A Portrait of Jain Religion

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PUBLISHER’S NOTE

In the modern fast-paced and commercialized world religion continues to get separated from daily life after turning into a hollow ritual. As a consequence intolerance and violence have increased many-fold. Sensitivity to life, whether animal or human, has declined alarmingly. The need, therefore, is that this trend should be reversed and man should be made more humane not only in relation to man but also for other living breathing creatures. Ahimsa way of life as propagated by Jains provides an effective solution to these and many other problems.

Most of the economic systems today are based only on promoting wants rather than limiting them. This is having serious results. Material goods and money are becoming the measures of man. Internationally, this spirit is leading to regional and world conflicts. Jainism does not subscribe to forced poverty or glorify it, but suggests that wants should be minimized voluntarily and there should be no grabbing at any level.

In the past dogmatism was based on ignorance; now it is caused by certitude arising out of blind rationalism. Jainism has its doctrine of Anekantavad and logic of Syadvad (a seven-fold logic), which replaces certitude with relativity in thinking. According to this principle truth is many faceted. What is right from one viewpoint could be wrong from another. That means even an adversary could be right. Thus there is no place for dogmatism or fanaticism in this doctrine of non-absolutism. This is one of the great contributions of Jainism to world thought. Its application to personal conduct could make the world a safe and harmonious place. Certainly the ideological conflicts that we
witness today would not be as intense if this principle could permeate the minds of mutual adversaries.

It needs to be added that any religion or doctrine that does not pay adequate attention to the conduct of its followers often degenerates. Jainism, without any disrespect to any other religion, highlights the need for comprehensive combination of knowledge, doctrine and conduct (Samyak Jnana, Darshan, and Charitra); emphasis on one at the expense of others leads to an imbalance result.

Jainism believes in the plurality and equality of living creatures. Since nobody wants to be hurt or killed, the general rule should be that nobody should be hurt or killed. This rule of conduct is not confined only to man but extends even to the smallest of the small creatures. It is amazing that more than 2500 years ago, when scientific devices to detect micro-creatures were not available, Mahavir stated that there was life in wind, water trees and enjoined his followers to avoid, to that extent possible, their damage or destruction.

This kind of comprehensive concept of Ahimsa is unknown in the philosophical world. Indeed, Albert Schweitzer, the world-renowned social worker and Noble Laureate while dealing with Jainism in his book Indian Thought and Its Development said — "The laying down of the commandment not to kill and not to damage is one of the greatest events in the spiritual history of mankind. . . So far as we know it is for the first time clearly expressed by Jainism".

Ahimsa way of life as evolved by Jainism is today broadly accepted as an effective anti-dote to ever escalating violence around the globe. However, it has yet to be translated into concerted action from the ongoing academic exchanges. This is not to belittle the value of such discourses and debates but to provide a spurt to these activities with the hope that enough people may get inspired to translate word into deed.
This book, *Portrait of Jainism*, is a sincere effort to present a brief introduction of Jainism in modern idiom so that more and more people know about a unique school of thought that forms a bridge between the religious and the rational.

Dr. Jain is an eminent scholar and public figure having sagacity to combine thought and action. He has been India's Ambassador to United Nations, European Union, Nepal, Mexico and Belgium. He also has been Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. He is a noted economist, ardent environmentalist, a well-known poet, prolific writer, eloquent orator and above all a renowned Jain scholar. Dr. Jain has delivered key note speeches on non-violence and Jain philosophy at the World Jain conference (1988) Leicester (UK), Asian Jain conference in Singapore (1989), Biennial JAINA Conventions at Stanford University, USA (1991) Chicago (2001) and Cincinnati (2003), UN Earth Summit and Sacred Earth Gathering in Brazil (1992), Parliament of World’s Religions at Chicago (1993) and Cape Town, South Africa (1999) and UN Millennium Peace Summit, New York (2000).

It is our privilege that we are publishing this book by Dr. Jain. We are sure this brief introduction to Jainism will attract people in all walks of life to endeavour to move towards general peace and harmony. Thanks are also due to all connected with publication of this book.

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PREFACE

I have endeavored in this book to give a portrait of Jain religion and philosophy in a comprehensive setting of spiritual, ritual, ethical and at the same time socio-cultural, environmental, national and international perspectives. With growing global spread of Jain community across the world, it is imperative to keep in view not only the doctrinaire approach to religion, but also the broader framework for propagating to the wider human society the compassionate principles and practices of Jain religion.

There is in evidence growing interest globally in Jain religion despite its limited following. The interest is more in terms of the relevance of the fundamental tenets of Ahimsa (non-violence), Aparigraha (non-possession) and Anekant (relativity of manifold aspects of truth) for designing a stress-free ethical art of living.

