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# Sadbhavana

## DIGEST





Image 1

Jain depiction of the liberated soul in its pristine natural luminous state of infinite bliss.

# Sadbhavana Digest

Issue # 6, October 2021

## Contents

<b>Editorial.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction to Jainism - Mona Kothari Dikshit.....	3
<b>Part I – How do we deal with the Self?.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Jainism and Sadbhavana towards Self.....</b>	<b>9</b>
The Jain Code of Conduct.....	9
Jainism is Action, not Devotion.....	13
Jainism's Influence on Mahatma Gandhi.....	14
<b>Part II – How do we deal with Other Human Beings?.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Jainism and Sadbhavana towards Others.....</b>	<b>16</b>
History of Jainism and Other Religions.....	16
Sadbhavana towards All Human Beings and Religions.....	17
Jain Monks and Their Initiatives to Promote Harmony and Ahimsa.....	19
Acharya Tulsi.....	19
Acharya Mahapragnya.....	21
Foundation for Unity of Religious and Enlightened Citizenship' (FUREC).....	22
The Dharmasthala Temple.....	22
The Life and Work of Satish Kumar.....	25
<b>Part III – How do we deal with Nature?.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Sadbhavana towards Nature.....</b>	<b>27</b>
Jain Declaration on Nature – Dr LM Singhvi.....	27
Excerpts from Jainism, Dharma, and Environmental Ethics - Pankaj Jain.....	29
Introduction.....	29
Bishnoi Community and Jainism.....	30
Conclusion.....	33

# Editorial

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This issue of the Sadbhavana Digest explores Sadbhavana from the point of view of Jainism. It has been put together by Mona Kothari Dikshit, a Senior Visiting Fellow of the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, the knowledge affiliate of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. Mona is a Palanpuri Jain who was born in and grew up in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, where her grandfather had moved for business. Mona has a layperson's interest in the Jain tenets and in writing the introductory piece, she has thus used a number of reference texts, all of which are duly indicated in the footnotes.

As in every issue of the Sadbhavana Digest, after the introduction to a particular belief system or world view, we explore how three central themes related to human existence are answered by that belief system. The three themes are:

Theme 1 - How can we relate to ourselves better?

Theme 2 - How can we relate to other human beings better? And,

Theme 3 - How can we humans relate to nature better?

Under theme 1, "How can we relate to ourselves better?" the first article is on the Jain Code of Conduct, which has been taken from Dr LM Singhvi's piece on the Jain Declaration on Nature, reproduced in the third section. The second article is on the Role and Meaning of Prayer and Worship, which cites two prayers, including the well-known Prayer of Forgiveness. The article explains that Jain prayer is part of a being's spiritual development. Jains do not pray to ask the tirthankaras for grace or material favours, but to inspire them in their practice. The next article deals with Jainism focus on Action not Devotion. Jainism is a religion where the follower are expected to help themselves towards salvation, through thinking and acting in the proper way. The last piece in this section describes Jainism's influence on Mahatma Gandhi, most palpably through personal contact in his youth with the Poet Shrimad Rajchandra. We can see that Gandhiji's Ekadash Vrata were highly influenced by the Jain teachings.

Under theme 2, "how can we relate to other human beings better?" all the articles have been put together by Mona from various sources, duly cited. It is designed to give the readers an idea of a history of Jainism and other religions, and how despite persecution several times, Jainism has persisted with its goodwill towards all beings. Jain saint Anandghanji has a bhajan "Ram kaho Rehman kau Kaan Kaho Mahadeva ri, Parasnath kaho, kau brahma sakal brahm swayam evari". We carry a link to the version of this bhajan sung by eminent

Bhajan/Sufi singer Smita Rao Bellur. We then describe the life and work of various eminent Jain monks and some of initiatives launched by them for peace and harmony and the environment.

Finally under theme 3 “how can we humans relate to nature better?”, we carry the Jain Declaration on nature drafted by the eminent jurist Dr LM Singhvi, and excerpts from an article by Prof Pankaj Jain on Jainism and environmental ethics, with a case study of the Bishnois.

We hope the readers enjoy this issue expounding Sadbhavana from the point of view of Jains.

**Sadbhavana Digest Editor:** Vijay Mahajan

**Guest Editor for this Issue:** Mona Kothari Dikshit

**Design and Production:** Ankush Gupta and Srishti Kamra

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# Introduction to Jainism

by *Mona Kothari Dikshit*<sup>1</sup>

Jainism's origin can be traced to the 23rd Tirthankara 1Parshvanatha (c. 8th century BCE) and Mahavira (6th Century BCE). Jina is a Sanskrit term meaning "Victor," one who has conquered ignorance, achieved spiritual victory, and realized the luminous, perfect soul. Those who follow the path of the jinas are called Jains.

Beliefs: Jiva, Karma, Samsara, Moksha

The Jain faith revolves around the notion of the soul – **jīva**. The ultimate objective of the Jain religion is for the soul to attain self-realisation, which is liberation. Godliness is said to be the inherent quality of every soul. This quality, however, is subdued by the soul's association with karmic matter.

The soul is a concept found in many religions but Jain beliefs about the soul or self are very distinctive. In Jain cosmology the soul is a pure substance with:

- consciousness – **caitanya**
- energy – **vīrya**
- bliss – **sukha**

The soul always has these qualities – **guṇas**, regardless of the body it inhabits. Souls are found within many types of living beings, ranging from those with one sense to those with five. A soul contracts or expands to fill the available space inside a body, from a tiny, one-celled nigoda to a five-sensed blue whale.

The opposite of jīva is **ajīva**, which can be described as the absence of soul. Ajīva is found in non-living things. Both forms of matter make up the universe, according to Jain cosmology.

Karma

Another key Jain belief is **karma**. The soul is trapped in the cycle of rebirth – **saṃsāra** – by karma. In the cycle of births, the soul – **jīva** – is born into many different types of body – **kāya** – each with attachments to its world, including passions or emotions. Thoughts, speech and action create different types of **karman** or karma, which are bound to the soul, weighing it down and obscuring its shining brightness. To regain its original pure condition, the soul must rid itself of karma by progressing spiritually.

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<sup>1</sup> Tirthankara – path maker. One who shows the way.

Sanskrit **moksha** or Prakrit **mokkha** refers to the liberation or salvation of a soul from saṃsāra, the cycle of birth and death. It is a blissful state of existence of a soul, attained after the destruction of all karmic bonds. A liberated soul is said to have attained its true and pristine nature of infinite bliss, infinite knowledge and infinite perception. Such a soul is called siddha and is revered in Jainism. All souls who have achieved the natural state of infinite bliss, infinite knowledge (kevala jnana), infinite power and infinite perception are regarded as God in Jainism.

Moksha is the highest and the noblest objective that a soul should strive to achieve. In fact, it is the only objective that a person should have; other objectives are contrary to the true nature of soul. Siddhahood is the ultimate goal of all souls. There are infinite souls who have become siddhas and infinite more who will attain this state of liberation. Godhood is not a monopoly of some omnipotent and powerful being(s). All souls, **with right perception, knowledge and conduct** can achieve self-realisation and attain this state. Once achieving this state of infinite bliss and having destroyed all desires, the soul is not concerned with worldly matters and does not interfere in the working of the universe, as any activity or desire to interfere will once again result in influx of karmas and thus loss of liberation. **The inner cover photo (Image 1) is the Jain depiction of the liberated soul in its pristine natural luminous state of infinite bliss.**

## Cosmology

Jainism is a transtheistic religion. Jains do not acknowledge an intelligent first cause as the creator of the universe. The Jain theory is that the universe has no beginning nor end. It is traced to jiva and ajiva, the two everlasting, uncreated, independent and coexisting categories. Consciousness is jiva. That which has no consciousness is ajiva. The jiva (soul) has no form but, during its worldly career, it is vested with a body and becomes subject to an inflow of karmic `dust' (asravas).

These are the subtle material particles that are drawn to a soul because of its worldly activities. The asravas bind the soul to the physical world until they have brought about the karmic result when they fall away `like ripe fruit' by which time other actions have drawn more asravas to the soul. With the exception of the Arihantas (the Ever-Perfect) and the Siddhas (the Liberated), who have dispelled the passions which provide the `glue' for the asravas, all souls are in karmic bondage to the universe. They go through a continuous cycle of death and rebirth in a personal evolution that can lead at last to moksha (eternal release).

In this cycle there are countless souls at different stages of their personal evolution; earth-bodies, water-bodies, fire-bodies, air-bodies, vegetable-bodies, and mobile bodies ranging from bacteria, insects, worms, birds and larger animals to human beings, infernal beings and celestial beings.

## Sects in Jainism

There are two main sects in Jainism – Svetambara and Digambara. Both agree on the fundamental Jain principles and the five vows in Jainism. However, both have different views when it comes to scriptures, liberation, dress, the birth of Mahavira etc.

