cistern (*prapā*), and a stone slab (*śilāpaṭa*) were established in the sanctuary of the Nirgrantha *arhats* by Vasu, a junior (?) courtesan, [who is] the daughter of Loṇaśobhikā, the matron (?) courtesan, and the female disciple of the ascetics (*śramaṇasāvīkā*), with her mother, sister, daughter, son and her whole household, for the sake of honoring of the *arhats*.”)

in early Buddhist texts to refer to their Jain rivals, and literally means "those who are free from bonds." Several Jain and Buddhist texts, mostly of much later dates, refer to groups of Jain mendicants, who were in one way or another associated with a piece of cloth, by names such as *ekasāṭaka*, *ardhakarpāṭa*, *ardhaphālaka*, *yāpanīya*, or *gopya*.² In this paper I shall follow the precedent of the few scholars who have discussed these early Jain monks of Mathura and use the term "Ardhaphālaka" to refer to them, though it probably was not the name these monks used for themselves. "Ardhaphālaka" is a descriptive epithet which means "those with a partial piece of cloth."

No texts have been found that can be specifically associated with the Ardhaphālakas. Nor are there any texts that clearly identify them and explain their practices. Padmanabh S. Jaini has published a thorough study of passages in literature that might refer to the monks of this sect,³ but almost all of them were composed many centuries after their demise. "Given the variety of possibilities presented in various sources," concludes Jaini, "a conclusive identification of the sect of these *ardhaphālaka* images on the Mathura sculptures cannot be made from the available literary evidence."⁴ Therefore, the art historical and epigraphical records are the most reliable documents for understanding the tenets and mores of the Ardhaphālaka monks of Mathura. Upon

² The term *ekasāṭaka* appears in the Theravāda Buddhist *Samyuttanikāya*. The term, *Ardhakarpāṭa*, is used by Rāmacandra Mumukṣu in the twelfth century in his Sanskrit version of the *Badrabāhucarita*. The terms *ardhaphālaka* and *yāpana* appear in the *Bhadraḥāhukathānaka*, a section of Hariṣeṇa's *Bṛhatkathakośa* of the tenth century. And, the term, *Gopya* is found in a fifteenth-century commentary by Guṇaratna on Haribhadra's *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*. See Padmanabh S. Jaini, "Jaina Monks from Mathura: Literary Evidence for their Identification on Kuṣāṇa Sculptures," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (Vol. LVIII, Part 3, 1995), pp. 488, 479 (fn 2), 480, 487.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 479-494.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 492.

examining their depictions in art along with their inscriptions, it becomes evident that the Ardhapālaka monks of early Mathura were exemplars of *ahiṃsā* and *anekānta*, and their vigorous adherence to these principles apparently resulted in their being exceptionally prosperous, popular, and influential. Their practices significantly shaped the future of Jainism and Jain art, and, as a dominant religious group at Mathura, they were instrumental in creating a cosmopolitan cultural center where followers of diverse religions peacefully coexisted.

This paper begins with a brief history of the Ardhapālakas in sculptural representations, followed by a discussion of how we know that they embraced the tenets of *ahiṃsā* and *anekānta*, despite the lack of Ardhapālaka Jain treatises. Finally, the paper will identify some of the benefits resulting from the Ardhapālakas' practice of *ahiṃsā* and *anekānta*.

Archaeological evidence suggests that the Ardhapālaka sect of Jain monks was localized in Mathura, for no traces of them have been found elsewhere. They were active from at least the second century B.C.E. until the end of the Kushan Period in the late third century C.E., after which time they were no longer represented in art.⁵ They are ubiquitous on pedestals of Jain *Tirthaṅkara* images of the Kushan Period at Mathura (second and third centuries C.E.), such as the image of Pārśva in Figure 1.⁶ In the detail of Pārśva's pedestal in Figure 2, the Ardhapālaka monks are shown standing to the left of the central *cakrastambha*. As in all Kushan depictions, the Ardhapālaka monks are shown holding their distinctive piece of cloth in front of their bodies so

⁵ These statements are contingent upon evidence that has been discovered to date and of which the author is aware. They can be modified if conclusive evidence for the existence of monks belonging to the Ardhapālaka sect is found in a region other than Mathura, at a time earlier than the second century B.C.E. or later than the fourth century C.E.

⁶ This sculpture of seated Pārśvanātha in the State Museum, Lucknow (J.113/J.25) is inscribed as having been made in the Year 58 during the reign of the Kushan emperor Huvishka by a donor named Nāgasena.

as to cover their genitals. Such a practice was reviled as heretical by the orthodox Digambaras.

The Ardhapālakas seem to have particularly favored image worship, for more Jina icons have been discovered at Mathura than any other region in India during the pre-Kushan and Kushan Periods when the Ardhapālakas were active. Because the monks are so frequently depicted on the pedestals of Jina images during the Kushan period, scholars such as N. P. Joshi, Padmanabh S. Jaini, and U. P. Shah, who have studied the representation of the Ardhapālakas in art, have primarily dealt with sculptures such as these.⁷ Not previously studied, however, is their presence on Mathura sculptures that significantly predate the Kushan period. Possibly even as early as the second century B.C.E., in a narrative scene from Mathura depicting the renunciation of the first Jina Ṛṣabha, two Ardhapālaka monks may be identified (Figure 3).⁸ Though partially obscured by an unfortunate intrusive mortise cut when this architrave was reused as a railing pillar at some later date, portions of two monks are still visible. They are shown nude, with a piece of cloth, and they have been carved next to the earliest identifiable images of Jinās in human form. These two nude ascetics are possibly identifiable as Ṛṣabha himself after his renunciation. The smaller of the two holds an alms bowl in his left hand, and a small cloth in his right hand. The larger of the

⁷ U. P. Shah, *Jaina Rūpa Maṇḍana*, New Delhi, 1987, especially pp. 5-8; N. P. Joshi, "Early Jaina Icons from Mathurā," in *Mathurā: The Cultural Heritage*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 332-367; and Padmanabh S. Jaini, "Jaina Monks from Mathura: Literary Evidence for their Identification on Kuṣāṇa Sculptures," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. LVIII, part 3, 1995, pp. 479-494.

⁸ The seated figure in the lower right of the group carved in the central portion of the architrave, with the large turban and grasping a pillar of the pavilion, is identifiable as Ṛṣabha prior to his renunciation. At this point in his life Ṛṣabha was a king, witnessing the impending death of the dancing nymph Nīlāñjanā under the pavilion, which event propelled him to renounce the kingly life and become a wandering ascetic. For the story of the life of Ṛṣabhanātha, see Champat Rai Jain, *Ṛṣabha Deva: The Founder of Jainism*, Allahabad, 1929.

two originally may have held the cloth in his left hand or draped over his left forearm; the damaged condition of the stone makes it impossible to know for certain. At the left end of the frieze are two depictions of the Jina R̥ṣabha, seated in meditation, with his distinctive single lock of hair depicted like a pigtail. Following parallel representations in later Jain manuscripts, the one on the right may depict R̥ṣabha in *dhyāna*, or meditation, while the second figure may depict him in *kevala samādhi*, or the state of eternal meditative bliss.⁹ While this remarkable early relief sculpture of the second century B.C.E. does not depict Ardhapālaka monks in the usual fashion as seen in later sculptures, it is noteworthy that the representations of nude Jain ascetics on this architrave are both associated with a piece of cloth. This sculpture may represent an early phase in the formation of the Ardhapālaka *saṅgha*, before the manner of donning the small piece of cloth was clearly codified.

Between the first century BCE and first century CE, the representation of Ardhapālaka monks in Mathura sculptures appears to have assumed a consistent pattern. The identifying piece of cloth, which we can call a *colapaṭṭa*, is invariably draped over the left forearm, as we see in Figures 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, and 14. One of the most common ways in which they are depicted in pre-Kushan art is in flight through the air. The fragment in Figure 4 is from a sculpted relief probably not unlike the one in Figure 5, though it is about one hundred years older. The umbrella in Figure 4 originally would have surmounted a sacred site or object, such as a *stūpa*, like the one on the complete relief in Figure 5. The Ardhapālaka monks in Figures 4 and 5 are shown in a flying posture, hovering in the air at a higher level than the celestial *kinnaras*, who bring garlands or flowers as pious offerings to the site. It is clear that the Ardhapālakas were considered to be of a

⁹ An unpublished folio from a manuscript of the life of R̥ṣabha in the San Diego Museum of Art (1990:214), dating to the seventeenth century, depicts two images of R̥ṣabha seated in meditation on block-like pedestals. One is labeled *dhana*, while the other is labeled *kavalasamaya*.

higher status than the celestial beings.¹⁰ Their ability to fly through the air as *vidyā cāraṇa munis*, is indicative of their advanced achievements in meditative practice. In the detail in Figure 6, the Ardhaphālaka monk is shown flying through the air, visibly nude; the *colapaṭṭa* draped over his left forearm does not shield his genitals at all. In his left hand he carries a small pot, and his right hand touches his forehead in a gesture of homage and veneration.