Escalating violence, horrifying spectre of terrorism, continuing exploitation – political, economic, social, cultural and ethnic of the have-nots in the society, increasing intolerance, and unrestrained wasteful consumption are issues of paramount global concern. Jain path of self-restraint at the individual level and equity and generosity at the community level offers the prospects of peaceful coexistence and harmonious mutual supportiveness of humans not only among themselves, but even more so in their relations with other living species and forces of nature. Jain spirituality is anchored on love and compassion for others through the practice of active non-violence, and firm belief in Ahimsa being the supreme religion.

It has been a matter of deep and abiding pleasure for me as a Jain born and brought up in the best of Jain traditions to have taken active interest in propagating the compassionate principles of Jainism abroad during four decades of serving as India’s
Ambassador to several countries, and in the last two decades since retirement from I.F.S. (Indian Foreign Service) by articulating them at the U.N. and other International Conferences like the U.N. Millenium Spiritual Summit, Parliament of World’s Religions, U.N. Earth Summit and global Jain conventions.

A heartening feature of Jain community settled abroad is that they have not only built temples and sthanaks for worship, but are assiduously orienting their younger generation to the Jain way of life, and educating them into the principles and practices of Jain religion. In India as well, with the younger Jain generation turning professional, it is imperative for them to grasp the fundamentals of our religion, and not rest content with remaining vegetarians and observing religious rituals only.

It is a happy augury that Jain community abroad is steadfast in following Jain religious principles and practices. Large number of joint Jain temples representing all the Jain sects under one roof have come up in environmental-friendly ambience in almost all parts of the world ranging from New York to Nairobi, Bangkok to Boston, London to Los Angeles, Kobe to Kuwait, Antwerp to Atlanta, and San Hose to Singapore – to just give a few illustrative examples. Jains have earned great respect abroad by their active pursuit of human welfare projects, environmental initiatives, and inter-faith compassion programs.

A more important fact emerging in today’s increasingly shrinking world, is for the Jain religion to make a decisive impact on global ethical thinking for securing stable peace, social harmony, equanimity and tranquility.

The global Jain Diaspora needs to come together and form a united and cohesive group transcending varying practices of different sects. Forging unity in diversity in the Jain community in India and abroad is both a challenge and an opportunity to give the Jain religion a distinct global identity and presence.

- Dr. Narendra P. Jain

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Chapter - 1
What Is Religion

Religion is a stream of well-knit and harmoniously blended thought, perception and conduct which relates itself to the search for truth about the very basis, nature and purpose of human existence. Religion or Dharma, as it is called in Sanskrit, is very aptly defined as “Dharayati iti Dharmah”. This means that the faith that holds human beings from straying off the path of truth and succumbing to false delusions is religion.

Dharma connotes the stimulation of the process of attaining self-realization, soul purification and soul awakening. Religion brings home the awareness and conviction that life is not all matter. It also comprises the spirit. Spiritual orientation is essential for the attainment of lasting happiness and bliss.

The word ‘Religion’ is derived from the latin word ‘re-ligare’, which means to reconnect or bind. Materialistic culture aggravates the inner anxieties and physical insecurities of life. It erodes a sense of purpose and trivializes human destiny. It creates illusions of happiness, that may comfort the body but are not soul-satisfying. Religion makes human beings experience transcendence for which the soul hungers. Greater and faster the material progress, there is even greater realization of the need for spiritual insight and the desire for wisdom.

Religious beliefs have existed since the first human communities on Earth. They have been generally shared by a community and express the community’s culture and values through myth, doctrine, theology, ethics and ritual. Humanity’s search for the ultimate reality, called by whatever name, has been at the root of religion. Religion has served as a vehicle for the deep-rooted spirit of enquiry into the mysteries of universe creation and human destiny entwined with them.
Jain scripture ‘Dashvaikalik Sutra’ highlights four supreme gifts that are difficult to attain as the fountain spring of religion. First is the gift of being born as a human being; second the gift of being ignited with a longing for truth and of having that longing fulfilled; third the gift of developing faith in and love for the true teachings one hears; and fourth the gift of being so filled with enthusiasm and conviction as to put the teachings into practice in one’s daily life.

The human quest for an understanding of the origin and purpose of life and the nature of existence has gone on from times immemorial, ‘Who am I?’, ‘From where do I come?’ ‘What is my role in this universe’ and ‘Where do I go from here’ are questions that have formed the essence of religions. Religions have been instrumental in awakening human consciousness to universal ideals of conduct and to transcendent insights that have laid the foundations of the world’s great civilizations. Their histories stretch back thousands of years.