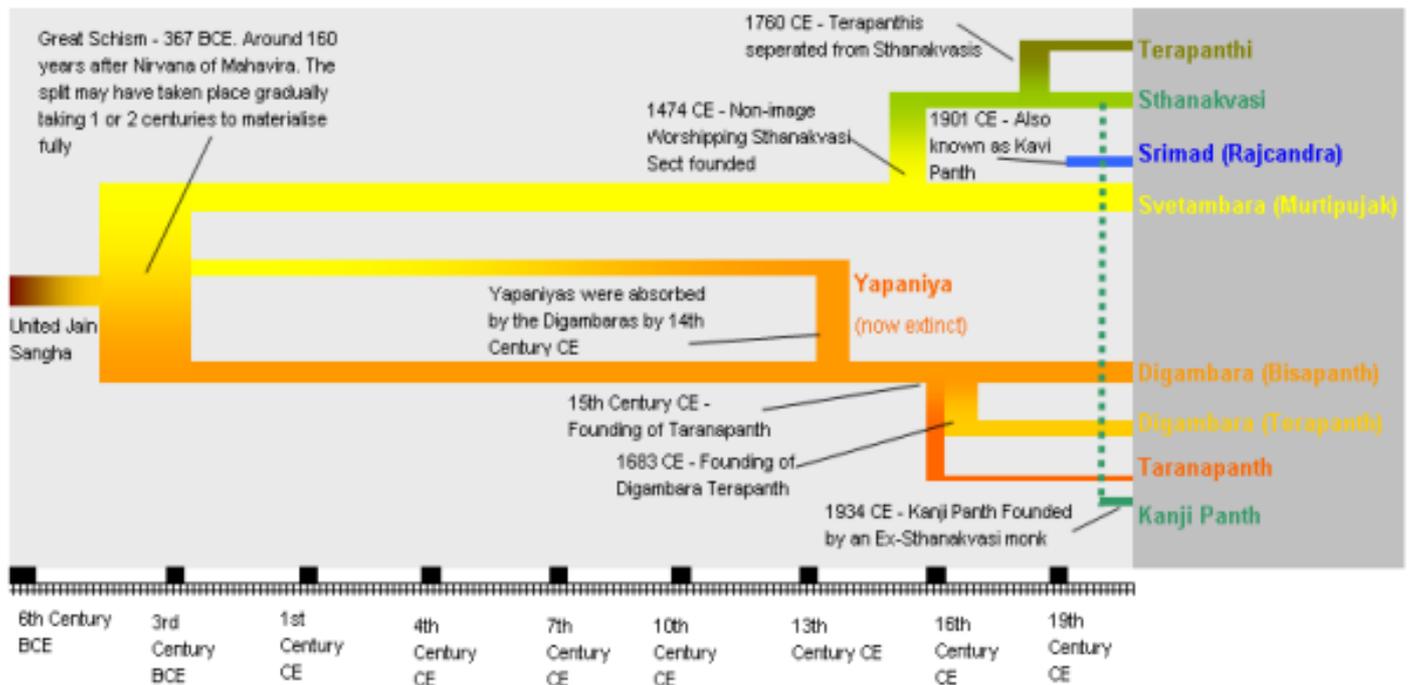
Digambara means “sky-clad” i.e. naked and Svetambara means “white-clad”, that’s why they wear white clothes. Digambara believes that in order to achieve nirvana or liberation, one must renounce everything including clothes. Therefore Digambara monks are completely naked. Svetambara, on the contrary, believes that practice of nudity is not essential to attain liberation. Therefore they wear white clothes. However, nuns in both the sects wear white clothes.

Digambara believes that women cannot achieve nirvana or liberation directly. They first have to reborn as a man for this. Svetambara, on the other hand, have a different opinion. According to them, women are equally capable of achieving liberation as a man. They believe that anybody can achieve salvation, be it a householder or a monk.



Both of the major Jain traditions evolved into sub-traditions over time. Those who avoid temples and idols, and pursue their spirituality at a designated monastic meeting place came to be known as Sthānakavāsī.

Śvētāmbarins who are not Sthānakavāsins are called Murtipujaka (Idol-worshippers). Murtipujaka temples contain idols of the Tirthankaras instead of empty prayer rooms (Sthanak) of the Sthanakvasis.



## Ahiṃsā, Anekāntavāda and Aparigraha

The three main pillars of Jainism are Ahiṃsā (non-violence), Anekāntavāda (non-absolutism), Aparigraha (non-possessiveness).

### Ahimsa

It encompasses being nonviolent to all living beings: to oneself, to others and to nature. The teaching of ahimsa refers not only to wars and visible physical acts of violence but to violence in the hearts and minds of human beings, their lack of concern and compassion for their fellow humans and for the natural world.

Ancient Jain texts explain that violence (himsa) is not defined by actual harm, for this may be unintentional. It is the intention to harm, the absence of compassion that makes action violent. Without violent thought there could be no violent actions. When violence enters our thoughts, we remember Tirthankara Mahavira's words: "You are that which you intend to hit, injure, insult, torment, persecute, torture, enslave or kill."

Being non-violent to oneself mean not being angry, not being in any kind of fear or anxious, being equanimous and accepting of all ups and downs, being kind to all living creatures including plant and animal life. Being angry or fearful is considered being violent to yourself.

Anekantavada

(Hindi: अनेकान्तवाद, "many-sidedness") is the Jain doctrine about metaphysical truths that emerged in ancient India. It states that the ultimate truth and reality is complex and has multiple aspects. Anekantavada has also been interpreted to mean non-absolutism, "intellectual Ahimsa", religious pluralism as well as a rejection of fanaticism that leads to terror attacks and mass violence.

According to Jainism, no single, specific statement can describe the nature of existence and the absolute truth. This knowledge (Kevala Jnana), it adds, is comprehended only by the Arihants. Other beings and their statements about absolute truth are incomplete, and at best a partial truth. All knowledge claims, according to the anekāntavāda doctrine must be qualified in many ways, including being affirmed and denied. Anekāntavāda is a fundamental doctrine of Jainism.

The origins of anekāntavāda can be traced back to the teachings of Mahāvīra (599–527 BCE), the 24th Jain Tīrthankara. The details of the doctrine emerged in Jainism in the 1st millennium CE, from debates between scholars of Jain, Buddhist and Vedic schools of philosophies.

## Parable of Seven Blind Men and the Elephant <sup>2</sup>



The Jain texts explain the anekāntvāda concept using the parable of blind men and elephant, in a manner similar to those found in both Buddhist and Hindu texts about limits of perception and the importance of complete context. The parable has several Indian variations, but broadly goes as follows:

A group of blind men heard that a strange animal, called an elephant, had been brought to the town, but none of them were aware of its shape and form. Out of curiosity, they said: "We must inspect and know it by touch, of which we are capable". So, they sought it out, and when they found it they groped about it. In the case of the first person, whose hand landed on the trunk, said "This being is like a thick snake". For another one whose hand reached its ear, it seemed like a kind of fan. As for another person, whose hand was upon its leg, said, the elephant is a pillar like a tree-trunk. The blind man who placed his hand upon its side said, "elephant is a wall". Another who felt its tail, described it as a rope. The last felt its tusk, stating the elephant is that which is hard, smooth and like a spear. This parable is called *Andha-gaja-nyaya* maxim in Jain texts.

### Aparigraha

The third main principle in Jainism is aparigraha which means non-attachment to worldly possessions. For monks and nuns, Jainism requires a vow of complete non-possession of any property, relations and emotions. The ascetic is a wandering mendicant in the Digambara tradition, or a resident mendicant in the Śvētāmbara tradition.

For Jain laypersons, it recommends limited possession of property that has been honestly earned, and giving excess property to charity.

According to Natubhai Shah, aparigraha applies to both the material and the psychic. Material possessions refer to various forms of property. Psychic possessions refer to emotions, likes and dislikes, and attachments of any form. Unchecked attachment to possessions is said to result in direct harm to one's personality.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anekantavada#Parable\\_of\\_the\\_blind\\_men\\_and\\_elephant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anekantavada#Parable_of_the_blind_men_and_elephant)



# Part I – How do we deal with the Self?

## **Jainism and Sadbhavana towards Self**

The word **Jina** meaning “Victor,” is one who has conquered ignorance, achieved spiritual victory, and realized the luminous, perfect soul. Those who follow the path of the **jinas** are called Jains. In this very nomenclature, is the path and goal of sadbhavna towards self.

Thus Spoke Mahavir

Jo sahasam sahasaanam

Samgaame dujjae jine

Egam jinejja appaanam

Esa se paramo jao

One who vanquishes millions of warriors in an invincible war still loses out to another who has conquered his mind and senses - as the latter is the ultimate victory. Jainism does not teach the dependency on any supreme being for enlightenment. The Tirthankara is a guide and teacher who points the way to enlightenment, but the struggle for enlightenment is one's own. Moral rewards and sufferings are not the work of a divine being, but a result of an innate moral order in the cosmos; a self-regulating mechanism whereby the individual reaps the fruits of his own actions through the workings of the karmas.