The high status of a flying Ardhaphālaka monk is also to be seen in the carvings on a large tympanum, which may have, when it was intact, formed the top of an imposing arched doorway leading into an Ardhaphālaka precinct of the early first century C.E. (Figure 7). Only a fraction of the flying nude Ardhaphālaka monk remains on the broken edge in the central register of this tympanum. His leg bent in the posture of flying is seen in the detail in Figure 8, as is his arm with the salient *colapaṭṭa* draped over the left forearm. The object held over the monk's right shoulder is the *rajoharaṇa*, or whisk broom used by Jain monks to sweep the path before them as they walk. In the original center of this tympanum (now lost) would have been an object of worship, probably a seated Jina image, if it is analogous to other similar tympana that survive intact from the Kushan Period (Figure 9). Note that on the broken early tympanum (Figures 7 and 8) the Ardhaphālaka monk is placed closer to the holy object in the center of the tympanum than the flying gods who bear offerings of lotus flowers behind him.

The remains of another architrave from Mathura dating to the pre-Kushan period of the early first century C.E. depicts three Ardhaphālaka monks (Figure 10). The scene on the left portion seems to be in a monastic setting with a tank. One Ardhaphālaka monk, who is nude with the *colapaṭṭa* over his left forearm and a

¹⁰ For a discussion of the exalted status of Ardhaphālaka monks see my "Closer to Heaven than the Gods: Jain Monks in the Art of Pre-Kushan Mathura," *Marg*, March 2001, pp. 57-68.

small pot in his left hand, approaches the tank with his right hand outstretched. In the center of the surviving fragment is what appears to be an Ardhapālaka monk of particularly high status, as he is seated on a cushion or platform under a tree.¹¹ He has the water pot in his left hand and *colapaṭṭa* over his left forearm, while his right hand is raised to his shoulder holding the handle of a *rajoḥaraṇa*, whose bristles drape over his shoulder. He is being venerated by a layman, standing before him, clothed and bejeweled, with his hands pressed together in *añjalīmudrā*.

A more enigmatic depiction of an Ardhapālaka monk is represented in Figure 10, where only the lower halves of three figures are visible on the back of a mythical serpentine creature riding through a rocky sylvan setting. The foremost figure is an Ardhapālaka monk with his pot and *colapaṭṭa*, while seated behind him are a lay man and woman, who faces backwards.

Ardhapālaka monks are also found in more iconic settings, in the central circles of sacred plaques called *āyāgapaṭas*.¹² The one in Figures 11 and 12 dates to the early first century C.E., and it depicts the Jina Pārśva seated in meditative bliss while being venerated by two Ardhapālaka monks. The monks are completely nude with the *colapaṭṭa* draped over each of their left forearms (Figure 12). Their hands are pressed together in *añjalīmudrā*, the gesture of adoration. As in all pre-Kushan depictions, the *colapaṭṭa* is not used to cover nudity, but is nevertheless constantly present.

By the Kushan Period of the second and third centuries C.E., however, the *colapaṭṭa* invariably covers the frontal nudity

¹¹ This presentation of the monk seated under a tree echoes the placement of divinities and sacred altars under trees. The Ardhapālaka Jains of Mathura seem to have adopted the universally recognized idea of locating a holy being under a tree on a platform, as did the Buddhists in the placement of Siddhartha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. Here, however, a mere monk is depicted in such an exalted state, and his sanctity is further emphasized by his being worshipped by a lay person.

¹² For a full discussion of *āyāgapaṭas*, see my "Āyāgapaṭas: Characteristics, Symbolism, and Chronology," in *Artibus Asiae*, LX, 1990, pp. 79-137.

of Ardhaphālaka monks, as seen in the plaque dated to the early third century C.E. (Figure 13),¹³ and on the lion pedestal of the late second century C.E. (Figure 2). The monks themselves are still highly revered as seen in Figure 13 where the Ardhaphālaka cleric is being venerated by serpent deities, and the lay followers.

How can we tell from the sculptural representations that members of the Ardhaphālaka sect in early Mathura, whom the Digambaras deem heretical, practiced *ahimsā*? One clear piece of evidence is their use of the *rajoharaṇa*, which they frequently hold, both in pre-Kushan and Kushan sculptures (Figures 10, 8, and 13). This whisk broom was used to sweep tiny creatures from their path to prevent any injury to them while the mendicants walked. Even the distinctive emblem of the sect, the *colapaṭṭa*, may have been used for preventing injury to living beings. A fifth-century Buddhist source, the *Dhammapada-Aṭṭhakatha*, states that the Nirgranthas wore the cloth not to cover their frontal nudity, but to prevent one-sense beings found in dust and dirt from entering the alms bowl and being eaten or harmed accidentally. It is interesting to note that the bowl is held in combination with the *colapaṭṭa* in early representations, though it doesn't actually cover the bowl itself (Figures 6 and 10).

Another piece of evidence for the practice of *ahimsā* by the Ardhaphālaka monks can be found in their holding of the

¹³ The somewhat damaged inscription on this plaque reads as follows:

1. s[i]ddha[m] saṃ 90 9 gri 2 di 10 6 koḷyāt[o] gaṇato ṭhaniyāto kulāto vai[rā]to . . . [vo]to aryasura[po] . 2. śiṣiṇi dhamaśriye ... ṇavartinā grahadatasya dhi[tu] dhanahathi . . .

A. ā...gha[?]ṣṭhiviji

B. kaṇa śramaṇa

(Translation: "Hail! In the year 99 in the second month of summer, on the sixteenth day . . . the daughter of Grahadata, [the wife of ?] Dhanahathi . . . at the request Dhamaśiri, the female pupil of Aryasurapo-- of the Koliya gaṇa, the Ṭhaniya (Sthāniya) kula, and the Vaira [...vo]."

A. "Ānagha--ṣṭhaviṇi"

B. "The ascetic Kaṇa")

mukhapatīkā, which is a small cloth used to cover the mouth during speech to prevent any tiny beings from accidentally entering the mouth and being injured or killed (Figure 14). The *mukhapatīkā* is also grasped in the left hands of the Ardhapālaka monks on the detail of a Jina pedestal (Figure 15), where they are also shown holding their *rajoharaṇas* up in their right hands.

It is interesting to note in connection with the image in Figure 15, that a fully clothed Śvetāmbara monk is depicted together with the Ardhapālakas, at the left. This suggests that by the mid to late Kushan Period, the Ardhapālakas of Mathura began to integrate with the canonical Śvetāmbaras, and were eventually subsumed into the Śvetāmbara sect of Jainism, thereby explaining their disappearance in art after the third century C. E. This gradual integration into the Śvetāmbara sect may also explain the shift towards covering their frontal nudity with the *colapaṭṭa* in the later images.

Now we shall turn to the question of how the Ardhapālaka monks of early Mathura exemplify the ideals of *anekānta*. The Ardhapālakas were very open to the ideas and practices of other religions they came across. Their adoption of practices and accouterments from other religious groups, such as Brahmanism, cults of popular *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs*, and Buddhism, testifies to their attitudes of tolerance and acceptance. They also did not hesitate to include among their followers women, foreigners, and members of any classes or occupations. This attitude made them more familiar and more easily acceptable to the local population. In turn, such attitude facilitated the conversion to Jainism of lay people, many of these were very wealthy and prominent, especially in pre-Kushan Mathura. One feature they seem to have adopted from Brahmanical Hinduism was the idea of the *vidyā cāraṇamuni* and the holding of the pot in the left hand, which is a standard attribute of Brahmins. Figure 16 is a second century B.C.E. depiction of Brahmins holding a pot in their left hands and able to fly through the air as a result of their high-level austerities. This depiction is very similar to the flying Ardhapālaka monks

on the plaque in Figures 5 and 6, only the Jain monk is nude and tonsured.