The irresistible call from within has constituted the religious dimension- the highest, deepest and universally binding dimension of all. Whether one lives in north or south, east or west, is white, brown or black, rich or poor, man or woman, spiritual quest has taken the shape and form of religion, religious beliefs and faith traditions since the first human communities on the Earth. The feeling has grown that religion guides and protects all those who imbibe it, grasp it and nurture it in their day-to-day beliefs, behaviors and expressions.

The doctrines, myths, rites and rituals may be varied, yet the religions have promulgated universal tenets of ethical conduct towards others in their respective historical and geographical settings. Their founders were exceptional persons commanding deep reverence for having attained a degree of self-realization and spiritual energy that enabled them to resist all evil and seek the highest ideals of good despite innumerable obstacles, difficulties and suffering.
World history has been witness to a wide variety of religions coming up and asserting their identity ranging from tribal faiths to organized religions in varying historical conditioning and environment. Each religion is inspired by its own vision of the divine and has a distinct cultural ethos. At the same time, each religion perceives the divine power as the source of unity and peace. Religions have provided to the confused humanity the eventual purpose and the right technique of living. They have reduced stress and strain of modern living, and trained one to think for oneself to analyse, investigate, realize the essence of life and true nature of soul-uplifting happiness.

Religions have formed the foundations of cultural identity and have decisively shaped world civilizations based on differing but not exclusive views of ultimate value: non-violence as supreme religion in Jainism, compassion and benevolence in Buddhism, devotion and mystical unity of Divine self in Hinduism, love for the creator and one's fellow beings in Christianity, submission to the will of Allah in Islam, morality and ethics in Confucianism, and obedience and perseverance in Judaism.

Religions have responded to the stirrings of the soul, and have focused on soul energy and power to seek liberation and eventual salvation from overpowering and intoxicating material illusions (maña) that keep the souls entrapped in the never-ending cycle of birth and death. Religions have inbuilt in them an ethical and moral code of conduct to ensure right relationship with the creative force of the universe. Spiritual beliefs have been echoed from early times in the visions and sermons of prophets and saints, thoughts of thinkers and philosophers, and songs and folklore of dreamers and poets in all parts of the world.

Religion has been widely interpreted as 'victory of good over evil.' This is underlying the common belief that good deeds and virtuous conduct will take you to heaven, while bad deeds and sinful conduct will take you to hell. Religions have been votaries of ascendancy of love over hatred, amity over hostility,
coexistence over exploitation, compassion over cruelty, nonviolence over violence and truth over falsehood. In one form or another, each religion has elaborated the concept of sin and the way of getting rid of it by doing good deeds.

Each religion has developed its own logic and ritual. Rituals are born of human instinct of adoration and awe towards the unseen power underlying all life in the universe. Conceptual thought culture reflected in the scriptures, worship modes, prayer, meditation, penance and contemplation are intended to promote conquering of one’s ego and spiritual awakening. In its own way, each religion seeks not only to sustain life, but to elevate it to a higher spiritual plane.

However, for the average follower of a religion, rituals have tended to be identified as religion. Often people have been hypnotized by seemingly miraculous powers of rituals and have drifted from the spiritual substance of respective religious beliefs. Religions have been reduced to mere ritualistic allegiance to Gods and Godesses.

The religions of the world have not necessarily grown in isolation. They have enriched one another in diverse ways at significant points of contact, while maintaining their distinct identity. This has happened between Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism in the early centuries in a spirit of synthesis. At the same time history has also been witness to clashes including violent ones between religions as well as between sects of the same religion. Each religion has also developed within its own parameters considerable diversity of beliefs as well as practice both in the interpretation of doctrine as well as rituals. This has, over a period of time, led to the formation of sects and sub-sects in the same religion.

The global perspective has not at all times, been harmonious and accommodating. This has tended to weaken and compromise universal translation into daily life of people of love, compassion, synthesis, piety and mutual tolerance- which happen to be fundamental tenets common to most religions. Instead ritualistic
rigidities, caste-ridden prejudices and hypocritical assertions of egoistic superiority over other religions and even sects within the same religion have found their way in the mindset of priests as well as the common folk.

A poet has put it aptly:
So many sects, so many creeds
So many paths that wind and wind
While just the art of being ethical and kind
Is all the world needs

Albert Schweitzer, who was a life-long practitioner of compassion in action has observed that: “Any religion which is not based on respect for life is not true religion. Until he extends his circle of compassion to all living beings, Man will not himself find peace.”

