

FROM SHREE VALLABH SURI

SMARAK NIDHI

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J A I N I S M

SERVICE OF JAINISM TO INDIA

Jainism is a religion of varied and Multifarious activities. It held a very prominent position in the literary world of ancient India and has produced great geniuses in every branch of literature. The Jain scholars and philosophers have composed works so voluminous and learned on Philosophy, Logic, Grammar, Mathematics, Prosody, Comparative Religion, History, Biography, Astronomy, Lexicography, Medicine and various other subjects too numerous to mention here, that they excite the wonder and admiration of even the Western civilized world. The famous and ancient libraries of Cambay, Jaisalmer, Patan and several other places and the private libraries of many Yatees and Saadhoos bear out fully the truth of my assertion.

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The special feature of Jainism is its claim to Universal brotherhood. It opens its portal to

all, irrespective of caste and creed. Its main object is to lead all men to salvation and admits within its sacred pall the Aryans and the Non arians alike. In ancient times when the masses governed under a tyrannic priesthood, Jainism came forward and freed them from its tyrannical yoke. Like some of its contemporary religions it does not preach that the high born only, have the privilege of reading the sacred books and penetrating into the truths of religions. On the contrary it very nobly and boldly proclaims that Jainism is the common property at all, high and low, rich and poor and that every one has the right of drinking at the fountain of knowledge revealed by the ancient Tirthankars. Thus Jainism has been the solace of millions of human beings and helped them in their evolution.

The essential criterion of Jainism has been its spirit of absolute toleration and nonpersecution. The Jains never forced their religion upon others. They opened the treasures of their religion before the masses and the latter being convinced of its sterling merits accepted it. In ancient times, when mighty king like Chandra Gupta, Samprati, Kumarpal and several others were converted to Jainism and when it was made a state religion, Jainism like its hostile sects, never took advantage of its patrons to persecute the followers of other religions.

SHREE VALLABHSURI JAINA LITERATURE SERIES NO. 8
LORD MAHAVIR AND HIS TEACHINGS
LORD MAHAVIRA - An Evaluation

Dr. S.B. DEO, M.A., Ph.D

It is well over two and a half thousand years that the personality of Lord Mahavira illumined the religious horizon of India. And yet with the passage of several centuries, the influence of his teachings, instead of waning, as happened in the case of several others, is on the increase. His name still remains a revered memory and an invigorating spiritual force to thousands of people. What then, is the secret of this everlasting popularity?

The answer lies in the review of the work done by the Lord during his lifetime. With his towering personality, his struggles against various hardships and hence his wisdom arisen out of his own experiences coupled with the zeal of a reformer and the patience of a missionary, he could rise to the occasion.

The two hundred and fifty years which are supposed to have elapsed between Parshvanatha and Mahavira possibly saw, as evidenced by the Suttrakritanga, the rise of numerous sects and subsects loosely grouped into several monastic communities. The ritualistic practices in Brahmanism were again coming up to the forefront. The ideas about the superiority by birth and the privileged position of the priestly class were gaining ground. The commanding personality of Parshvanatha was no more on the scene. Against such a chaotic background Mahavira had to work.

He immediately grasped the situation and had the courage to declare-

The external appearances are no test. What is really required is the mental purity and the behaviour which would lead to such mental purity and the consequent equanimity. Therefore,

Otherwise fake ascetics would take the field. Hence the real brahmin should be-

It is the penance and celibacy that make a real brahmin. It is the ideal behaviour which implies non-attachment towards worldly matters that idealises a person.

Once this emphasis on actual behaviour, rather than mere sermons on it, was laid bare before the then somewhat demoralised society, Mahavira led this attack on the caste system. He had the courage to declare that-

It is the Karma and not the birth that determines the social status of a person. These ideas were revolutionary ideas indeed! And the receptive intelligent ideological elements in Brahmanism welcomed these ideas. It is significant to note that the ganadharas of Lord Mahavira were brahmins !

NON - VIOLENCE : A WAY OF LIFE

(A sketch of Bhagwān Mahāvīr's life and teaching)

BY: DR. KUMARPAL DESAI

(One is born a Brāhmin, a Kshatriya, a Vaishya or a Shoodra according to one's karma) Thus he led shoodras out of the darkness of slavery and lifted them up from beastliness to godliness. He said that a man or woman of any caste could practise religion. In fact he said that a monk should not be at all conceited regarding his appearance, caste, knowledge, penance, and celibacy. This was Bhagawān Mahāvīr's great, social revolution. He changed the whole situation. This true insight given from the depth of his soul made a permanent impact on the society. Bhagawan Mahavir fearlessly and firmly expressed his thoughts and liberated people from the bonds of a certain class of people, from the practice of violence and mental slavery. He led the society out of the bonds of the caste

system. He completely revolutionised the concept of the high and the low. He revolted against the convention which laid down that woman should be under her father's protection in childhood, under her husband's protection in youth and under her son's protection in old age. Now onwards, the distinctions of caste or gender shall not obstruct the development of the soul. Under the aspect of the soul, all are equal. Brahmin or Shoodra, man or woman, young or old-whoever makes efforts can attain liberation. It was in order to justify this that he made Chandanbālā his first nun. He helped men overcome the dependence on fate and on the grace of God. He preached that man should make efforts and said, "However great a god may be and however good his heaven may be, if man shows his humanity even a god bows at his feet. That is why man should insist on truth and love. It is by his deeds, his virtues and his efforts that

man can be great. For this, birth, family and caste are of little use".