Even the *colapaṭṭa* itself may have been adopted from the practice of Brahmins who, in the pre-Kushan periods draped the skin of a black antelope over their left forearms, rather than over the left shoulder as was the practice during the Kushan period and later. In Figures 17 and 18 are relief carvings of Brahmins. The former depicts a scene from a Jātaka story in which the Buddha was a Brahmin in a previous life, and he wears the black antelope skin in the same way that the Ardhaphālakas wore the *colapaṭṭa*. The relief in Figure 18 is a detail from the story of the Brahmin ascetic boy Ṛśyaśṛṅga, who is similarly depicted with the antelope skin over his left forearm. This may have been a practice of revered Brahmin ascetics that was adopted by the Ardhaphālaka Jains, but adapted to cohere with the non-violent tenets of Jainism. Thus the black antelope skin was converted to a strip of cloth, though it still functioned as the emblem of an ascetic.

A distinctive aspect of the Ardhaphālaka Jains of Mathura is their focus on *stūpa* worship, but without any evidence of the *stūpas*' association with a relic.¹⁴ Two examples of bas relief depictions of a *stūpa* under worship by Jains are on the stone plaque in Figure 5 and in the spandrel of the tympanum in Figure 19. It is possible that the Ardhaphālaka Jains adopted the centrality of *stūpa* worship from their Buddhist neighbors, though this is a point that bears further investigation. The monument of the *stūpa* could serve as a focal point of veneration for the Jain spiritual community, as it did for the Buddhists. Nowhere else in Jain art or at other Jain archaeological site does the *stūpa* play such a prominent role as it did in early Mathura. The donative inscription on the bas relief depiction of the *stūpa* in Figure 5

¹⁴ The archaeological remains of the prominent Jain *stūpa* at Kaṅkāli-Ṭīla in Mathura were published by Vincent Smith in *The Jain Stupa and Other Antiquities at Mathura*, Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series, vol. XX, North-Western Provinces and Oudh, vol. V: Muttra Antiquities, 1900.

states that a female courtesan and a lay disciple along with members of her family gave a shrine, an assembly hall, a cistern and a stone slab to the Jain sanctuary,¹⁵ thus expanding a monastic complex that would have included a *stūpa*. The *stūpas* were dedicated to a Jina, such as Mahāvīra; the one in the slab in Figure 5 appears to be a bas relief representation of a *stūpa* that was dedicated to Mahāvīra, for the inscription opens with an invocation to him, and his cognizance of the lion is found atop one of the flanking pillars. It was a large *stūpa*, built upon a high platform, the entrance stairway of which is flanked by a *yakṣa* on the left and a *yakṣī* on the right.

Yakṣas and *yakṣīs* were remarkably prominent and especially important to the local population of Mathura during this early period,¹⁶ and the Ardhaphalaka Jains were tolerant of and receptive to this proclivity. Their early art includes many *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* in their pantheon of Jain deities. A famous Jain relief invoking Mahāvīra, which was dedicated by a female lay disciple in the Year 72 during the reign of the Mahākṣatrapa

¹⁵ See note 1, above.

¹⁶ More iconic statues of *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* have been found from the environs of Mathura dating from the second century B.C.E. to the first century C.E. than from any other single region on the Indian subcontinent. This statistic holds despite the fact that most sites at Mathura have yet to be systematically excavated. The prominence of *yakṣa* cults at Mathura are also attested in early Buddhist literature. The Pali *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, relates that in Mathura, “[the ground] is uneven; there is much dust; there are fierce dogs; bestial yakkhas; and alms are got with difficulty.” (F. L. Woodward and E. M. Hare, trans., *The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Āṅguttara Nikāya)*, 5 vols., Pali Text Society Translation Series, nos. 22, 24-27, London, Pali Text Society, 1932-36, vol. 3, p. 188. Cf. John Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, p. 29.) One such fierce *yakṣa* of Mathura, named Gardabha, is said to have been converted by the Buddha in Aśvaghōṣa’s *Buddhacarita*. (*Buddhacarita*, xxi.25. *The Buddhacarita or Acts of the Buddha*, E. H. Johnston, trans., Delhi, 1984 (first published in Lahore, 1936), Part III, p. 59.) The prominence of *yakṣas* in Mathura is also reflected in the Buddhist *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya*, wherein Brahmins entreat the Buddha to quell *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* who ravage the city. The Buddha subsequently converts these beings to Buddhism, and the citizens of Mathura are enjoined to build Buddhist *viḥāras* in their honor. (John Strong, *The Legend and Cult of Upagupta*, p. 6; *Gilgit Manuscripts*, 9 vols., edited by Nalinaksha Dutt, Calcutta, 1939-59, vol. 3, pt. 1, 16-17.).

Śoḍāsa (ca. C.E. 15), features a figure that is best identified as a *yakṣī* who has been subsumed within Jainism (Figure 20). Similarly, at the broken edge of the lowest register of the tympanum we discussed above (Figure 7), is a representation of a seated goddess being venerated by female devotees. In this way the Ardhapālakas exhibited an inclusivist attitude towards local divinities, embracing them within their own religion. This was apparently attractive to women who were not obliged to abandon their traditional divinities associated with childbirth and prosperity when they embraced Jainism. Consequently, women made up a large segment of the lay Jain population of early Mathura, and they were some of the most generous donors and patrons of Jain sites.

One special *yakṣa* deity incorporated into the Jain pantheon by the Ardhapālakas, like other *yakṣas*, *yakṣīs*, and *nāgas* was the goat-headed *yakṣa* associated with childbirth, called Naigameṣin. A damaged image of Naigameṣin stands guard at the entrance of an Ardhapālaka Jain stupa (Figure 5), while another is found on a gateway architrave (Figure 21). Both images, which date to the first century C.E., may represent early incorporation of Naigameṣin into Jainism, possibly even before the rise of the tradition regarding the transfer of the embryo of Mahāvīra found in the Śvetāmbara canons. Fertility goddesses are also carved on the Jain architrave with Naigameṣin (Figure 21). The Ardhapālaka incorporation of the *yakṣa* cult into their open and tolerant form of Jainism also included the worship of trees, as seen in a detail from a Jain *āyāgapata*.

Not only did the Ardhapālakas include divinities and practices from other religious groups, but the art historical evidence shows that they also encouraged foreigners to be followers of their religion. In the lower register of a tympanum dating to the Kushan Period (Figure 9) Scythians in non-Indian dress consisting of tunics, trousers and boots worship a seated Jain goddess, who is flanked by Naigameṣin and another male

divinity. In the topmost register of the same tympanum Ardphālaka monks venerate a *stūpa* with their female disciples, while lay men honor the image of a seated *Tirthāṅkara* in the middle register. The inclusion of foreigners, women, *stūpas*, *yakṣas*, *yakṣīs* and anthropomorphic images into Ardphālaka Jainism as seen on this one tympanum bespeaks the adherence of these unique early Jains of Mathura to the ideals of *anekānta*.¹⁷

The Ardphālaka Jains also adopted the Mathuran propensity for iconic image worship. The earliest identifiable depictions of *Tirthāṅkaras* in human form, the seated figures of Ṛṣabha (Figure 3), are from Mathura, datable to around the second century B.C.E. They apparently were based on the prototype of the Brahmanical ascetic (*tapasvin*), with feet crossed, seated on a platform.¹⁸ The form was adapted to suit Jain ideals, for the images of Ṛṣabha are in the posture of meditation, instead of active instruction, and no antelope skin covers their pedestals,

¹⁷ In the pre-Kushan Jain tympanum from Mathura of the first century C.E. there are no examples of figures in Scythian dress. There are, however, a significant number of figures wearing an Iranian type of headgear, consisting in horizontally wrapped turbans secured to one's head by means of a broad strap worn under the chin (Figures 7 and 19). J. C. Harle and Domenico Faccenna have demonstrated that this type of headgear is generally worn by grooms, horsemen, warriors or hunters. (J. C. Harle, "The significance of wrapped heads in Indian sculpture," *South Asian Archaeology* 1979, ed. H. Härtel, Berlin, 1981, pp. 401-11; D. Faccenna, "The turban in the figural frieze from the Main Stūpa of the Buddhist Sacred Area of Saidu Sharif I (Swat, Pakistan) and the Corpus of Gandhāra sculpture," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology*, vol. 6, 1999/2000, pp. 45-9, esp. figs. 2, 7, and 8.) Whether those who wear them are necessarily foreigners in Mathura is uncertain. This sort of headgear is found in regions were particularly in close contact with the West, namely, Bhoja in Western India, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh, and Gandhara and Swat. In any event, this kind of headgear is foreign to Mathura and is not regularly seen in art from India-proper. It appears to be an Iranian type of hat that was worn frequently either by Iranians in India employed as grooms or local people who adopted the Iranian item of dress. Be they foreigners or low-class grooms, hunters, or soldiers, men with this type of headgear were embraced by the Ardphālakas, which serves as further evidence for their attitudes of *anekānta*.