Mahatma Gandhi, the 20th century apostle of non-violence was fond of reciting the following prayer, which brings out what religion should imply in the conduct of day-to-day life in the spirit of ‘Live and let live’:

Not for any kingdom do I long
Not even for the kingdom of heaven
Not even for the freedom
From the endless cycle of birth and death
For one and only one thing do I long
To free living beings from their agony and pain
To wipe away their tears
CHAPTER - 2
UNDERSTANDING JAIN RELIGION

Lord Mahavir defined religion as one that helps us to know the fundamental nature of truth and universal reality, control the restless mind and purify the soul which is eternal (Jain holy text: Mulachar 5/70)

Jain religion is rooted in the intrinsic nature of soul as well as other elements that interact with it. Vastu Swabhavo Dharma constitutes the bedrock of Jain conception of the universe and its animate and inanimate elements. In Jain conception the eternal or abiding nature of a thing is religion. The abiding nature of soul is ‘chetana’ (consciousness). From the introvert or inner spiritual angle, religion invokes the true nature in the self, experience it and merge with it. From the extrovert or exterior angle, religion implies purifying one’s thoughts, perceptions and conduct to attain that purified and sublime state.

Jain world view is that there is no external power like God sitting in heaven creating, preserving, regulating or destroying the universe. The process of integration and disintegration of ultimate particles (paramanu) is responsible for the creation of this physical universe. In the Jain conception, the Universe is made of six elements (dravyas) namely Jivas (animate elements or souls), and Ajivas (inanimate elements) comprising ‘Pudgal’ (matter), ‘Akasha’ (space), ‘Kala’ (time), ‘Dharma’ (the medium of motion), and Adharma (the medium of rest).

The attributes of a living being is sentience (chetana), knowledge and bliss. The attributes of matter are form, taste, smell and touch etc. Space provides the locus for the existence of all entities. The universe undergoes the natural process of creation and transformation through endless cycle of time. The attributes of motion and rest apply to all the six dravyas.
Nothing else exists. These six entities have existed for ever and are eternal. They may with the passage of time undergo transformation, but in intrinsic terms they are a permanent feature of the universe and its natural environment. No one has created them, nor can any one destroy them.

The concept of time is its eternal, infinite and cyclical nature. There is no beginning or end of time. Tattvartha Sutra, a highly regarded second century Jain scripture describes the function of time as follows:

"Bringing about incessant, minute, imperceptible change; perceptible transformation, activity, anteriority and posteriority are the functions of time."

Time (kala) measures changes in living beings and non-living substances, but it is not the cause of such changes. A child becomes a youth and then an adult and finally an old person who eventually dies. In other words what may be new at the birth becomes in course of time old and worn out. Silver-extracted from mines changes its form when converted into an ornament.

A full cycle of time consists of two halves, namely a period of ascent (Utsarpini) followed by a period of descent (Avasarpini). Each of these two periods has six divisions (aras). The level and intensity of happiness, age span, state of health and nature of progress and prosperity etc changes from division to division.

In the Utsarpini period, the six divisions begin with unhappy-unhappy ara and move on to unhappy, unhappy-happy, happy-unhappy, happy and at the climax happy-happy ara (division). Then begins the descent towards avasarpini period beginning in the reverse order as illustrated in the diagram below:
The six divisions of each half time cycle have a duration as follows:

Happy-happy 1,68,000 years; Happy 1,26,000 years; Happy-unhappy 84,000 years; Unhappy-happy 42,000 years; Unhappy 21,000 years; and Unhappy-unhappy 21,000 years. Right now the world is in ara no. 5 of avasarpini period which began about 2500 years ago.

Jain scriptures indicate that the first and founder Tirthankar (Path-finder) Adinath or Rishabhdev was born towards the end of ara 3 of the descent period namely happy-unhappy. The other 23 Tirthankaras and eleven Chakravartis were born during ara 4
namely unhappy-happy. When the time wheel will take an upward swing, Utsarpini period will start and in its ara 3 namely unhappy-happy ara, 23 Tirthankars will be born, and the last one in ara 4 namely happy-unhappy ara. The same pattern would have taken shape in the time cycle prior to Rishabhdev. This is indicative of the eternal nature of Jain religion.

This time cycle goes on for ever and makes Jain religion an eternal one embracing the entire universe with its animate and non-animate elements which go on interacting with one another. There is in fact no single soul or Jiva. There are infinite number of distinct and independent Jivas going through the cycle of birth and death. Every living being is a single soul in a material body of a human, animal, bird, insect or plant transmigrating from one life form to another and in the process becoming impure and polluted. By itself the soul is eternal, intangible and formless. It can only be experienced by dwelling deep within oneself by detachment from material bondages, and controlling oneself through self-restraint and self-discipline as ordained and elucidated in the Jain spiritual path covering 14 Gunasthanas (stages).