Devout Jains take five main vows — ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truth), asteya (not stealing), brahmacharya (sexual continence), and aparigraha (non-possessiveness). When a householder decides to become a monk or nun, after due preparation, he or she completes the ritual of renunciation or initiation — diksha.

## **The Jain Code of Conduct**

The five vratas (vows) in the Jain code of conduct are:

- Ahimsa: Non-violence in thought, word and deed,
- Satya: To seek and speak the truth,
- Asteya: To behave honestly and never to take anything by force or theft,
- Brahmacharya: To practise restraint and chastity in thought, word and deed,
- Aparigraha: To practice non-acquisitiveness and non-possessiveness.

The vow of ahimsa is the first and pivotal vow. The other vows may be viewed as aspects of ahimsa which together form an integrated code of conduct in the individual's quest for equanimity and the three jewels (ratna-traya) of right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. The vows are undertaken at an austere and exacting level by the monks and nuns and are

then called maha-vratas (great vows). They are undertaken at a more moderate and flexible level by householders and called the anu-vratas ('atomic' or basic vows). Underlying the Jain code of conduct is the emphatic assertion of individual responsibility towards one and all. Indeed, the entire universe is the forum of one's own conscience. The code is profoundly ecological in its secular thrust and its practical consequences.

### **1. Kindness to animals**

The transgressions against the vow of non-violence include all forms of cruelty to animals and human beings. Many centuries ago, Jains condemned as evil the common practice of animal sacrifice to the gods. It is generally forbidden to keep animals in captivity, to whip, mutilate or overload them or to deprive them of adequate food and drink. The injunction is modified in respect of domestic animals to the extent that they may be roped or even whipped occasionally but always mercifully with due consideration and without anger.

### **2. Vegetarianism**

Except for allowing themselves a judicious use of one-sensed life in the form of vegetables, Jains would not consciously take any life for food or sport. As a community they are strict vegetarians, consuming neither meat, fish nor eggs. They confine themselves to vegetable and milk products.

### **3. Self-restraint and the avoidance of waste**

By taking the basic vows, the Jain laity endeavor to live a life of moderation and restraint and to practice a measure of abstinence and austerity. They must not procreate indiscriminately lest they overburden the universe and its resources. Regular periods of fasting for self-purification are encouraged. In their use of the earth's resources Jains take their cue from "the bee [that] sucks honey in the blossoms of a tree without hurting the blossom and strengthens itself". Wants should be reduced, desires curbed and consumption levels kept within reasonable limits. Using any resource beyond one's needs and misuse of any part of nature is considered a form of theft. Indeed, the Jain faith goes one radical step further and declares unequivocally that waste and creating pollution are acts of violence.

### **4. Charity**

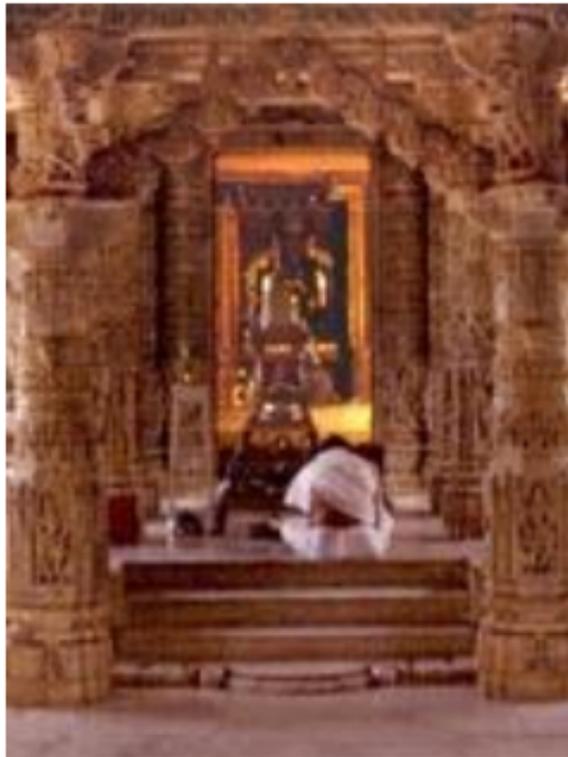
Accumulation of possessions and enjoyment for personal ends should be minimized. Giving charitable donations and one's time for community projects generously is a part of a Jain householder's obligations. That explains why the Jain temples and pilgrimage centers are well-endowed and well-managed. It is this sense of social obligation born out of religious teachings that has led the Jains to found and maintain innumerable schools, colleges, hospitals, clinics, lodging houses, hostels, orphanages, relief and rehabilitation camps for the

handicapped, old, sick and disadvantaged as well as hospitals for ailing birds and animals. Wealthy individuals are advised to recognize that beyond a certain point their wealth is superfluous to their needs and that they should manage the surplus as trustees for social benefit.

Some religions preach that an individual can be saved by devotion to God, the saviour, or to God's incarnations and intermediaries. Jainism teaches that we can attain true peace and happiness only through behaving and thinking rightly. Acharya Kundakunda.

### **Role and Meaning of Prayer and Worship**

<sup>3</sup>Jain worship and prayer are radically different to the worship and prayer found in many other faiths. There are three main reasons for this:



Jain worship and prayer are different from the practices of many other faiths ©

Jains say that if a person takes part in prayer or worship (or gives to charity) because they want to get something then they won't get any spiritual benefit from that worship, let alone any material benefit. Jains have little reason to pray to gods out of self-interest since only devas can give help, siddhas cannot; and the operation of karma, which sets the quality of a being's life, is completely automatic and cannot be influenced by prayer.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/jainism/worship/worship\\_1.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/jainism/worship/worship_1.shtml)

Jains know that spiritual beings can't benefit from being worshipped, because such beings are beyond human contact. Such beings have been liberated from all desires and passions and so they cannot be pleased by worship or anything else. So on the face of it, there is no reason for Jains to worship. Yet they do. Despite everything said above, Jains have good reasons for worshipping:

- It improves the spiritual state of the worshipper.
- The very act of worshipping brings about spiritual purification - rather as going to the gym improves the body.
- It can destroy bad karma attached to the soul.
- It provides a focus for spiritual activity.
- It acknowledges the worshipper's own inherent divinity.
- It reminds the worshipper of the life-example they want to follow.

### **Jain prayers**

Jain prayers aren't like the God-focussed prayers found in Christianity. Instead Jain prayers tend to recall the great acts of the tirthankaras and remind the individual of the various teachings of Mahavira. Jain prayer is part of a being's spiritual development; it is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Jains do not pray to ask the tirthankaras for grace or material favours, but to inspire them in their practice. This is best understood by the term – i.e. "we pray to the attributes of such Gods to acquire such attributes".<sup>4</sup>

Prayers are spoken in the ancient dialect of Ardha Magadhi (which is as old as Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ). One of the most important daily Jain prayers is the Namaskara Sutra (Namokar mantra) which praises the five great beings of Jainism:

**<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3yok55>**

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<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God\\_in\\_Jainism#Godliness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_in_Jainism#Godliness)

I bow down to those who have reached omniscience in the flesh and teach the road to everlasting life in the liberated state.

I bow down to those who have attained perfect knowledge and liberated their souls of all karma.

I bow down to those who have experienced self-realisation of their souls through self-control and self-sacrifice.

I bow down to those who understand the true nature of soul and teach the importance of the spiritual over the material.

I bow down to those who strictly follow the five great vows of conduct and inspire us to live a virtuous life.

To these five types of great souls I offer my praise.

Such praise will help diminish my sins.

Giving this praise is most auspicious.

So auspicious as to bring happiness and bliss.

This prayer does not worship any particular individual. It worships the virtues of the arihantas, the siddhas, the acharyas, the upadhyayas and sadhus. This prayer is learnt by Jain children. It is often the first prayer a Jain will say rising in the morning and the last prayer said before going to sleep for the night.

### **The prayer of forgiveness**

This prayer begins by forgiving all beings for anything they may have done to the person praying, it goes on to ask forgiveness of all beings (including the tiniest insect) for anything that the person praying may have done to them. The order of the prayer is very typical of Jainism - the person praying begins with the things they can change in themselves, rather than asking for changes in others.

I grant forgiveness to all living beings,

May all the living beings please forgive me.

I have friendship with all the living beings.

I have no hostility towards anyone.

### **Jainism is Action, not Devotion**

Jainism followers are expected to help themselves towards salvation, through thinking and acting in the proper way. Some say that it is a religion "of action, not devotion", although others say that devotion and action can be the same thing. Nonetheless, many Jains in India worship at their temple every day, and join forces for community worship on festival days.