¹⁸ For an example of a seated Brahmanical *tapasvin* dating to the mid- to late second century B.C. see A. K. Coomaraswamy, *La Sculpture de Bharhut*, Paris, 1956, pl. XLIV, fig. 172.

thus showing their adherence to *ahimsā*. Shortly thereafter, full scale Jinas carved in the round were being produced at Mathura, presumably by the impetus of the Ardhamphalaka Jains, like the standing Pārśva of the early first century B.C.E. (Figure 23). Images of Jinas subsequently are found frequently in the Jain art of Mathura through first century C.E. Thus, the strong tradition of making images of Jinas as objects of worship in human form seems to have been started under the auspices of the open-minded Ardhamphalakas at Mathura. The veneration of *Tirthāṅkara* images continues to be central to the Jain faith to this day.

The Jains of Mathura, who, before the mid-second century C.E. belonged to the Ardhamphalaka sect, as far as the currently available evidence indicates, had been making human images of Jinas since the second century B.C.E. They created a climate of openness and tolerance, by inviting members of other religions, various ethnicities, and people from all walks of life into their fold. They adopted monuments, images and practices associated with contemporaneous religions that were familiar and popular among the residents of Mathura. Consequently, they successfully attracted a large, wealthy, and diverse following, and became instrumental for the production of a great deal of art for their grand monastic complexes, and, as far as the archaeological evidence attests, they became a dominant religious group in Mathura.

The other religions of the area then responded and seemed to follow the Ardhamphalaka model in ways such as the making of human images for worship. The earliest surviving image of the Buddha in human form was found in Mathura and is datable to the early first century C.E. (Figure 24). It bears close resemblance to images of Jinas produced for their Ardhamphalaka neighbors, such as the seated Pārśva from the center of an *āyāgapata* (Figure 12). After this time the image cult among the Buddhists gradually gained momentum, such that by the early second century C.E., colossal stone Buddhas were being exported

to other cities in northern India. Similarly, Hindu imagery took root and diversified during the period when the Ardhapālakas were flourishing.

The art historical, epigraphical and archaeological evidence shows that the Ardhapālaka sect of Jains in Mathura, who evidently embraced the ideals of *ahimsā* and *anekānta*, were instrumental in creating a tolerant, diverse environment in a cosmopolitan cultural center where the arts were copiously patronized, and different religions flourished alongside one another. Scholars have often wondered why Mathura was the seat of so many key religious movements and iconographic developments that significantly affected the course of history. The answer may lie in the influence exerted by the Ardhapālaka Jain monks and their followers, who comprised a large segment of the population, and the atmosphere of inclusiveness, peace, and tolerance that they helped to create and uphold.



Figure 1. Seated Parsva. Mathura, second century A.D., State Museum, Lucknow J.113/J.25. (Photo: Sonya Rhie Quintanilla, courtesy State Museum, Lucknow.)

Figure 2. Detail of the pedestal in Figure 1. (Photo: Sonya Rhie Quintanilla, courtesy State Museum, Lucknow.)



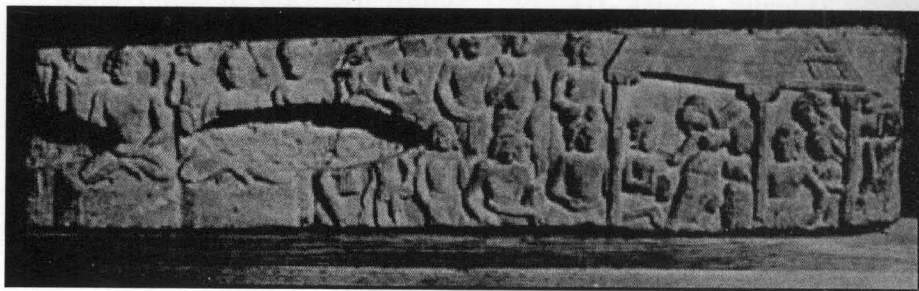


Figure 3. Architrave with Renunciation of Rṣabha. Mathura, late second century B.C., State Museum, Lucknow J.354/609. (Photo: AIIS)



Figure 4. Fragment of a panel with flying Ardhaphālaka monk and kinnara. Mathura, c. early to mid first century B.C., State Museum, Lucknow J.105. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy State Museum, Lucknow.)

Figure 5. Stone plaque depicting the veneration of a Jain stūpa. Mathura, c. mid to late first century A.D., Government Museum, Mathura Q.2. (Photo: After Ludwig Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture*, New York, 1929, pl. 91.)





Figure 6. Detail of flying Ardhāphalaka monk from Figure 5. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy Government Museum, Mathura.)



Figure 7. Jain tympanum. Mathura, c. early first century A.D., National Museum, New Delhi J.555. (Photo: After L. Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture*, New York, 1929, pl. 102.)



Figure 8. Detail of Figure 7. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy National Museum, New Delhi.)

Figure 9. Jain tympanum. Mathura, second century A.D., State Museum, Lucknow B.207. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy State Museum, Lucknow.)

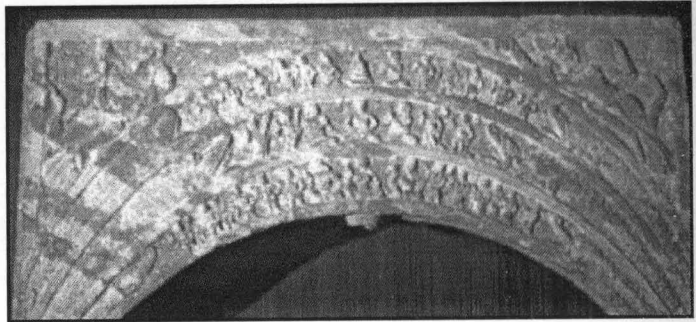


Figure 10. Jain architrave with Ardhapālaka monks. Mathura, c. early first century A.D., Brooklyn Museum of Art 87.188.5, Gift of Michael and Georgia de Havenon. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy Brooklyn Museum of Art.)



Figure 11. Āyāgapāṭa with veneration of Pārśva by two Ardhaphālaka monks. Mathura, c. early first century A.D., State Museum, Lucknow J.253. (Photo: John M. Rosenfield.)



Figure 12. Detail of Figure 11. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy State Museum, Lucknow.)



Figure 13. Kāṇa Plaque, Mathura, c. early third century A.D., State Museum, Lucknow J.623. (Photo: John M. Rosenfield.)

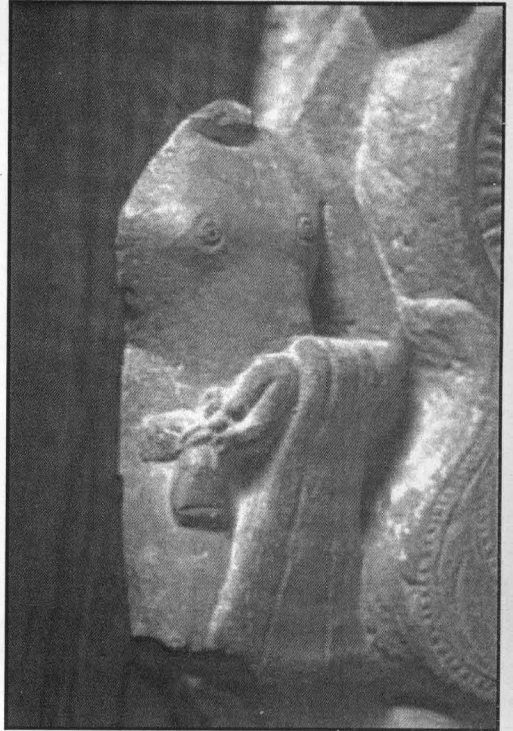


Figure 14. Detail of a Jain pedestal with an Ardhaṇṭhalaka monk. Mathura, second century A.D., State Museum, Lucknow J.20. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy State Museum, Lucknow.)



Figure 15. Detail of a Jain Pedestal with Ardhaphālaka monks and a Śvetāmbara monk. Mathura, second century A.D., State Museum, Lucknow J.26. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy State Museum, Lucknow.)