Lord Mahavir observed:

“A man conquers millions of warriors in a terrible battle
Another man conquers himself
If these two are compared
The ultimate victory is that in which
The Self is conquered by Self.”

He further preached:

“Maker, unmaker of pleasure and pain for the self
Is the Self itself, none else
Self again is friend and foe
That induces good or evil.”

Souls born in form of human, animal, bird, insect or plant accumulate in the course of their interaction with matter
knowledge-obstructing particles of transient and illusory material attachments and passions. True happiness begins to elude the soul on account of the false perception of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain born out of the materialistic environment surrounding all living beings. This happens due to Asrava i.e., influx of karmas followed by Bandh (bondage of karmas).

Depending on the merit or otherwise of karmas, rebirth could be in any of the four ‘gatis’ namely celestial beings (devas), human beings (manushya), other living beings (tiryanch), and hell beings (naraki). During each life cycle, a soul may add or get rid of positive and negative karmas. The more it sheds negative karmas, the better it can move up on the ladder to liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

Jain religion charts out the spiritual path steadily moving up through 14 stages for soul purification and self-realization of soul’s true eternal nature through a process of Samvar (stoppage of the influx of karmas), Nirjara (partial exhaustion of karmas), and finally Moksha (total liberation from karmas). Infact the nomenclature of Jain religion is derived from the word ‘JINA’ which is a synonym of Tirthankar, who has conquered his Self and attained Enlightenment.

Unique to Jain religion is the Shraman tradition with its legendary glory of Tirthankars as Path-finders and role models. Beginning with Adinath or Rishabhdhev, who was the founder of Jain Religion, and ending with Mahavir, there have been, in the present cycle of time, 24 Tirthankars. Tirthankars were born like any other human beings, but it is through their bold, total and voluntary renunciation from worldly life, and taking to the life of ‘Veetraag’ (total detachment) that they moved towards achieving Omnicience (Keval Gyan) and sublime enlightenment.

The process involved intense and dedicated Sadhana (devoted and disciplined effort), deep introspection, in-depth study and observation, meditation, penance and suffering. Mahavir went through this process for over 12 years before he could achieve
enlightenment. Once he became a Tirthankar, he traveled round the country for 30 years preaching what he himself had practiced and experienced before achieving Nirvana and attaining Siddhahood.

Having achieved omniscience and state of perfect and rational knowledge, perception and conduct (Samyak Gyan, Samyak Darshana and Samyak Charitra), the Tirthankars—each in his life time conveyed to humanity through the then prevalent oral (shrut) tradition the principles of Jain philosophy, its doctrines and ritual. Mahavir as the last Tirthankar consolidated the entire religion with its fundamental principles in a comprehensive manner. Mahavir's everlasting contribution has been the profound impact on the composite cultural heritage of India of the Jain compassionate philosophy with Ahimsa as its sheet anchor.

Ganadhars methodically compiled, and preserved Mahavir's teachings in the form of 12 main texts called Anga-Agamas or Dwadasanga. These scriptures constitute the soul and backbone of the extensive canonical literature developed by both the Digambar and Shvetambar traditions in the subsequent centuries.

In the long interregnum between Tirthankars, the flag of Jainism was kept aloft by learned Acharyas, Upadhyays and Sadhus and Sadhvis in the best Shrman tradition. Since Mahavir also, over the past 25 centuries, canonical literature including learned commentaries and interpretative texts composed by learned saints and scholars has continued to enrich and enliven Jain philosophy in pursuit of right and rational knowledge, perception and conduct (Samyak Gyan, Samyak Perception and Samyak Charitra).

Jain religion recognizes the guiding and inspiring role of the Pancha Parmeshthi — the five spiritual achievers, namely Tirthankar (Arihant), Siddha, Acharya, Upadhyaya. And Sadhus/ Sadhvis. All of them command veneration since each one at his stage has progressed towards the path of attaining Samyak Gyan, Samyak Darshana and Samyak Charitra— the three fundamental jewels of Jainism. Attainment of rational and right knowledge,
perception and conduct is crucial to self realization and enlightenment. In fact Namokar Mantra, widely held by Jains as a divine protector and healer Mantra is a deeply reverential salutation to the Panch Parmeshthi.