The Jain community is by and large economically prosperous, and indeed, many Jains are among the top industrialists, manufacturers, traders, billionaires of India with lavish consumerist lifestyles. The community donates generously and regularly towards construction and maintenance of grand Jain temples, pilgrimage sites, to gaushalas and animal welfare organisations. Donations and contributions are also made for organizing community religious activities, upkeep and care of the Jain clergy.

Many are devout followers of their monks who in turn support and bless them spiritually. However, both sides are either unaware or choose to ignore the lack of balanced outlook and living involved in such lifestyles, the malpractices committed in business and the lack of ahimsa and aparagriha principles of Jainism, while claiming to be proud and good Jains, and preaching the same. There is an out-of-proportion focus on following the principles of Jainism in food and eating habits as compared to the understanding and following of ahimsa, aparigraha and anekantada in other aspects of living, consumption and social life.

At Pune in October 2018 President Ram Nath Kovind said that the teachings of the great Jain spiritual teachers were particularly relevant in today's tumultuous world. "The three jewels of gems of Jainism are Samyak Darshan (right perception), Samyak Jnana (right knowledge) and Samyak Acharan (right conduct). In today's world, which is being torn apart by hatred and violence in the name of religion, Jainism's emphasis on compassion for all creatures is particularly relevant." Mr. Kovind said, adding that Jainism teaches people to live and let live.

Bhagwan Mahavir gave special importance to 'Aparigraha' that is not taking what is more than essential to live, Mr. Kovind said. "Humankind is exploiting nature indiscriminately. Ruthless consumption and accumulation of resources is increasing. Due to this, phenomena like climate change are emerging as challenges. Following the Jain tradition shows us a way out." <sup>5</sup>

## **Jainism's Influence on Mahatma Gandhi**

The Jain emphasis on nonviolence toward all life made a profound impression on Mohandas Gandhi, a Vaishnava Hindu who grew up in the western part of India in Gujarat, where there is a large Jain population and a significant heritage of interrelations between Jains and Hindus. "I have said elsewhere that besides Kavi (Poet Shrimad Rajchandra), Ruskin and Tolstoy have contributed in forming my intrinsic character, but Kavi has had a more profound effect because I had come in personal and intimate contact with Him" – Mahatma Gandhi.

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<sup>5</sup>

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/doctrines-of-jainism-particularly-relevant-in-todays-world-president/article25290546.ece>



Gandhi used the Jain concept of Anekantavada to explain his views. I am an Advaitist, and yet I can support Dvaitism (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has a something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an Anekāntavadi or a Syādvadi. But my Syādvāda is not the Syādvāda of the learned, it is peculiarly my own. It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view, and am often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this

knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics. (...) My Anekāntavāda is the result of the twin doctrine of Satyagraha and ahiṃsā.

#### Gandhiji's Ekadash Vrat (11 vows)

(१) सत्य (truth) (२) अहिंसा (nonviolence)(३) ब्रह्मचर्य (self discipline) (४) अस्तेय (non stealing) (५) अपरिग्रह (non possession) (६) अस्वाद (control of the palate) (७) अभय(fearlessness) (८) अस्पृश्यता निवारण (removal of untouchability) (९) शरीर-श्रम (physical labour) (१०) सहिष्णुता (tolerance)(११) स्वदेशी (use locally made goods)



## Part II – How do we deal with Other Human Beings?

### **Jainism and Sadbhavana towards Others**

#### **History of Jainism and Other Religions**

Jainism co-existed with Buddhism and Hinduism in ancient and medieval India. The emergence of major philosophical ideas within Hinduism impacted Jainism. Around the 8th century CE, Adi Shankara brought forward the doctrine of Advaita. The Vaishnavism and Shaivism also began to rise. This contributed to a decline of the "Jaina church", particularly in South India. Under these influences, Jaina kings became Shaivite and the aggressive spread caused suffering and decline of Jains and Jainism in what is today Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

Here is a link for A Video presentation by Dr. Shobha Varthaman on Jainism in Tamil Nadu:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Be3K0wZTdbU>



In Karnataka, the Digamber Jain Bunt community highly reveres Bahubali, a king who turned into an ascetic. Huge, monolithic statues have been erected by the Jain Bunts in his honor throughout their recorded history. There are five monolithic statues of Bahubali in Karnataka measuring more than 20 feet in height including the world's tallest monolithic 57 feet granite statue at Shravanabelagola in Hassan District in 981 CE.

Jain temples, called basadi and derasar, are numerous in the region and were built by various Jain Bunt rulers. The most famous among them is the Saavira Kambada Basadi located in Moodabidri.

During the 11th century, Basava, a minister to the Jaina king Bijjala II, converted numerous Jains to Lingayatism that was hostile to Jains. According to legend, they destroyed various temples belonging to Jains and adapted them to their use. A saint named Ekdanta Ramaya further propagated Lingayatism. In 1683, they stamped linga symbol in the main basadi of Jains in Halebid. Jains were forced to perform Shiva rites.

In north India Jainism faced persecution during and after the Muslim conquests on the Indian subcontinent from the 10th/11th century. This period witnessed the destruction of Jain temples, pilgrimage centers and other forms of persecution. There were significant supporters of Jainism, such as Emperor Akbar the Great (1542–1605) whose legendary religious tolerance, out of respect for Jains, ordered the release of caged birds and banned the killing of animals on the Jain festival of Paryusan. After Akbar, Jains faced an intense period of Muslim persecution in the 17th century.

The British colonial rule era, according to von Glasenapp in 1925, allowed Jains to pursue their religion without persecutions they had faced before. Further, the British government promoted trade, which allowed members of the Jain community to pursue their traditional economic activity. Jain businessmen and Jainism thrived during this period, and they used their financial success during the British Raj to rebuild Jain temples. For example, the Dharmanatha temple was built in Ahmedabad (Gujarat) in 1848. The British census reported a drop in Jain population between 1891 and 1921, from 1.417 million to 1.179 million. This may be from the Jain conversions to Hinduism and causes such as famines and epidemics.

The British colonial government in India, as well as Indian princely states, passed laws that made monks roaming naked in streets a crime, one that led to arrest. This law particularly impacted the Digambara tradition monks. The Akhil Bharatiya Jaina Samaj opposed this law, and argued that it interfered with the religious rights of Jains. Acharya Shantisagar entered Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1927, but was forced to cover his body. He then led an India-wide tour as the naked monk with his followers, to various Digambara sacred sites, and he was welcomed by kings of the Maharashtra provinces. Shantisagar fasted to oppose the restrictions imposed on Digambara monks by British Raj and prompted their discontinuance. The colonial-era laws that banned naked monks were abolished after India gained independence.

### **Sadbhavana towards All Human Beings and Religions**

The Jainism principles of Anekantada and Ahimsa and their practice vis-à-vis rest of society often comes into conflict and contradictions, as in any other religion. As mentioned earlier, focus on preaching and practice of vegetarianism food habit is widespread, popular and extreme in the pursuit of Ahimsa. The issue of serving and selling non-vegetarian items and food in public places, location and closing down of abattoirs etc. are matters in which the Jain Community – lay persons, leaders and religious heads have always tried to assert themselves using their economic and political might, almost always to the economic and social disadvantage and of other poorer and marginalized communities who are not followers of vegetarianism, even though the Jain community population size may be in minority. The following two articles are two diverse illustration of the contradictions and conflicts:

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/the-jain-monk-who-has-advice-on-trade-insurance-and-politics/story-kWpit6qIFgMZyoRrnnZ2SM.html>

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/kzm5bm/indian-cult-blames-climate-change-on-capitalists-and-jains-gains-thousands-of-followers>

So what does history tell us about the Jainism and its practice vis-à-vis other religions, about Sadbhavana toward others?

Shri Anandghan was a 17th-century Jain monk, mystical poet and hymnist, who stayed in the area of present-day north Gujarat and Rajasthan. His works are focused bhakti (devotion) as well as internal spirituality. His hymns are still popular in followers of Jainism as well as non- Jains because they are nonsectarian in nature and put emphasis on internal spirituality. They are found in religious hymn collections especially in the collection of Digambara hymns even though he is associated with Svetambara sects. His works give the message of universal oneness, harmony and brotherhood.

The Jain Foundation ([www.jainfoundation.in](http://www.jainfoundation.in)) a not for profit organization, devoted to spreading the foundational values of Jainism, organized a discourse series in year 2021 on one of his stavans– The Anandhghan Chaubisi (24 verses).

The talk is by Professor Ramzan Hasaniya, assistant professor, scholar of Gujarati Literature at Government Arts and Commerce College, Rapar in Kutch District, Gujarat. He regularly travels across Mumbai, Gujarat, etc. invited by different Jain community groups to lecture on different facets of Jainism.

In 1999-2000 Hasaniya, a Muslim, came in contact with Acharya Bhuvanchandraji Maharaj and Dr Geeta Jain when they were organizing a youth camp. Despite his not being a Jain he was allowed to take part and there was no looking back. Under the gurus, he learnt various topics of Jainism. During his doctoral research, he studied spiritual songs of Jains and other religions. In 2013 he delivered his first lecture on Jainism to the Jain Community during Paryushan, the most important annual religious event of Jains.