..... Bhagawān Mahāvīr showed that the differences of creeds and sects are subsidiary and every creed has relative truth. He preached that man should never cause, harm to anyone. He gave the doctrine of anekāntavāda to promote tolerance in thought. He taught syādvāda to promote harmless speech. He showed the importance of possessionlessness in society.

LIFE FORCE
The World of Jainism

By Michael Tobias

Chapter One

Ethical Realism:

Jainism is a momentous example to all of us that there can, and does exist a successful, ecologically responsible way of life which is abundantly non-violent in thought, action and deed. We might misread our history, go forward confusedly to perpetrate other follies, but we will do so knowing that there is a viable alternative.

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Chapter Two

First Encounters:

Jainism was the only large-scale force in Indian society that never accepted the caste system and that provided equal status and equal rights to

women. Those rights-however restrictive in their definition - included abortion, and while the fetus is considered inviolate from the moment of conception, the lay Jains - conscious of population control - allow for medically approved forms of birth control. This is not to suggest that the Jain religion officially ordains contraception, but as a social practice it is allowed. In addition, a Jain doctor will normally agree to perform an abortion if the mother's health is in jeopardy.

GUIDELINES OF

JAINISM

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MEHSANA.

WHAT IS THE JAIN DHARMA OR JAINISM

Before we understand the meaning of the Jain dharma, it is absolutely necessary that we should have a thorough knowledge of the word, dharma or religion because for thousands of years, innumerable wrong notions about dharma have been n^ourished and held by people. Dharma or religion is neither a cult nor a creed; nor is it a reserved system of any community. Dharma is not entirely related either to an individual or to a society; nor is it confined to any area. Dharma is the essential nature of an individual or an object. Shramana Bhagawan Mahavir has explained the meaning of dharma clearly thus:-

"Vatthu Sahavo Dhammo"

Dharma is nothing but the real nature of an object. Just as the nature of fire is to burn and the nature of water is to produce a cooling effect, in the same manner, the essential nature of the s^ol^u is to seek self-realisation and spiritual elevation.

If we examine the matter thus, we find that dharma acquires different definitions in different contexts but here is a simple and clear meaning of it: Dharma is the name that can be given

to all the elaborate codes of conduct and ideologies that enable him to attain worldly and spiritual exaltation". Dharma can be the only means to understand and realise the true meaning of life. Dharma in its real sense is that which leads the soul on the path of felicity, peace and spiritual bliss; and impels it to be active and progressive. The great Jineshwaras have defined dharma thus:-

- Arhat dharma- the dharma of Arihantas or the destroyers of the inner enemies namely Karmas.
- Anekanta darshan- the ideology that is comprehensive and is not limited to a single point of view.
- Vitarage marg- the dharma that has been expounded by the Paramatma who is devoid of all attachments and hatred.

Thus, Jainism is known by various names.

Who is a Jain?

The devotee of Vishnu is called Vaishnav; the devotee of Shiva is called a Shiva; the follower of the Buddha is called a Buddhist; the follower of Christ is called a Christian. In the same manner, the follower of Jineshwar is known as a Jain. Hence, this dharma has become current, established and renowned under the name

of the Jain dharma. One who follows the path shown by Jineshwar is a Jain.

Such a man is a Jain to whatever nation he may belong; to whatever sect or creed he may belong; in whatever philosophical context he might have been born or brought up. The Jain dharma is not a religious sect or creed. Anyone can adore and follow this dharma irrespective of his caste and creed. This living dharma is meant for all.

The Jain dharma

This dharma is absolutely independent, unique and systematised among the religions of the world. It has its own philosophy; it has a code of conduct tested by time. It has a unique outlook and wisdom. By means of this dharma, it is possible to see and examine the nature and real dimensions of every object in this universe. There is no definite day or date for commencing to live according to this dharma. Moreover, this dharma does not have any seer who first preached and expounded it. The Jain dharma has been in existence from times immemorial. In relation to time, that which undergoes changes according to the passage of time, naturally passes through the phases of gradual evolution and gradual decline. This process of development and decline continues in the endless and boundless flow of time.

THE JAINA PATH OF PURIFICATION

By PADMANABH S. JAINI

Mahavira and the Foundations of Jainism

Who are the Jainas?