Figure 16. Brahmin ascetics flying through the air. Detail from the coping stone, Bharhut, Madhya Pradesh, c. mid second century B.C., Indian Museum, Calcutta. (Photo: After A. K. Coomaraswamy, *La Sculpture de Bharhut*, Paris, 1956, fig. 251.)



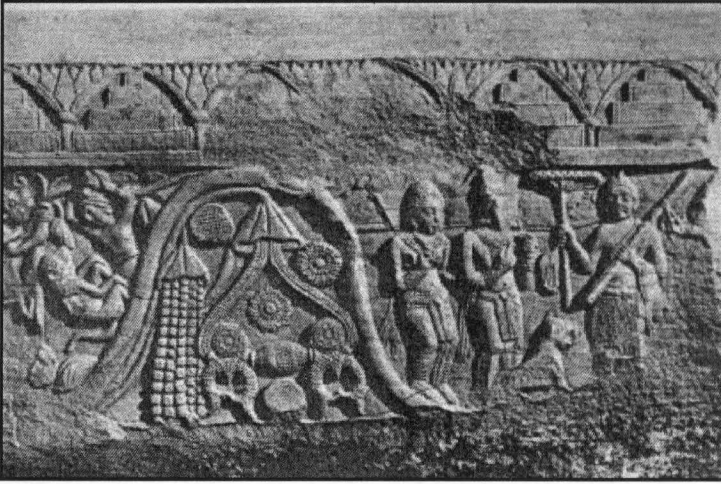


Figure 17. *Mahabōdhi Jataka*. Detail from the coping stone, Bharhut, Madhya Pradesh, c. mid second century B.C., Indian Museum, Calcutta. (Photo: After A. K. Coomaraswamy, *La Sculpture de Bharhut*, Paris, 1956, fig. 137.)

Figure 18. *Rśyaśṛṅga*, the brahmin ascetic and the Princess Shanta. Detail from a rail post, Mathura, c. early first century B.C., Government Museum, Mathura 76.40. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy Government Museum, Mathura.)

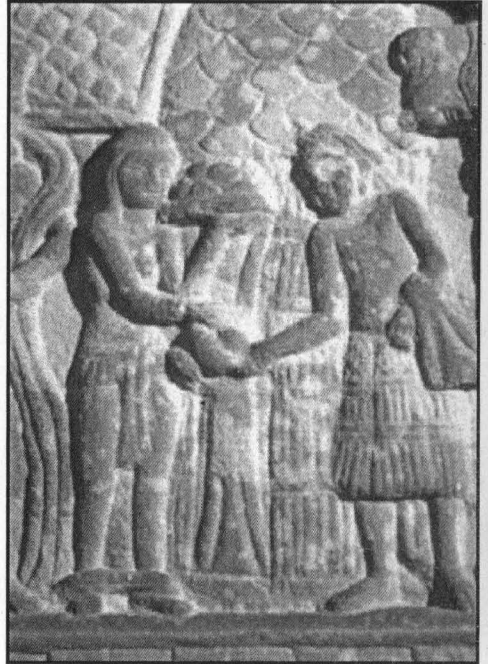




Figure 19. Worship of a Jain stupa. Detail from a Jain tympanum. Mathura, c. early first century A.D., National Museum, New Delhi. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy National Museum, New Delhi.)

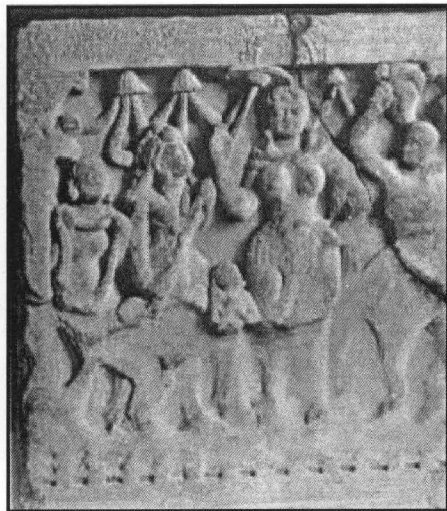


Figure 20. Jain stone plaque dedicated by Amohini. Mathura, early first century A.D., State Museum, Lucknow J.1. (Photo: After Ludwig Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture*, New York, 1929, pl. 74.)



Figure 21. Detail from an architrave depicting Naigameshin. Mathura, c. late first century A.D., State Museum, Lucknow, J.626. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy State Museum, Lucknow.)

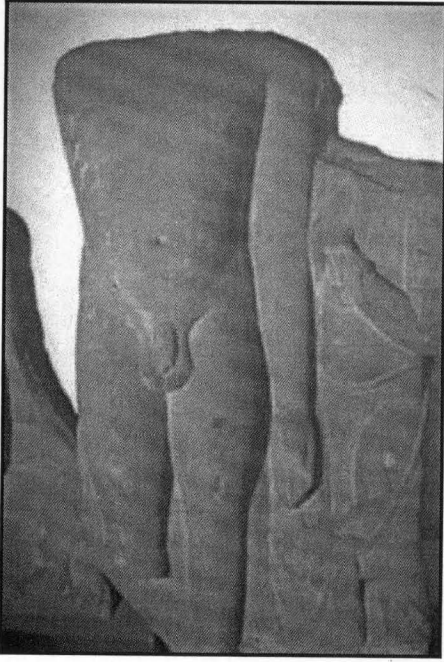


Figure 22. Standing Pārśva with attendant. Mathura, c. early first century B.C., State Museum, Lucknow J.82. (Photo: S. R. Quintanilla, courtesy State Museum, Lucknow.)

Figure 23. Buddha and *lokapālas*. Mathura, c. early first century A.D., Government Museum, Mathura H.12 (Photo: Government Museum, Mathura.)



Mahāvīra's Teachings in Indian History Textbooks

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Textbooks play a critical role in the process of learning as “authentic” sources of knowledge for college students, who often know little about the subject matter. This is particularly true of college students in the United States enrolling in survey courses such as History of India. Many K-12 Educators (elementary, middle and high school teachers) also rely on Indian History textbooks to familiarize themselves about the subject matter in which they often lack prior training. One primary reason for this is that they are now required, at least in some states like California, to integrate India in their K-12 world history curriculum. Therefore, these texts, in addition to serving as authoritative sources for college students, inform the K-12 teachers, and through them their very impressionable students. One of the topics students are most interested in learning about India is the Indic religions. Of the major Indian religions, the least discussed in the history textbooks is Jainism.

In this paper, I focus on the representation of Mahāvīra and Jainism--India's ancient most *Śramaṇa* tradition--in the Indian History textbooks. Jainism, as we know today, is rooted in the teachings of Mahāvīra. The Jain canonical literature, the *Āgams*, not only serve a significant role within the tradition but are also regarded as primary sources for historians and social scientists, especially for writing about early periods of Indian history. Like Buddhism, Jainism has a rich tradition of art and architecture as seen in the temples, *derāsars*, *sthānakas*, etc; and is central to the

understanding of India's tradition of *ādhyātmavidyā* (inner sciences). Its fundamental principle of ahimsā has inspired significant studies of ecology, peace, and bioethics. Therefore, the study of this religion, like that of Hinduism and Buddhism, is important not only to the understanding of continuity and change in Indian history, but is important also for appreciating the place of our past in our future.

In reviewing six leading college textbooks on Indian History, however, I find a very different message. In these textbooks the coverage of Jainism is less than adequate and its representation in historical narrative is often superficial, impertinent, misleading and, at times, even reminiscent of orientalism. This is a particularly vexing situation given the emerging scholarship pertaining to India as well as World History. Recent scholarship about India has questioned the orientalist approach in the Indological discourse.¹ Over the last few decades, specialized studies about India have become far more inclusive in terms of both content and approach. Historians are becoming increasingly interdisciplinary in their analyses, which are more inclusive in terms of their representations of gender, the 'subaltern' and the underprivileged.² Issues pertaining to dynastic history or political history are no longer the major focus. Social institutions, human agency, environment, gender, globalization, etc. have become significant themes in the writing of Indian history. World History too is gradually shifting its focus from Europe to Asia. Historians are increasingly finding the role of India and China in World History much more significant

¹ See for instance the seminal work of Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); and a study questioning the orientalist discourse in the study of India, Richard Inden, *Imagining India* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

² Of particular relevance in this regard is the 'Subaltern Studies' collective over the last twenty years. Ranajit Guha, who pioneered this initiative, has recently published an important study, *History at the Limit of World History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). For an appraisal of the 'subaltern studies' collective see Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed), *Mapping Subaltern studies and the Postcolonial* (London: Verso, 2000).

than has been granted in the received wisdom of Eurocentric social theory.³ Historians are also interested in examining historical narratives in ways these were constructed and approaching the past to depict how the contending agents constituted the past through their constant negotiations and interactions. Studies of Indian Religions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism, have continued to evoke scholarly interest.⁴ Even Jainism, which is not quite as established a field of study as Buddhism, has elicited a great deal of scholarly interest in the recent years.⁵

Yet, the majority of textbooks on Indian history continue to be chronologically driven political histories. The textbooks I have reviewed in this paper are written by internationally known scholars of India from Britain, Germany, India, and the United States, and are published by reputable publishers. Some of these

³ Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁴ Some of the recent studies are: Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion Postcolonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East'* (London: Routledge, 1999); Richard Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of Early Teachings* (London: Athlone, 1996); Christopher Key Chapple, *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth and Self in Asian Traditions* (New York: SUNY Press, 1993); Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan R. Williams (eds.), *Buddhism and Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Christopher Key Chapple and Mary Evelyn Tucker (eds.), *Hinduism and Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); and Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Collected Papers on Buddhist Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000).