The YouTube link is <https://youtu.be/y261phg4xDY>

The talk is on the first Stavan of the 24 Stavans of the Anandhghan Chaubisi. “Rushab Jineshwar Preetam maro”.

Prof. Dr. Hasaniya explains that the Stavan is about love/Bhakti for the lover/God. The essence is that true love/bhakti is when you follow the path of God rather than pleasing the God. Anandghan has also raised the issue of "sati" prevalent in those times. He says a woman burning herself on the pyre along with her dead husband is also not the right path for love of a wife for her husband. Sacrifice and penance for the lover/Jineshwar/God is not he wants. What he wants from the lover is that he/she walks on the path of Spirituality/God.

Mr. Ramesh Shah the founder says "The Jain Foundation" truly believes in unity, harmony and togetherness. Anandghanji Maharaj poems rise above sectarian and religious differences, focusing on atma and adhyatma.

Another poem of Anandghanji is "Ram kaho Rehman kau Kaan Kaho Mahadeva ri, Parasnath kaho, kau brahma sakal brahm swayam evari". Here is a link to the version sung by eminent Bhajan/Sufi singer Smita Rao Bellur:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMRr1AT0ZY0&list=PLV3KWG\\_jtaK\\_XLBy-LK7bWNYkmIKkDJpb&index=20](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMRr1AT0ZY0&list=PLV3KWG_jtaK_XLBy-LK7bWNYkmIKkDJpb&index=20)

The poems speaks for humanity, togetherness, acceptance and brotherhood. This hymn was also included by Mahatma Gandhi in Ashram Bhajanavali prayer book. In today's day and age when the world is divided, we need to remind ourselves of the divine people who talked about oneness. The fact that Dr. Hasaniya who has deeply studied and is conducting this discourse, gives the true message of spirituality of Jainism if for all. It is a true national integration, meeting of religions, acceptance of faith and hope for a bright future for India".

## **Jain Monks and Their Initiatives to Promote Harmony and Ahimsa**

### **Acharya Tulsi**

Acharya Tulsi (2 October 1914 – 23 June 1997) was a prominent Jain religious leader.

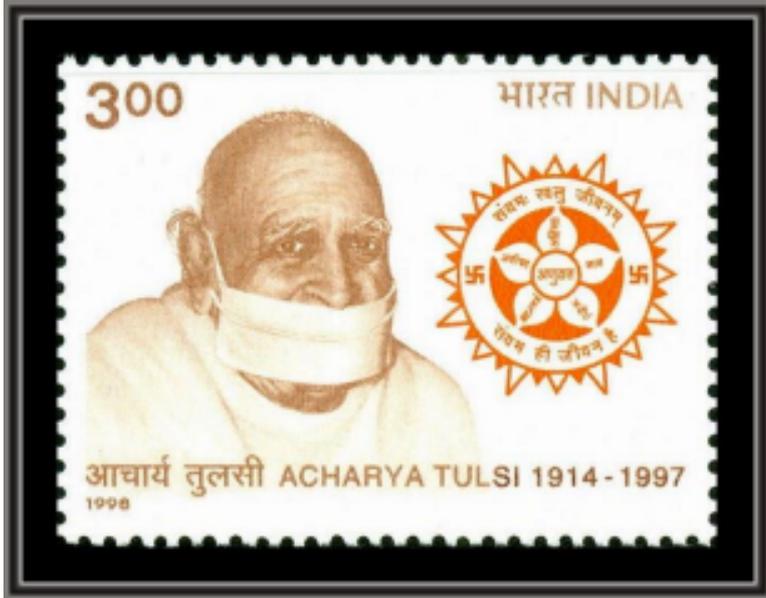
In 1949 he launched the Anuvrat movement (anu = small, vrat=vow, Anuvratas are the limited version of the Mahavratas for the monks), based on the five Jain principles Truth, Nonviolence, Non possession, Non-stealing and Celibacy as applied in their limited version for the lay people. The movement encouraged people to apply the Anuvratas in their personal lives, even when dealing with non-religious aspects of the society. The movement also held that dharma is not for ensuring happiness in the future lives but also for achieving happiness in the present life.

In 1948 Tulsi established the Parmarthik Shikshan Sanstha, a spiritual training centre for female aspirants who wanted to lead the Jain monastic lifestyle. Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, an education and research institute was established in 1991 with inspiration from

Acharya Tulsi. Jain sadhus and sadhavis remain under a vow of moving on foot all their life. In Tulsi's lifetime he covered more than 70,000 km. His major wanderings included:

- 1949: From Bikaner to Jaipur, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and back to Rajasthan.
- 1955: From Rajasthan to Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and back to Rajasthan.
- 1958: From Rajasthan to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, again Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and back to Rajasthan.
- 1966: From Rajasthan to Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and back to Rajasthan.
- 1974: From Rajasthan to Haryana, Delhi, Punjab, and back to Rajasthan.
- 1981: From Rajasthan to Haryana, Delhi and back to Rajasthan.
- 1987: From Rajasthan to Haryana and Delhi and back to Rajasthan.

Acharya Tulsi proposed harmonious cooperation among various Jain sects. As a result of his support, Samana Suttam came to be compiled and accepted by all sects.



He received many recognitions, including

- Title of Yug Pradhan in 1971 by the President of India V. V. Giri
- Bharat Jyoti Award
- Vakpati Award
- The Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration in 1993
- On 20 October 1998, the Vice President Krishan Kant released an Indian commemorative three-rupee postage stamp of Acharya Tulsi. Kant said that the Acharya gave a new and contemporary direction to the high ideals of Jainism.
- In 2014, the Reserve Bank of India issued two coins featuring Acharya Tulsi, five rupees made of nickel-brass and 20 rupees. Finance Minister Shri P. Chidambaram released the commemorative coins to commemorate the birth centenary of Acharya Tulsi at Bikaner.

### **Acharya Mahapragya**

*Ācārya Mahapragya* (14 June 1920 – 9 May 2010) was the tenth head of the Svetambar Terapanth order of Jainism. Mahapragya was a saint, yogi, spiritual leader, philosopher, author, orator, and poet.<sup>7</sup> He played a key role in the conception and establishment of Jain Vishva Bharati University, Ladnun, Rajasthan. It was established under the spiritual patronage of Acharya Tulsi in 1991. One of the prime objectives of this University is to spread literacy in subjects like nonviolence and peace, Jainology, Sanskrit, Prakrit, yoga, meditation, and literature, apart from regular degree courses.

The world's problems touched Acharya Mahapragya deeply. In response, he came up with the solution of Ahimsa Yatra, a journey on foot to advance the cause of non-violence. It was launched by Mahapragya on 5 December 2001 at Sujangarh in Rajasthan.



*Acharya Mahapragya during Ahimsa Yatra*

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<sup>7</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mah%C4%81praj%C3%B1aAcharya>

It is an endeavor to awaken a new faith in the infinite power of nonviolence. It aims at bringing the problems of all forms of violence into sharp focus. Its mission is to provide training for transforming the negative thoughts/emotions into positive direction. Having eschewed violence and pledged to refrain from killing innocent creatures; political leaders, social workers, and spiritual leaders came to him for advice.

He took his Yatra from Rajasthan to Gujarat, Maharashtra, Daman, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, some parts of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Chandigarh. He passed through 87 districts of India, and covered more than 2400 villages, towns and cities, where he held meetings with many spiritual and political leaders and appealed for communal harmony. Approximately 40,000 volunteers were assigned to various responsibilities in their local areas. The Yatra concluded 4 January 2009 at Sujangarh, the same place where it had been begun.

### **Foundation for Unity of Religious and Enlightened Citizenship' (FUREC)**

President of India, Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam's vision for prosperous and harmonious life for its citizens of India, especially the youth, motivated enlightened spiritual and religious leaders who organized a Conclave under the aegis of Acharya Mahapragya at Surat on 15 October 2003. The Action Plan discussed during the Conclave was documented and is known as 'Surat Spiritual Declaration' (SSD).

The SSD Action Plan envisages "Five Garland Projects". The emphasis of four projects was on celebration of inter religious festivals, multi religious projects, healthcare, and employment, imbibing value based education in schools and encouraging interfaith dialogue among religious/spiritual heads. In order to pursue these in a sustained manner and to coordinate all activities, a national level independent and autonomous organization managed by religious/ spiritual leaders as well as scholars and enlightened Citizens was set up.

This organization was named FUREC was launched by the president Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam on the birthday of Acharya Mahapragya, 15 June 2004 at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi. FUREC combines the objectives of the Surat Spiritual Declaration and President Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam's Vision 2020 and is a non-profit organization which was founded by 15 spiritual leaders.