Integrated pursuit of the three jewels of Jainism namely Samyak Gyan, Samyak Darshana and Samyak Charitra constitutes the foundation of Jain philosophy. The indivisible and logical trinity reflects a uniquely articulated approach to strike a judicious and wholesome balance between logic and faith, reason and belief. Jain scripture Yogashastra written by Hemachandracharya reiterates that final liberation is none other than experiencing the trinity of right knowledge, right perception and right conduct as the very nature of the Self in its purity.

Jain religion looks at Earth, our home in this Universe as a marvelous planet Jain religion recognizes that on this planet human destiny is intertwined with other living beings and forces of nature in a divine web of interdependence. Interdependence embraces mutual supportiveness, peaceful coexistence and harmonious balance. Tattwarth Sutra has aptly summed it up as “Parasparopagraho Jeevanam”. It is from this philosophy that the three fundamental pillars of Jainism have emanated namely Ahimsa, Aparigraha and Anekant.

The three A’s of Jainism namely Ahimsa, Aparigraha and Anekant constitute an integrated and comprehensive definition of Non-violence. Ahimsa in thought, perception and conduct has been elevated to the exalted status of a Supreme Religion in the Jain philosophy as reflected in "Ahimsa Paramo Dharmaha". Nonviolence strengthens the autonomy of life of all living beings, Aparigraha (Non-possession And non-attachment) strengthens inter-dependence and mutual supportiveness of all existence, and Anekant (doctrine of manifold aspects or the philosophy of coexistence) strengthens the autonomy of thought of every individual, and promotes an approach of tolerance and synthesis between differing views.
Jain religion regards Ahimsa as the core attribute of religion and the contrary as sin. Ahimsa is the fountain spring of all virtues like learning and meditation, compassion and charity, non-attachment, pursuit of truth and ethical conduct. Ahimsa, Aparigraha and Anekant taken together also make Jain religion a Religion of Environment and a Religion of Peace and Peaceful Coexistence.

The earth is integrally related like pearls in a necklace to the sun, the moon and the multi-billion star galaxy of the planetary cosmos as well as its hydrosphere, geosphere and biosphere. In his first divine sermon after achieving enlightenment in the year 527 B.C., Jain Tirthankar Mahavir emphatically said:

“One who ignores the existence of earth, water, fire, wind and vegetation ignores to one’s own peril the very basis of one’s existence that is interwoven with these elements.”

Ancient Jain Universal Peace Prayer (Jain Brihat Santi) sums up the universal perspective enshrined in the Jain religion:

“Shivamastu Sarva Jagataha
Parahitanirata bhavantu bhutaganaha
Doshah prayantu nasam
Sarvatra sukhi bhavantu lokah”

May the entire universe be blessed
May all living beings engage in each other’s well being
May all false illusions and faults vanish
May everyone be happy, peaceful and full of bliss everywhere.
JAIN BLESSING CIRCLE

NAMO ARISHANTANAM
NAMO SIDDHANAM
NAMO AYARIYANAM
NAMO UVAJHAYANAMA
NAMO LOE SAVVASAHUNAM
ESO PANCHA NAMOKKARO
SAVVAPAVAPPANASANO
MANGALANAM CHA SAVVESHM
PADHAMAM HAVAI
MANGALAM
CHAPTER - 3

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF JAIN RELIGION

Seen in the broad universal perspective, Jainism is among the oldest living world religions with a truly magnificent heritage, profound philosophy, all-life inclusive spirituality, knowledge-based scientific temper and remarkable synergy of faith and reason. As such it has had an abiding impact on the ethical orientation of Indian culture and development of its moral dimensions in terms of compassion, tolerance and cooperative interdependence.

The calligraphed edition of the Constitution of India carries the portrait of Vardhaman Mahavir in a meditative posture with the tribute that Jainism is another stream of spiritual renaissance which seeks to refine and sublimate man’s conduct and emphasizes Ahimsa (nonviolence) as the means to achieve it.

India, the birth place of Jain religion has, indeed, been home to all the great religions of the world. In addition to Jainism, Hinduism and Buddhism and later Sikhism that had their origin
in India, Islam and Christianity came from abroad and have flourished in India. While Jainism remained confined to India, Buddhism spread to southeast Asia, China, Mongolia, Korea and Japan. In the pre-vedic era, the Jain “Shramana Sanskriti” ran parallel to the “Shaiva Sanskriti” in an ambience of complementing one another.

For quite some time it was erroneously assumed that both Jainism and Buddhism were offshoots of Hinduism, and came up as reformation movements for abating increasing violence, greed and lust of power by asserting the power and potential of the culture of nonviolence. This happened in the 7th century B.C. in the life time of Mahavir, the last Tirthankar of Jain religion in the present time cycle and Gautam Buddha, founder of Buddhism who were contemporaries.