⁵ Beginning with the publication of Padmanabh S. Jaini's, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), which is regarded nearly as a primary source among Jain scholars, and which is both lucid and thorough in its analysis and discussion of Jainism, several key works have been published recently. Of particular mention are the following. Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (London: Routledge, 1992, revised edition 2002); Lawrence Babb, *The Absent Lord* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); John E. Cort, *Jains in the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Christopher Chapple (ed), *Jainism and Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); and Vastupal Parikh, *Jainism and New Spirituality* (Peace Publications, 2002). Moreover, Jaini's own essays on Jainism have also been reprinted recently as *Collected Papers on Jaina Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000).

titles have been reprinted more than once. The books, in order of their original publication dates, are:

- Romila Thapar, *A History of India* (New York:Penguin, 1966, 1991)
- Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977, 1983, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2000)
- Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India* (London: Routledge 1986, 1990, 1998)
- Burton Stein, *History of India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998, 1999, 2000)
- John Keay, *India* (New York: Grove, 2000)
- Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of India* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Based on my analysis, it appears that for the most part, the authors' understanding of Jainism in the context of Indian History is dictated by the assumption that religion is a matter of antiquity and, therefore, does not deserve any discussion in their historical narrative of subsequent time periods. Within the context of the ancient period, coverage of Jainism is often superficial, impertinent and, at times, not grounded in facts but based on assumptions. That is, in their discussion, the authors are more occupied with the description of physical appearances rather than principles; more concerned with the seemingly exotic and strange customs without regard to the understanding of key concepts and values they embody. There is also a tendency to present religions as uniform systems disregarding the diversity that characterizes each of the Indic religions. In what is said about Jainism and Mahāvīra in these textbooks, and also how it is said there, I see a variety of problems that can broadly be categorized as follows: i) inadequate coverage, ii) misconception, iii) flawed comparisons, iv) misrepresentation, and v) neo-orientalism.

I. Inadequate Coverage

I fully recognize that given the longevity and complexity of Indian History, a textbook can only provide limited space to the discussion of various topics. Given such limitation, however, it is even more important that whatever information is provided on any topic in a textbook is at least fundamental and central to the understanding of the topic, is balanced and historically supported. To assess the adequacy of coverage of Jainism in these texts, I have asked the following questions. Is the coverage of this topic too little or too much for a college textbook? Is the information provided central and germane or is it marginal or superfluous to the proper understanding of Jainism? Is it balanced or biased?

Response to these questions may differ from one reviewer to the other, but it is possible to arrive at some consensus on what might be covered for a proper understanding of Jainism in the context of Indian History. For instance, it will be reasonable to expect to learn about Jainism from an Indian History textbook in terms of the following. What was the historical milieu of Mahāvīra, the 'founder' of Jainism? What was the larger context in which Jainism emerged and subsequently evolved? How is Mahāvīra represented in Indian History? What do we learn about his world-view, key concepts, and fundamental teachings or lessons? What do we learn about his followers, patrons, and persecutors of Jainism? What has been the larger historical significance of Jainism in terms of the historical change and impact within and outside India? Equally important is the question of how this information about Jain tradition is integrated in the larger scheme of historical narrative about India.

My analysis suggests that by and large, the coverage of Jainism in the texts books under review is less than adequate. Political history appears as a predominant theme in most of these narratives, except in books by Burton Stein and Romila Thapar. The extent and quality of coverage on Jainism varies a great deal in these books. I will briefly discuss each of these books in terms of its approach and coverage of this topic.

One of the textbooks has no discussion of Jainism at all, since it is actually not what its title--*A Concise History of India*--claims to be, but rather a concise history of India since the Mughals. The term "Jains" and the name Mahāvira do, however, appear in the Glossary of the book [Metcalf and Metcalf].

A History of India by Kulke and Rothermund devotes just two sentences mentioning Mahāvira. This brevity of coverage by itself is not the only problem. The larger problem arises from the nature of the content and the context in which these few sentences appear. Consider the following paragraph:

The new Gangetic civilisation found its spiritual expression in a reform movement which was a reaction to the Brahmin-Kshatriya alliance of Late Vedic age. This reform movement is mainly identified with the teachings of Gautama Buddha who is regarded as the first historic figure in Indian history... The Buddha, however, was not the only great reformer of the age. There was also Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, who is supposed to have been a younger contemporary of Buddha...It could be said that Mahavira's teachings reappeared in the rigorous ethics of Mahatma Gandhi, who was influenced by Jainism as he grew up in Gujarati Bania family, the Banias being a dominant traders' caste... [Kulke and Rothermund, pp. 51-52]

The above has problems ranging from lack of focus to inaccurate historical facts, from problems of definition to the problems of interpretation.

John Keay asserts, his history is 'not a cultural history of India, let alone history of Indian "cults."' If it has a bias, it is in favor of chronology... This might seem rather elementary; but chronology is often a casualty of interpretative urge which underlies much of Indian history writing.' [Keay, p. xix] There is only a marginal mention of Mahāvira and Jainism.

Stanley Wolpert's *A New History of India* does, however, touch upon the issues of context, milieu, the "founder" and the schism, although in a somewhat sketchy manner. The discussion of the topic is located mainly in the context of ancient India.

The book by Stein attempts to trace the religious developments beyond the ancient period, but is overtly repetitive.

Like Keay, Stein is concerned more with the extraneous, the seemingly strange and the alien aspects of Indic traditions, including Jainism, than their key concepts and principles. Often, his statements about Jainism are contradictory and confusing.

Unlike the other five textbooks, Thapar weaves the discussion of Jainism along with her discussion of Buddhism throughout the narrative of her book, *A History of India*. The role of the Jains and the Buddhists in making India and Indian sciences known to the West is discussed. Also discussed in the narrative is Jain and Buddhist art and sculpture. The discussion of Mahāvīra and Jainism, however, is lacking both in clarity and substance. Moreover, the basic framework applied to the understanding of this religious tradition remain, as in other textbooks, primarily Western in approach.

While more specific aspects of these books are discussed in the sections that follow, I do want to underscore that the coverage of Mahāvīra and Jainism in these books is simply inadequate. Discussion of Jainism is marginalized, is primarily anchored in ancient India and does not show how Jainism, like other religions, also evolved through history. None of these books provides an understanding of the significance of the key concepts and role of Jainism in Indian history or even discusses the centrality of this tradition, especially of its core principles of nonviolence and compassion—ideas that have influenced and continue to influence political, peace, and environmental movements.

II. Misconceptions

Misconceptions about Jainism abound, and range from the meaning of simple names and terms to the understanding of its key concepts. A few examples will illustrate the points I wish to make in this context.

Jains in India and Abroad

One of common impression given in these texts is that Jains are prominent in Gujarat and Bombay [Wolpert, p. 54; Metcalf and Metcalf, p. xx] and, unlike Buddhism, Jainism “never spread beyond India... [Stein, p.70] Such statements give the impression

that Jainism has been a localized or regional religion and raise questions in the minds of the textbook reader: Are there any Jains in other parts of India today? Did Jainism ever spread outside of India?

According to the 1991 Census of India, there were 3.4 million Jains spread all over in India, with major concentration in Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Delhi—the largest concentration being in Rajasthan.⁶ Today, the Jains in India are estimated to be just under 6 million. Similarly, Jainism in the modern times, especially in the twentieth century has spread to different parts of the world via Jain diasporas.