### **The Dharmasthala Temple<sup>8</sup>**

Kṣētra Dharmasthala is an 800-year-old religious institution in the temple town of Dharmasthala in Karnataka. The deities of the temple are Shiva, who is referred to as Mañjunatha, Ammanavaru, the Tirthankara Chandraprabha and the protective gods of Jainism, Kalarahu, Kalarkayi, Kumarasvami and Kanyakumari. The temple is considered unique since it belongs to the Shaiva sect, priests are Madhwa Brahmins Vaishnava, and the administration is run by a Digambara Jain Bunt family called the Pergades.

The eldest male member assumes the position of *Dharma Adhikari* (chief administrator) and uses the title Heggade. The Heggade was the feudal lord of the temple town and solved civil or criminal disputes. This was a judicial function and continues even to this day. About nearly twenty generations of the Pergade family have assumed the position of Dharma Adhikari. The present Dharma Adhikari is Veerendra Heggade. He succeeded to the post at the age of 19, on 24 October 1968, the 21st in his line.

As Dharmadhikari, he has continued the traditions of the institution. He continued the tradition of the Kshetra to hold annual 'Sarva Dharma and Sahitya Sammelana' at Dharmasthala. The 85th Session of the Sammelana was held in 2017. **Sarva Dharma Sammelan** ("Meeting of all faiths") is an assembly organized in several places in India. It is generally organized by the Jain community, since it confirms with the anekantavada principle of Jainism. The best known meeting is held at Dharmasthala every year, where it has been held since 1932. Other Sammelans have been held at Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai, Jabalpur, Bangalore, etc. The philosopher Osho started his public speaking at the annual Sarva Dharma Sammelan held at Jabalpur since 1939, organized by the Taran Panthi Jain community, in which he was born. He participated from 1951 to 1968.

Sarva Dharma Sammelan resolves to form unity chapter:

<http://www.hindu.com/2005/10/03/stories/2005100315840500.html>

*CHENNAI: It was a stage filled with white satin decorating the background, evoking an atmosphere of purity and peace. The occasion was a meeting of religious heads at the Sarva Dharma Sammelan. The final outcome of the daylong deliberations was the Chennai Spiritual Resolution. Organised by the Sri Jain Swetamber Terapanthi Sabha under the aegis of Acharya Shri Mahapragyaji's disciple, Sadhvi Animasriji, the congregation resolved to form a chapter of the Foundation for Unity of Religions and Enlightened Citizenship (FUREC), as part of the nationwide independent and autonomous body of FUREC. The major resolutions were to bring out the spiritual component of religion, to enlighten society by creating awareness on values, infuse education with secular and interfaith material, apply spiritual wisdom in relation to science and arts and find solutions to problems of gender discrimination, child labour and influence policy-makers.*

*Participants included Sadhvi Animasriji (Terapanth Jain sect), Brahma Rishi Guru Anand from Tirupati, Kazi Mufthi Dr. Salahuddin Mohammed Ayub, Government Chief Kazi, Father Vincent Chinnadurai, Santhome Communication Centre, Giani Pratipal Singh, Sri Gurunanak Sat Sangh, Ven. M. Ratanajoathy, Monk In-charge, Buddhist Temple, Kundrathur, Rajayogini Brahma Kumari Shantha, Regional Director, Prajapita Brahma Kumaris and other leaders took part. There were 16 signatories to the resolution.*

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<sup>8</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharmasthala\\_Temple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharmasthala_Temple)

*At the meeting Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali, the Prince of Arcot urged people of different religions to shun violence and hatred among each other in the name of religion. Paying rich tributes to the Jain community, the Prince, in his special address said that the Holy Prophet said in the Quran that one should stand firm for justice as witnesses to God, even if it was against oneself and one's near and dear. "Hypocrisy is more dangerous than disbelief. Envy destroys humanity than animosity," he quoted. The failure to protect a 16th century mosque from destruction at Ayodhya has been catastrophic in terms of secularism and constitutional-democratic values in sheer human terms, he said pointing out that this was against the preaching of all religions to demolish a place of worship of another religion. "Killing of innocent people by terrorists in the name of any religion, to whichever they belong, one should know that they are not martyrs, but criminals," the Prince said.*

The Dharmasathala has a large number of charitable Trusts. One of these - the Shri Kshethra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project (SKDRDP)<sup>9</sup> was founded with single important purpose of "Inclusive Rural Development". To achieve this were created three main things for Individuals. They were Loans, Insurance & Pensions which ushered Financial Stability.

To enable people to inculcate the habit of helping others, SKDRDP started organizing Self-Help Groups which are called as Pragathi Bandhu Groups (PBG). Its lending and training programs are geared towards members and their families. It has 5.75 lakh PBGs with 46.64 lakh members and loans outstanding of Rs 14,489 crore as on 30th Sep 2021. As every family has three types of people, SKDRDP has programs focused on these groups.

- Family Head - huge array of programs under Agriculture division.
- Women Empowerment - Jnanavikasa to make them self-sustainable.
- Children SujnanaNidhi scholarship

Apart from family, Community also matters, hence SKDRDP has a special division called as CDP (Community Development Programs) to develop the Rural Infrastructure.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://skdrdpindia.org/>

## The Life and Work of Satish Kumar

Satish Kumar (born 9 August 1936) is an Indian British activist and speaker, nuclear disarmament advocate and pacifist. We can learn about application of teaching of Jainism and as an individual for Sadbhavna towards nature. He was born into a Jain family in a small village in north-west India, the youngest of eight children. In 1945, the 9-year old Satish Kumar left his family to become a mendicant Jain monk, but nine years later, after reading a book by Gandhi, he ran away from the order to study for six years under Gandhi's 'spiritual successor', Vinoba Bhave. His most notable accomplishment is the completion, together with a companion, E. P. Menon, of a peace walk of over 8,000 miles in 1973–4, from New Delhi to Moscow, Paris, London, and Washington, D.C., the capitals of the world's earliest nuclear-armed countries.

Returning to India, he founded a short-lived magazine in Delhi, but was soon back in Europe, travelling, writing and teaching non-violence. In 1973, he settled in Britain and took over from the Rev John Papworth as editor of the bi-monthly magazine Resurgence (which the Guardian has called 'the artistic and spiritual flagship of the green movement'). In 2012, it merged with the Ecologist under the new title Resurgence & Ecologist. He is the author of Non-Violence or Non-Existence (1969), No Destination (1978; 1992; 2000), You Are Therefore I Am (2002), The Buddha and the Terrorist (2006), Spiritual Compass (2008), Earth Pilgrim (2009) and Soil, Soul, Society (2013).

He founded the Small School in Hartland in 1982 and co-founded Schumacher College (where he is today a visiting fellow) in Dartington in 1990. In his 50th year, he undertook another pilgrimage, walking 2,000 miles around the holy places of Britain, again carrying no money. He insists that reverence for nature should be at the heart of every political and social debate.

In this interview to EcoResolution ([www.ecoresolutionearth](http://www.ecoresolutionearth)) co-founder Ruby Reed talks with Satish about how to change the world with non-violence, joy and connection. As an activist for change, you can act out of two different kind of emotions. You can act out of anger about destruction of the environment, pollution, cruel treatment of animals in factory-farms etc. – all of these which can cause you anger. But the Jain teaching properly understood and applied says that you need to act, but to act out of compassion. You act out of compassion for those and all that is being ill-treated or exploited. And you also have to be compassionate towards the perpetrators and subjugators. Because they don't know what they are doing. They are in ignorance. They need our help to understand, be enlightened and act properly.

Satish says in the Jain tradition, we don't see the world as us vs. them, we are all interconnected in the way we treat the earth. As consumers in a materialistic society, we are

participants in the exploitation of the earth and nature. So as Mahatma Gandhi did and inspired, non-violent, non-cooperation is the way. We withdraw our participation and lovingly communicate, explain to others why we are doing it and influence other people.

He says, as a monk he was “practicing non-violence mainly for myself and seeking salvation my own salvation and liberation”. He got influenced by Mahatma Gandhi’s ideas that “we are not separate individuals, we have to live in the world and practice non-violence and love”. Inspired by this, he decided to leave the monastic order, live in the world and practice spirituality, non-violence, truth and revolutionary love and join the Gandhian Movement. He joined Vinoba Bhave’s social movement of land reforms to bring by changing the hearts, mind and attitude of the large landowners. They worked on changing the attitude of large landowners from “ownership” of the land to a “trustee relationship” with the land. Similarly, individuals, businesses, corporates, multinationals need to arrive at a worldview where they see themselves as caretakers of the earth, land and natural resources.

He proposes an economic model where production and consumption is cyclical and regenerative rather than the dominant model of economic growth which is destructive and unsustainable. 60-70% of our production and consumption and economy should be local. The rest can be traded and transported across long distances. In the current model humans and society are becoming the means rather than the end, and profit and growth is becoming the end rather than the means. This is leading to destruction of natural resources, destruction of indigenous and local cultures, local economies and of bio-diversity. On these issues, we need to think globally as one earth, one humanity, one future; and act and live more locally.