Both led their respective religions, inter-alia, as reformation movements inspired by their nonviolence oriented spiritual philosophy. Gautam Buddha was junior to Mahavir, and sourced a lot of inspiration from Mahavir’s teachings while charting out his middle path approach in place of intense austerity and penance prescribed in Jainism. Ancient Jain religion was rejuvenated by Mahavir, while Buddhism was founded as a new religion by Buddha. Both emphasized the relevance of their respective religions as reformation movements for correcting violence-oriented rituals and customs that had overtaken Hinduism.

Jain asceticism greatly influenced the philosophical speculations of the Upanishadic period such as through the philosophy of *Nivritti* (turning away from worldly life), *trigupti* (total abstinence by body, mind and speech) *pravrajya* or sanyas (reclusive renunciation), and the concept of *samlekhana* or *santhara* (voluntarily casting one’s body by prolonged fasting. This has led to emphasis on penance as the means of liberation from the bondage of karma and rebirth.

Thanks to the pioneering research of noted western Jainologists like Hermann Jacobi, Buhler, James Ferguson, N.R. Guseva,
Vincent Smith and others as well as Indian scholars like, C.J. Shah, P.C. Nahar, Banarsidas Jain, Kamta Prasad Jain, J.L. Jaini, Barrister Champatrai, H.D. Sankalia, A.N. Upadhye, H.R. Kapadia, A. Chakravarty, B.C. Bhattacharya and others in the late 19th and early 20th century that the image of Jainism was established as an ancient religion by linking together archaeological, religious, literary and historical information.

Jain religion has its own long philosophical tradition with distinctive lineage of 24 Tirthankars (spiritual masters), detailed and comprehensive scriptures and history. With Rishabh Nath (Adinath) as the first Tirthankar (spiritual master), the Jain spiritual quest is both pre-vedic and pre-aryan. Jain religion then called Shraman religion culture predates Indus, Egyptian, Babylonian, Mesopotamian and Roman cultures. The pre-aryan Indus valley civilization as revealed in the excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodoro depict an entire society and its civilization built on the edifice of Ahimsa (nonviolence). The seals with images of a meditating saintly figure found in these excavations relate to Rishabhdeo and confirm Jain traditional lore.

With Rishabh Nath as the first and founder Tirthankar, Jain religion traces its beginning to the formation of organized society after transition from nomadic life. Prior to renouncing worldly material life and becoming an ascetic, Rishabh Nath as the Emperor of then India pioneered the introduction of division of labour in the society by identifying distinct professional sectors of livelihood as ASI
(making and using of weapons), *MASI* (reading and writing), *KRISI* (agriculture), *VIDYA* (learning and fine arts), *VANIJYA* (business), and *SHILPA* (arts and crafts).

Historically it is significant that India derived its original name ‘Bharat’ from Bharat, the son of Rishabhdeo and his successor as Emperor. Bharat’s younger brother Bahubai following the footsteps of his illustrious father took to the path of renunciation and became a Jain monk. Bahubali’s 57 ft. high granite statue stands in its divine grandeur of renunciation and total detachment and inspiring serene glow of penance and meditation at Shravanbelgola in the state of Karnataka in South India.

The statue was built during the rule of The Gang dynasty by General Chamundrai in the 11th century. At the same place where many centuries earlier Emperor Bharat had built a statue to commemorate the arduous penance of Bahubali. In fact inspired by Bahubali’s renunciation, Bharat himself became a Jain monk.

*Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan writes in his book ‘Indian philosophy’:*  
“Evidence is available that much before first century A.D., there were followers of the first Tirthankar Rishabhdeo. There is no doubt whatsoever, that Jain religion existed much before Mahavir and Parsvanath. Yajurveda also mentions Rishabh Nath, Ajitnath and Arishtnemi. Bhagwat Purana also supports that Rishabhdeo was the founder of Jain religion.”
It is pertinent to mention here that while as a religion Jainism has a limited following of 10 million in India and around 300,000 abroad, it has made an abiding impact on India’s cultural heritage with its central focus on the practice of nonviolence as compassionate life ethics. Jain religion has not been a proselytizing religion and is open to any one in the society regardless of caste or social status. Its compassionate philosophy has indeed, inspired ethical and humanitarian values in thought and conduct at individual as well as collective levels in India.