Mahāvīra and the Jains

While students recognize that the term “Buddhist” comes from Buddha, they usually do not know the origin of the word, “Jain.” In one of the books, Vardhamāna Mahāvīra’s name appears to be listed as “Mahavira Jain,” and therefore, Jains are followers of Mahāvīra [Metcalf and Metcalf, pp. xix, xx].

The word “Jain” has never been used as a family name for Mahāvīra. It derives from the Sanskrit word *Jina*, which refers to “spiritual victor,” and not to “spiritual conflict” as assumed by Burton Stein [p. 69]. Within the tradition, this word has been used to describe those human teachers, who after overcoming all the passions of anger and attachment, become omniscient, and preach the path to mokṣa (liberation from the cycle of re-birth). The *Jina* are also referred to as *Tīrthaṅkaras* (builders of the ford to lead across the ocean of suffering). Jains are followers of the *Jina*. Mahāvīra was the last *Tīrthaṅkara* in the current cycle.⁷

⁶ 1991 Census of India. Table C-9, Part VB (ii) – Religion.

⁷ Jina is the preacher and propagator of truth not “founder.” It is believed that 24 of them appear in a every half-cycle which repeats itself at regular intervals in beginning less time. However, only Pārśvanātha and Mahāvīra -- 23rd and 24th *Tīrthaṅkaras* in the current cycle – are considered historical as no sources can historically corroborate the presence of Jainism beyond the 9th century BCE. For more details, see Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path to Purification*, op. cit., pp. 1-3. The footnotes are specially illuminating.

Polytheism and Atheism

The inadequacy of Western framework, and the dangers of simplistic analogy to help understand this Indic tradition become apparent when some scholars attempt to explain "*Tirthaṅkaras*" as "the Jain equivalents of gods," [Wolpert, p. 53] and others label Jainism, like Buddhism, as "atheistic." [See Stein, pp. 64-65; Thapar, pp. 64, 66.] In either instance, it is the construction of the Western "other"—polytheistic or atheistic. Do we have to explain Jainism, or for that matter other non-Western religions, using a Western framework? A more meaningful analysis could emerge perhaps by focusing on the worldview of the Jains. Essential to the Jain worldview is the fact that the existents in the cosmos have neither a beginning nor an end. Hence the concept of creator God is irrelevant to the Jain worldview. However, the Jains do not regard themselves as agnostics or atheists, but believe in mokṣa--where the liberated souls (siddhas) reside--which they regard as their ultimate goal.

Key Concepts and Teachings

What did Mahāvīra teach? These books offer us a range of interpretations of his teachings, but not any substantive discussion of what these were. We are told, Mahavira, like Buddha, "taught an ascetic world-denying philosophical and ethical system." [Metcalf and Metcalf, p. XX] But, we never learn about the nature of this ethical system or even its principal philosophical concepts. The Jains believe, according to one author, "everything in the universe material or otherwise, has a soul. Purification of soul is the purpose of living... purification is not achieved through knowledge, knowledge being a relative quality." [Thapar, p. 65] Such statements result from a misunderstanding of the Jain worldview. First, Jainism maintains that there are two major categories (rāśī) of existents: *jīva* (living) *ajīva* (matter, non-living).⁸ Hence not everything in the universe has life. Secondly, knowledge in its highest form, which in Jainism is known as *kevalajñāna*, is a precondition for

⁸ See Chapple, *Nonviolence to Animals*, op. cit., p. 11.

liberation. Also, the significance that knowledge occupies within this tradition is underscored in the dictum, “*padam nāṇam tao dayā*” (first knowledge, then compassion).

III. Flawed Comparisons

Comparative analysis is a good way of learning and teaching. Comparisons allow us to understand similarities and distinctiveness about things we compare. A precondition to an effective comparative analysis, however, is that we first understand on their own terms and within their own contexts the people, principles, concepts or whatever we wish to compare. When comparisons occur as a way of simply “mapping religions” without clarifying the individual categories of discussion, there is risk of distortion and misunderstanding.

One of the tendencies in the books under review is to often “map” Jainism through comparisons with Buddhism, with Vedic and Upanishadic thought, or with Western thought, without first discussing within each tradition the categories and concepts being compared. Often such comparisons confuse categories and concepts being compared. Take for instance the following statements.

Ātman versus Jīva

Like *ātman*, all *jīva* are eternal, but in contrast to Upanishadic idealism, there is no Jain equivalent to the infinite cosmic *ātman*, only a finite number (millions of billions) of various degrees of *jīva*, some much more powerful than others.” [Wolpert, p. 53]

Here the focus on contrasting the “infinite number” with the “finite number” of the souls is flawed, as the comparison is made on the basis of incorrect information. The number of *jīva* conceived within the Jain world view are *ananta*, i.e. infinite (and not finite as the above passage suggests). The contrast between the very nature of *ātman* and *jīva* can, however, help illuminate a different worldview within each tradition. In the *Upanishads* all *ātman* are part of the cosmic *ātman*, while under Jainism, each

jīva is independent and is fully responsible for its own acts (*karma*) and destiny.

Concept of Karma

The following passage compares the concept of karma among Brahmanical, Jain and Buddhist traditions. For Brahmanism, according to Stein, *karma* meant

"work or act, and in formulation of Vedic ritual manuals 'action' referred to ritual and ceremonial performances so meticulously executed as to compel the gods to act in obedience to them. For Buddhists and Jainas, however, karma referred to the acts of ordinary men and women, the sums of whose lifetime behavior determined the body in which the soul (atman) would be reborn in the process of transmigration (samsara). Upon death, that is, souls were thought to pass from one to another body and associated social condition. The idea that every good action brought a measure of happiness and each bad action sorrow tended to suggest a mechanical moral process leading to fatalism..." [Stein, p. 66]

Here the distinction made between the *karma* in Brahmanism which refers to ritual and ceremony performed by the elite (by implication) versus the *karma* under Buddhism and Jainism of "ordinary men and women" appears to focus on fundamental differences in terms of "who" the concept of *karma* applied to: ordinary people versus elites. Such comparisons are further flawed as they ignore the fact that the role of karma is defined differently in Buddhism and Jainism—which are lumped together in the above comparative statement. Moreover, the above comparison assumes a logical connection between *karma* and fatalism, which is misleading.

Jainism and Buddhism

"Jainism was even more essentially moralistic in its outlook than Buddhism, with an even greater emphasis on austerity and mendicant monasticism as the soul route to salvation..." [Stein, p. 69]

The unclear relationship between morality and mendicant monasticism in the above statement does not allow us to

understand how Jainism was more moralistic than Buddhism. Therefore, such comparison fail to provide any meaningful insight into the extent of Jain or Buddhist morality. A good example to compare could have been, for example, the notions of nonviolence and compassion in the two traditions.

IV. Misrepresentation

Most problematic for the proper understanding of Jainism and its distinctive contributions to *ādhyātmavidyā* is the serious misrepresentations made about Mahavira and his teachings. The following passages not only distort Mahāvira's *sādhana* and its significance but also factually misrepresent Mahāvira.

Mahāvira, "like the Buddha abandoned his hedonistic life to become a wandering ascetic... He not only went naked, but also advocated and practiced self torture and death by starvation. Though it took him thirteen years from the time he resolved to starve himself to death before he finally succeeded in doing so..." [Wolpert, pp.52- 53]

After thirteen years, often as a naked ascetic, he attained enlightenment and thereafter taught his doctrine in the kingdom of the Ganges region before succumbing to a ritual of slow starvation near the Magadhan capital of Rajagriha around 400 BCE. [Stein, p. 70]

The thirteen years referred to in both passages above represent the most significant phase in Mahavira's life as a *Thīrthaṅkara*. His *sādhana* as detailed in the *Ācārāṅga-sūtra*, during which he frequently fasted, sometimes for a very long period of time, and often without water (total days when he took food during the period of almost thirteen years is said to be 349), practiced austerities (misrepresented as "self-torture") and renounced all attachment, including the attachment to his body in his single-minded pursuit of his goal and attained *kevalajñāna* (infinite knowledge), becoming omniscient. At the end of this period, Mahavira did not die as the first passage above inform us. Following his omniscience, he lived as a teacher for nearly thirty years, before he became a *siddha* (liberated soul) after his nirvāṇa

in Pavapuri, near modern city of Patna in the year 527 BCE,⁹ and not in Rajgriha around 400 BCE. One wonders, then, what are the sources for such distortions, and inaccurate historical detail? The significance of Mahāvīra, arguably the greatest apostle of nonviolence, and his sādhanā has been missed in both these accounts. Since the principles inspiring Mahāvīra's renunciation in pursuit of mokṣa are not part of the "mapping" strategies used by Wolpert and Stein, their representations are simply of the extraneous, and thus fail to provide any insight into the wisdom and essence of such principles.