The designation Jaina, applied to the approximately four million members of one of India's most ancient sramana or non-Vedic religious traditions, literally means "follower of a Jina". The Jinas are "spiritual victors," human teachers said to have attained kevalajnana (infinite knowledge) and to have preached the doctrine of moksa (salvation). Such figures are also called Tirthankaras (Builders of the ford (which leads across the ocean of suffering)). It is believed that twenty-four of them appear in each half of a time cycle, have done so from beginningless time, and will continue to do so forever.

Hence a Jina or Tirthankara is not the founder of a religion; he is rather the propagator

of a truth and a path which have been taught in the same manner by all teachers of his everpresent, imperishable tradition. Each Jina reanimates this tradition for the benefit of succeeding generations. The teachings are neither received through divine revelation nor manifested through some inherent magical power (as, for instance, the Vedas are alleged to be). It is the individual human soul itself which, aided by the earlier teachings, comes to know the truth. Strictly speaking, then worshipping or following the teachings of a particular Jina has no special significance; nothing new is taught, and the path remains always the same. Even so, it is natural that those teachers who most immediately precede the present age would be remembered more readily.. Thus we find that the last few Jinas - Nemi, Parsva, and especially Mahavira, final teacher of the current time cycle -

are often regarded as the teachers and taken as the objects of a certain veneration. Recent activities in the Jaina community celebrating the 2500th anniversary of Mahavira's nirvana (final death) attest to this phenomenon.

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JAINISM EXPLAINED

Paul Marrett

PREFACE

By Dr. Natubhai K. Shah, President, Jain Samaj Europe

The aim of the Jain philosophy is to purify the soul and manifest its natural virtues, like complete bliss and knowledge. It describes a clear-cut path in a logical fashion, and any person who follows this path can advance his or her own soul spiritually and ultimately reach final liberation (Moksha) where there is permanent bliss. Our body is the house which the soul occupies. Most people give more importance to materialistic things and to the body, which we are going to leave behind when we go, rather than to spiritual salvation of the soul. By describing the theory of Karma, its attachment to the soul and the method of shedding this Karma from the soul, Jainism has shown the way of permanent happiness. It also describes the two components of this world, Jiva (soul) and Ajiva

(non-soul) and the importance of Jiva as compared to Ajiva.

The religions which developed in India could be classified as Vedic (Brahmanism or Hinduism) and Non-Vedic (Jainism and Buddhism). Both Jainism and Buddhism have full faith in the concepts of the soul, the other world and emancipation. Any philosophy which accepts the existence of the other world and transmigration of the soul, a fact beyond our senses, is sometimes called astika, and hence Jain philosophy from one point of view may truly be called astika.

The philosophy of Jainism is logical, practical, scientific and suitable to the needs of the modern world. By the doctrines that it has preached, the architecture and fine arts it has produced,

it has made a great contribution in the development of Indian culture and civilisation.

ESSENCE AND SPIRIT OF JAINISM

By CHITRABHANU

Jainism is not a sect or just one more conflicting ideology - it is a way of thinking and living.

The greatness of Jain philosophy lies in the fact that its teachings assure "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," not only of men, but of all living beings, under all circumstances.

Its philosophy is not essentially founded on any particular writing or external revelation, but on the unfoldment of spiritual consciousness, which is the birthright of every soul. Mere words cannot give full expression to the truths of Jainism which must be felt and realised within.

The Jains are the advocates of the development of man in all aspects-physical, mental and spiritual. Through knowledge and endeavour the

individual develops and unfolds the potential within him.

The word Jain is derived from the generic term "Jina". A person who conquers his lower nature, i.e. passion, hatred and the like and brings into prominence the highest, and achieves the state of the supreme being is called a Jina. There have been several Jinas and there can be many more in the future. A Jina who is a guiding force to his followers, reviews principles of religion and regenerates the community, is called a "Tirthankara".

Adinath who dates back to the beginning of the world was the first Thirthankara and founder of Jain religion according to Jain philosophy. Today in the twentieth century we live in the era of Bhagwan Mahavira, the twenty-fourth and the last Thirthankara. Bhagwan Mahavira was born in

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598 B.C. in modern Bihar, lived upto the age of seventy-two years and attained Moksha, i.e. salvation, in 526 B.C. He revived the Jain philosophy about 2500 years ago. Since that time Bhagwan Mahavira has been the spiritual guide of the Jains.

Even now about four million Jains of India practise the preachings of Bhagwan Mahavira and it is the duty of their mentors to guide them in practising it in its spirit in this rapidly changing world. "What then, is the essence, the spirit of Jainism?" - you may ask.

Jainism, viewed as a whole, rests on the four pillars which are Ahimsa, i.e. Nonviolence, Anekantwad, i.e. Theory of Relativity, Aparigraha, i.e. Nonacquisition and Karma, i.e. Deeds or Action.

Nonviolence, Theory of Relativity, Nonacquisition and Deeds or Action.