For the video interview with Satish, see [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27\\_7vVf6-A0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27_7vVf6-A0)



## Part III – How do we deal with Nature?

### **Jain Declaration on Nature – Dr LM Singhvi<sup>10</sup>**

The Jain tradition which enthroned the philosophy of ecological harmony and non-violence as its lodestar flourished for centuries, side-by-side with other schools of thought in ancient India. The ecological philosophy of Jainism which flows from its spiritual quest has always been central to its ethics, aesthetics, art, literature, economics and politics.

The Jain Teachings

#### **1. Ahimsa (non-violence)**

The Jain ecological philosophy is virtually synonymous with the principle of ahimsa (non-violence) which runs through the Jain tradition like a golden thread. “Ahimsa parmo dharmah” (Non-violence is the supreme religion).

The scriptures tell us: “All the Arhats (Venerable Ones) of the past, present and future discourse, counsel, proclaim, propound and prescribe thus in unison: Do not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture or kill any creature or living being.” In this strife-torn world of hatred and hostilities, aggression and aggrandizement, and of unscrupulous and unbridled exploitation and consumerism, the Jain perspective finds the evil of violence writ large.

#### **2. Parasparopagraho jivanam (interdependence)**

Mahavira proclaimed a profound truth for all times to come when he said: “One who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, fire, water and vegetation disregards his own existence which is entwined with them” Jain cosmology recognizes the fundamental natural phenomenon of symbiosis or mutual dependence, which forms the basis of the modern day science of ecology. It is relevant to recall that the term ‘ecology’ was coined in the latter half of the nineteenth century from the Greek word oikos, meaning ‘home’, a place to which one returns. Ecology is the branch of biology which deals with the relations of organisms to their surroundings and to other organisms. The ancient Jain scriptural aphorism Parasparopagraho jivanam (All life is bound together by mutual support and interdependence) is refreshingly contemporary in its premise and perspective. It defines the scope of modern ecology while extending it further to a more spacious ‘home’. It means that all aspects of nature belong together and are bound in a physical as well as a metaphysical relationship. Life is viewed as a gift of togetherness, accommodation and assistance in a universe teeming with interdependent constituents.

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<https://jainworld.jainworld.com/pdf/Jaindecl.pdf>

### **3. Anekantavada (the doctrine of manifold aspects)**

The concept of universal interdependence underpins the Jain theory of knowledge, known as anekantava or the doctrine of manifold aspects. Anekantavada describes the world as a multifaceted, everchanging reality with an infinity of viewpoints depending on the time, place, nature and state of the one who is the viewer and that which is viewed. This leads to the doctrine of syadvada or relativity, which states that truth is relative to different viewpoints (nayas). What is true from one point of view is open to question from another. Absolute truth cannot be grasped from any particular viewpoint alone because absolute truth is the sum total of all the different viewpoints that make up the universe. Because it is rooted in the doctrines of anekantavada and syadvada, Jainism does not look upon the universe from an anthropocentric, ethnocentric or egocentric viewpoint. It takes into account the viewpoints of other species, other communities and nations and other human beings.

### **4. Samyaktva (equanimity)**

The discipline of non-violence, the recognition of universal interdependence and the logic of the doctrine of manifold aspects, leads inexorably to the avoidance of dogmatic, intolerant, inflexible, aggressive, harmful and unilateral attitudes towards the world around. It inspires the personal quest of every Jain for samyaktva (equanimity) towards both jiva (animate beings) and ajiva (inanimate substances and objects). It encourages an attitude of give and take and of live and let live. It offers a pragmatic peace plan based, not on the domination of nature, nations or other people, but on an equanimity of mind devoted to the preservation of the balance of the universe.

### **5. Jiva-daya (compassion, empathy and charity)**

Although the term 'ahimsa' is stated in the negative (a=non, himsa=violence), it is rooted in a host of positive aims and actions which have great relevance to contemporary environmental concerns. Ahimsa is an aspect of daya (compassion, empathy and charity), described by a great Jain teacher as "the beneficent mother of all beings" and "the elixir for those who wander in suffering through the ocean of successive rebirths." Jiva-daya means caring for and sharing with all living beings, tending, protecting and serving them. It entails universal friendliness (maitri), universal forgiveness (kshama) and universal fearlessness (abhaya). Jains, whether monks, nuns or householders, therefore, affirm prayerfully and sincerely, that their heart is filled with forgiveness for all living beings and that they have sought and received the forgiveness of all beings, that they crave the friendship of all beings, that all beings give them their friendship and that there is not the slightest feeling of alienation or enmity in their heart for anyone or anything. They also pray that forgiveness and friendliness may reign throughout the world and that all living beings may cherish each other.

# Excerpts from Jainism, Dharma, and Environmental Ethics - Pankaj Jain<sup>11</sup>

“Environmentalism is comparable to a child that only recently learned to walk. Ecospiritualities of different kinds seem to be the invisible backbone of the growth of this child”-Sigurd Bergmann<sup>12</sup>

## Introduction

...Scholars of environmental ethics and Indic traditions have differentiated two models of environmental awareness for India: the “devotional model” and the “renouncer model.” These two models are based on a long-standing dichotomy between the householders and ascetics. Householders perform devotional and ritualistic activities whereas ascetics perform austere practices. My fieldwork with the rural communities of Rajasthan and Gujarat suggests that their practices tend to be devotional rather than ascetic. To be sure, the devotional Indians do not reject ascetics. They continue to attend discourses by ascetics and pay their respect to them but their own practices largely consist of daily rituals, puja, at home and at temples. Fasting is another common practice performed by Indians. While lay Hindus would eat fruits and vegetables in their fasts, lay Jains avoid water and all kinds of food.

This example indicates an interesting dimension of environmentalism inspired by Indic traditions. The two models of devotional and ascetic actually lead us into a dichotomy of the Hindu traditions and the Jain traditions. As we saw, the majority of Hindu practitioners follow devotion in their daily rituals, and extending our discussion to Jain laity, we find that Jain lay practitioners come much closer to the austere practices of ascetics. Jain role models are their Tirthankaras who had renounced all their belongings including their clothing to perform the toughest austerities possible. Even the temple-going Jains know that the Jain ideal is to renounce householder life and to follow the path of their role models such as Mahavira, other Tirthankaras and the contemporary monks and nuns.

The Jain ideal is to attain Moksha by renouncing worldly life, whereas for most Hindus, especially the followers of Vallabha and Ramanuja, the ideal is to become perfect devotee or attain Moksha by practicing their routine householder lives.

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<sup>11</sup> The full article is available at <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8Q531B9/download>

<sup>12</sup> Bergmann, Sigurd. *Ecotheology*, Volume 11.3, September 2006.

## Bishnoi Community and Jainism

Although the Bishnoi community considers itself a caste-group within the larger Hindu community, several of its social and cultural practices match with Jain communities. Bishnoi Guru Jambheshvara in the fifteenth century Rajasthan was probably the first Indian guru to emphasize ecological awareness in his teachings. In his 29 rules, he specifically prohibited harming trees or animals and encouraged vegetarianism. Of his 29 rules, eight rules were prescribed to preserve and encourage animal husbandry. These include non-sterilization of bulls and keeping the male goats in a sanctuary, prohibition against killing the animals and the cutting down of any type of green trees and providing protection to all life forms. The followers are even directed to see that the firewood is devoid of small insects before burning it in their hearths. The strong emphasis of Jambheshvara and his followers on revering the animals and trees resemble Hindu rituals and Jain emphasis on non-violence.

Although Jambheshvara prohibited keeping goats as pets, he ordained against slaughter of goats and sheep in another verse, Kinnri tharpi chhali roso kinnri Gadar gai, sool chubhijey karak duheli to hai jayo jeeva no ghai, which means, “by whose sanction do butchers kill sheep and goats? Since even a prick by a thorn is extremely painful to human beings, is it proper to indulge in those killings? Therefore, these animals should be treated as own kith and kin and should not be harmed in any way.” In another verse, while preaching to another disciple Nathaji, Jambheshvara says, Chhery bheri adi ko par upkari mann, raksha main tatpar rahey so buddhiman. That means that goats, sheep, etc., are rendering services to others, and the one who protects them is a wise person. As a rule, following the Holi festival, villagers participate in a public auction to take care of the cattle sanctuary for the next one year.

Based on the similarities of the two non-violent traditions of Jainism and Bishnois, it is not surprising that a noted conservationist Valmik Thapar called Bishnoi tradition as an “offshoot of Jainism” (1997). In my quest to explore potential relationship between them, I noticed another similarity in the Bishnoi and the Jain traditions. Although the majority of Jains perform rituals in temples with elaborate idols and images, a new sect emerged on the borders of Rajasthan and Gujarat that completely rejected any use of images similar to Jambheshvara’s rejection of idol worship in the Bishnoi tradition during the same time. The new Jain sect was founded by Lonka Shah who was born in Sirohi district in South-West Rajasthan.<sup>25</sup> He was born in 1418 and died in 1484 while Jambheshvara was born in 1452 and died in 1537.