Jain Principle of Ahimsā

Another misrepresentation centers on the principle of ahimsa (nonviolence), the core principle of Jainism. One author represents nonviolence as "an obsession" for the Jains. [Thapar, p.65] Another author after recognizing the complete dedication in Jainism to the principle of ahimsā, states, 'the only living being a devout Jain was encouraged to "kill" was himself, through starvation, though such a death would be viewed as liberated "birth" of one's hitherto entrapped *jīva*. More than two thousand years after Mahāvīra's suicide, Gandhi was to revive the fast-unto-death as a political weapon.'" [Wolpert, p. 54]

Such interpretations of Jain commitment to nonviolence distort the very centrality of ahimsā to Jain worldview, and the way it is interpreted within the Jain tradition. Ahimsā is regarded as the supreme virtue (*ahimsā parmodharmah*). Under Jainism violence or injury to any living beings is considered violence to self and is a major impediment for one's liberation.¹⁰ There is no evidence to suggest that any Jain was encouraged to commit

⁹ The information in this paragraph has been compiled from Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path to Purification*, op. cit., pp. 25-37, including footnotes.

¹⁰ For an insightful discussion of nonviolence in Jainism, see P.S. Jaini, "Ahimsā: A Jaina Way of Spiritual Discipline," in Jaini (ed.) *Collected Papers on Jaina Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), pp. 3-19; and Christopher Key Chapple, *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions*, op. cit., pp. 9-15.

suicide. And, as pointed out earlier, Mahāvira certainly did no such thing. The practice of *sallekhanā* is practiced among the Jains but it is not considered “suicide,” though it may appear as such to those unfamiliar with the Jain tradition and its commitment to the principle of non-attachment (*aparigraha*).¹¹ On the contrary the practice of *sallekhanā* is regarded as the “most auspicious way that life can end.”¹²

V. Neo-Orientalism?

Nineteenth century Indological discourse was characterized either by the Romantic notions of India which represented mystical and the exotic in things Indian or by the Positivist and Utilitarian views of India which expressed about India a sense of contempt and disdain. Neo orientalist discourse is simultaneously mystical and disdainful. Representing people, culture or even ideas in this fashion makes it easier for one to dismiss what might be actually significant about them. The following description of the historical milieu of Buddha and Mahāvira is the case in point.

Rival holy men swarm across the countryside performing feats of endurance, disputing one another’s spiritual credentials and vying with one another for followers and patronage...Saints or charlatans, they evidently mirrored a society to which the paranormal, the supernatural and metaphysical had a strong appeal. Many of them went naked or unwashed and they cheerfully flouted the taboos of caste system. Defying social convention, they yet enjoyed society’s indulgence. Renunciation had become an accepted way of life in which asceticism was seen as a prerequisite to spiritual enlightenment. The philosophies on offer from this rag-tag army of reformers ranged from the mind boggling mysticism to defiant nihilism and blank agnosticism, from the outright materialism of the Lokayats to the heavy determinism of the Ajivikas, from the

¹¹ Wolpert incorrectly translates *aparigraha* to mean poverty. See, Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 51.

¹² Chapple, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-109; For a fuller discussion of this practice, see Jaini, *The Jaina Path*, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-233;

rationalism of the Buddha to the esotericism of Mahavira.
[Keay, pp. 63-64]

The above description about the sixth century BCE India appears to employ, what Richard Inden calls, "the curious metaphors."¹³ In the above passage the author simultaneously uses mystical and scornful expressions which paint certain images in the minds of the reader. The reader is burdened with philosophical terms without a clue to their meaning. There is also the question of contradiction. For example, how can one renounce and yet be an "outright materialist"? How can something be termed as esoteric without even describing it?

Keay's preoccupation with the trivial and sensational remains a hallmark of the book. Without digressing, let me give one more example of this characteristic in the context of the topic of this paper. While no significant space is provided to the discussion of key concepts and teachings of Mahāvīra, one is struck by the way the reference to Jain tradition is made. In the context of Alexander the Great's campaign (other invaders of India as well are of great interest to Keay), Keay introduces and discusses at length a person named 'Calanus' whom he considers "a figure worth remembering" as he was the first Indian expatriate. Preoccupied with chronology and dates, Keay is able to assign Calanus a date as he accompanied Alexander to Persia and died shortly before the latter did, without making any impact on the Greeks. However, unable to assign him to particular philosophical school, he tells us the following.

... Calanus and his friends went naked, a condition, in which no Greek could be persuaded to join them, they may have been *nigantha* or Jains. Jain nudity was dictated by that sect's meticulous respect for life in all its forms. Clothes were taboos because the wearer might inadvertently crush any insect concealed in them; similarly death had to be so managed that only the dying would actually die. Jains bent on ending their life, therefore, usually starved themselves to death. Yet Calanus, a man of advanced years, chose to immolate himself

¹³ Richard Inden, *Imagining India*, op. cit., p.1.

on his own funeral pyre. Though an extraordinarily stoical sacrifice in Greek eyes, this was a decidedly careless move for one dedicated to avoiding casual insecticide. Evidently the Persian winter had induced a chill, if not pneumonia, and Calanus had decided it was better to die than be an encumbrance. No one, not even Alexander can dissuade him from his purpose. He strode to his cremation at the head of an enormous procession and reclined upon the pyre with complete indifference. This composure he maintained even as the flames frazzled his flesh. [Keay, pp. 76-77]

This out-of-context association with Jainism (for which no evidence is provided) with an appeal of an eyewitness account creates a new genre of orientalism. It denigrates and distorts Jainism at the same time especially for those who are not likely be familiar with the tradition. Even a basic familiarity with the core tenets of Jainism would show that nudity--which is only practiced by the Digambaras--is not related to the vow of nonviolence (*ahimsā*), but to the vow of nonattachment (*aparigraha*). Furthermore, fire (*agni kāya*) under Jainism is considered as one of the six forms in which the Jiva reside. Therefore, self-immolation by fire will be unacceptable to a Jain as it violates the cardinal principle of nonviolence.

Stein too, is more concerned with what might appear as strange and exotic in Jainism rather than with the discussion of its core principles. Nearly three pages are devoted to the issues pertaining to female salvation, where the discussion of female biology and sexual orientations becomes a preoccupation with the author (Stein, pp. 70-73). This concern for the extraneous and strange is apparent from the following.

Both sides [referring to Śvetāmbara and Digambara] recognized that in addition to the three bodily sexual forms, male female and hermaphrodite, each form could have sexual feelings more usual in one of the other forms. Thus, they acknowledged the existence of not only homosexuality, but lesbianism and bisexuality, and did so without the usual anathematizing of traditional religions. In fact, the Digambara argued that scriptural evidence that might be taken to mean that women were eligible for nirvana without having first been reborn as

male really referred to men with female sexual orientation, i.e. to homosexual men. [Stein, p. 72]

The above is not supported by any evidence or footnote and is a serious misrepresentation of a tradition that emphasized *brahmacharya* or celibacy as one of the five key principles.¹⁴

These passages from Keay and Stein not only exemplify their preoccupation for the extraneous elements in a tradition, but more importantly, raise a larger issue for the integrity of the discipline of history. In the writing of history should one focus on issues central and germane to the topic or on issues which are only superficially and marginally related to the topic? This type of history writing also sets for the college students a bad example of "doing history" without proper evidence and supporting citations.

Conclusion

In my assessment, the treatment of Mahāvīra and Jainism in these textbooks is a matter of serious concern for teachers and students of Indian history, and also more generally for all those who care about education and scholarship in the Indic traditions. I am reminded of T. S. Eliot's famous lines from **The Rock**:

Where is wisdom we have lost in knowledge?

Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

The cause of sound learning and knowledge about Jainism is lost in the poor and distorted information contained in these books. And in turn, the wisdom of this great religious tradition is lost in the superficial and misleading knowledge imparted by majority of these textbooks.

¹⁴ This is not an isolated example of Stein's selective emphasis on extraneous aspects while missing the centrality of things. In discussing India's one of the most revered leaders, Mahatma Gandhi, Stein is more concerned to point out Gandhi's "idiosyncratic authoritarianism," his "largely malign influence on women," and his preoccupation with sex and untouchability," and is less concerned by his power of satyāgraha and his sacrifice for the cause of the nation and his people. See Stein, *History of India*, op. cit., pp. 299-302.

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