Lonka Shah’s movement to reject idol-worship started in 1452 and became widespread in Rajasthan and Gujarat by 1474. This is indicated by the manuscripts from 1456 that are found in Bikaner and Nagore, towns near the birthplace of Jambheshvara. Like the 29 rules given by Jambheshvara for Bishnois, Lonka Shah’s written work is also listed with numerical titles, “34 Statements,” “Basket of 58 Statements,” and “13 Questions and Their Answers.”

It is believed that he had about 400 ascetic disciples and thousands of lay followers. Out of 45 people who took initiation under him simultaneously, Lakhamsiji, Nunaji, Shobhaji, Dungarsiji, and Bhaninji became prominent monastic leaders eventually, established their own sanghas after the death of Lonka Shah, and named them as different branches of Lokagachha. Eventually, one branch became a prominent branch of Sthanakwasi sect called Nagori that developed in the Nagore town of Rajasthan, the birthplace of Jambheshvara. Given the wandering nature of Sthanakwasi monks and the powerful new movement launched by Lonka Shah, it can be speculated that Jambheshvara may have met one of the followers or disciples of Lonka Shah that led him to develop the Bishnoi code of conduct based on noniconic rituals and nonviolence towards animals.

In my fieldwork, I visited the Bishnoi cattle shelter institution Shri Jagatguru Jambheshvara Goshala Sanstha, at Mukam. This takes care of about 1335 cows. Their food is brought from Haryana and Punjab. About 8000 to 9000 kilograms of food is fed to them on daily basis. This institution is inspired by Amar That, an animal shelter institution mentioned in one of the verses by Jambheshvara's disciple Udoji "Naina Bakra paley that kar, tanni nahin nakho", which means that the goats should be looked after in sanctuaries and bullocks should not be castrated. Jains have also long supported such institutions in different parts of India and I visited one of such cattle shelter institution that I describe below.

Examples of Jain "Environmentalism" – "In my research for Jain environmentalism, I was struck by a unique center for wildlife protection, Shree Sumati Jeev Raksha Kendra located adjacent to the town of Malgaon in Sirohi District. This campus is developed by K. P. Sanghvi Group and it comprises a Jain Temple Complex and Animal Welfare Center. The center, established in 1998, takes care of sick, injured, old, retired, homeless, and rescued stray cattle including cows, buffalos, dogs, and donkeys.



The Institute has a Goshala (cow-center) that is spread over more than seven million square feet area that takes care of more than five thousand stray cattle. The center employs more than 150 persons to look after the cattle and three veterinary doctors to give medical aid to the cattle. Cow milk is used for rituals at the adjacent temple complex and the garden in the shelter premises provides flowers for the temple. Mr. Ramavtar Aggarwal, secretary of the All India Goshala Federation said that there are more than 3000 Goshalas in India and Sumati Center at Pavapuri is one of the biggest in India. Another organization called Love4Cow maintains a nationwide list of Goshalas maintained by Jains (and Hindus) and lists more than 670 Goshalas in Rajasthan alone. Though not trained as a scholar of Jain tradition, Michael Tobias recognized a commonality between his own environmental interests and the Jain worldview.

Similar such efforts by Hindu and Jain community are widely reported from many places in India. The Hindu reported a Jain/Hindu Goshala Satyam Shivam Sundaram Gaunivas at Gaganpahad near Hyderabad (July 5, 2005). Considered South India's biggest cow shelter and managed by the Shiv Mandir Goshala set up by jeweler-turned-philanthropist, Dharam Raj Ranka, the shelter houses over two thousand cows rescued from slaughterhouses in addition to three hundred and two hundred bulls. Justice Gumanmal Lodha, a Jain ex-lawmaker from Rajasthan, during his tenure as the chairperson of the National Commission on Cattle, published a detailed report to ban cow slaughter in India and submitted to the Union Government of India. The report, in four volumes, called for stringent laws to protect the cow and its progeny in the interest of India's rural economy. Lodha moved close to a national ban on cow slaughter in India, although most states except Kerala have already banned it long ago.

Another dimension of Jain principles in practice is evident at the Jain Bird Hospital in Delhi at the Digambar Jain Temple, opposite Red Fort near Chandni Chowk, where the patients admitted are only birds, preferably the vegetarian ones. It was established by Prachin Shri Aggarwal Digambar Jain Panchayat in 1956 on the Jain principle of aversion to killing. The hospital has separate wards in form of cages for different species like sparrows, parrots, domestic fowls, and pigeons. It also has a research laboratory and even an intensive care unit for its serious patients. The nearby people, especially the Jain merchants, bring the birds for treatment that are usually wounded by fowlers, ceiling fans or by other means. The hospital admits a maximum of sixty injured birds on a day and about 15000 in a year. They are treated, bathed, and fed a nutritious diet for their fast recovery. Later, the birds are set free from the hospital's terrace overlooking the Red Fort. To show yet another example of Jains protecting the animals, in 1969, Goa's largest wildlife sanctuary was named after Mahavira. The Governor at the time was a Jain and he suggested the name. In 1982, the local Jains donated 12.5 million rupees for the development of the Sanctuary.

Another relatively newer orchard, “Tapovan Ashram,” is in the denuded forests and hill region of the Aravallis at Naya Kheda village in Udaipur district. This is a lush green garden of about 15 acres of land with a high water table and exotic herbs and fruits. This began as an experiment by a Jain horticulturist Ratan Chand Mehta in 1991. He harvested the rainwater from the nearby hills and soon the water table of that small area was higher than the surrounding areas. The farming here is titled “Bhagwan Bharose Mast Kheti” (God Blessed Bio Diverse Farming).

I asked Mehta about his inspiration for the Ashram (Personal communication June 17, 2007). He emphasized his Jain background and mentioned the Acharanga Sutra, one of the earliest text that recorded Mahāvīr’s teachings. Christopher Chapple also cites Acharanga Sutra (2.4.2.11 – 12) in which Mahavira tells his disciples to recognize the inherent value of trees and to turn their thoughts from materiality by reflecting on the greater beauty of sparing a tree from the human exploitation. Sadhvi Shilapi also cites from Acharanga Sutra (1.1.5) to show that Mahavira proclaims that anyone who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, water, and vegetation disregards his own existence that is intrinsically bound up with them.

...Evidently, Jain history is full of examples, legends, and tales of protecting and avoiding injury to plants, animals, and environment in general. Jains believe that the nineteenth Jain Tirthankara Mallinatha had taken the responsibility of protecting the forests. A prominent Jain monk during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar, Hiravijaya Suri was invited by the royal court through the governor of Gujarat. Following the Jain tradition, Hiravijaya Suri walked on foot to Fatehapur Sikari where he first met the Muslim scholar Abul Fazal and then Akbar. He influenced Akbar to issue several ordinances in 1592 CE to prohibit animal slaughter for six months, to present the Shatrunjaya temple to Jain authorities, to stop confiscating the property of a dead person, to stop taxes against non-Muslims, and to liberate the prisoners. Even fishing was prohibited in Fatehapur Sikari during his time. This is evident from an edict of 1593 CE found at the eastern entrance-hall of Adinatha temple at Shatrunjaya written by Hemavijay. Akbar himself also refrained from eating meat for a certain period of the year.

## Conclusion

It is evident that there are several examples of Jains actively protecting the plants, animals, birds, and environment in general. Still, it is true that like other traditional societies, Jains (and other Indians) are yet to wake up to the problems of environmental disasters. Most sects, castes, and other traditional Indian groups continue to practice their dharmic rituals without being mindful of the environmental connections. Yet, despite being the second most populated country on the planet, India continues to boast of the richest flora and fauna on the planet, the bio-diversity that has been preserved for thousands of years as noted by Thapar above. Unless the ecological awareness is translated into a dharmic message, it will remain a distant voice largely limited to armchair exercises in political or scholarly discussions.

For the majority of Indians who speak, think, and read in vernacular frameworks, terms such as “global warming” or “biodiversity” have limited appeal and thus the rhetoric based on these terms will have limited appeal. The sooner these textual and intellectual exercises can become widespread practical movements, the better for our endangered planet. After all, what has sustained our planet for thousands of years is sustainable need-based usage of natural resources, not the greedy exploitation that we have done in the last few centuries in our drive for modern luxuries and comforts.

Historically, the population and consumption of natural resources of Asian civilizations have always been many times more than Western civilizations and yet it is the Westernized notion of progress in last few centuries that has endangered our planet. Unless we reform and expand our idea of progress by mixing ideas and concepts from the local communities, all ecological rhetoric will remain insignificant for the traditional communities around the world.



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