Despite its emphasis on intense penance and austerity particularly for the monks, Jain religion has survived the vicissitudes of history and the competing space claimed by other faiths in multi-religious India. According to Amartya Sen, the Noble Laureate, Jainism has from the beginning advocated a spirit of synthesis and has vitally contributed to the evolution of cultural pluralism and heterodoxy which has characterized the growth of Indian culture and spirituality from the earliest times.

In recent times, Mahatma Gandhi imbibed the traits of love for Truth (SATYA) and abiding faith in Nonviolence (AHIMSA) both in thought and conduct from his Jain Guru-like friend Srimad Rajchandra (1868-1901). The detached life style of Srimad Rajchandra full of equanimity, devotion to truth and compassion had a lasting influence Gandhiji far greater than even the impact the spiritual outlook of Tolstoy and Ruskin in his formative years.

He always recalled with pride that the Jain spirit instilled in him by Srimad Rajchandra gave him the courage and vision to successfully lead India's struggle for freedom from colonial rule through the technique of Satyagraha firmly rooted in the persuasive power and courage of nonviolence. Gandhiji transformed nonviolence from a religious doctrine into a potent spiritual force in the day-to-day life of not only the individual, but also the community and the nation.

Until very recent times, Jainism remained, by and large, confined to India. This was largely due to the severe restrictions forming
part of the highly austere code of conduct for the monks and nuns (Sadhavis), who could not travel except on foot. Yet Jainism spread to distant parts of India, judging from the discovery of ancient Jain temples in M.P., Gujarat, North India, Bihar, U.P., Orissa, Bengal and very notably South India. Jain religion reinforced its firm moorings in South India as early as the 3rd century BC, when under the leadership of Acharya Bhadrabahu, 12000 Jain monks traveled to south India when north India was struck with a severe 12 years duration famine during the reign of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya (322-298 B.C.). Chandragupta also became a Jain monk who joined the southwards migrating group of Jain ascetics.

It is towards the end of the 19th century and with much greater momentum in the 20th century that Jain businessmen and professionals started settling down in community groups all over Africa and in recent times in U.S.A. and Canada, U.K. and other countries both in east and west. A large number of Jain temples have come up in these countries as Jains abroad continue to pursue their religion subscribing to its salient principles and rituals with devotion and dedication. Noteworthy examples of Jain temples-invariably composite ones with simultaneous worship facilities for different Jain sects are Siddhachalam—the first and only Teerth outside India in New Jersey (U.S.A.), temples in New York, Detroit, Chicago, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles and many other cities in U.S.A., Edmonton, Toronto and elsewhere in Canada, Kathmandu in Nepal, Hongkong, Malaysia, Bangkok (Thailand), Singapore, Kobe in Japan, Nairobi and Mombasa in Africa, Antwerp in Belgium and so on.

What is more, slowly but significantly Jains have started taking active part in inter-faith cooperative endeavours both in India and abroad propagating the universal relevance of Jain philosophy and practices for bringing peace and succour to humanity tormented by increasing violence, lust of power, hatred, exploitation and discrimination. Carl Sagan, noted American spiritual scientist has recognized that it is only the Jain religion
in which the concept and implementation of 'the Right to Life' and reverence for all forms of life has been enshrined with comprehensive clarity.

In a very thoughtful observation, Michael Tobias, a reputed American Jain scholar, maintains that

"In no other religion has thought and action been so intricately merged into a unity of behavior, and an environmental code of ethics that permeates every aspect of Jain life, posterity and history. The intense spirituality, transparent ecological orientation, mutually supportive and tolerance promoting attributes and a highly disciplined ethical art of living puts the Jain philosophy in the ranks of the common heritage of humanity."

At the session of the U.S. Congress commemorating the 2600th birth anniversary of Lord Mahavir in April, 2001, Congressman Frank Pallone observed:

"Jainism is a beautiful religion originating in India over two millennia ago built on the principle of nonviolence, working on the self and realization of multiplicity of truth through our varying perspectives of life."

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CHAPTER - 4
THE ROLE OF TIRTHANKARS

Unique to Jain religion is the shramana tradition with its legendary glory of 24 Tirthankaras as ‘Path-finders’. Beginning with Rishabhdev or Adinath, who was the founder of Jainism, and ending with Vardhamana Mahavir, there have been in the present cycle of eternal time twenty-four Tirthankars. They were born like any other human being, but it is through their intense effort, penetrating spirit of enquiry, introspection, meditation, arduous penance and total detachment from worldly life that they gained omniscient knowledge and unraveled the mystery of the universe and the existence of life. Their teachings have constituted the living doctrine of Jainism comprehensively elucidated, refined and consolidated by Mahavir.

Tirthankars are also called ARHANT or JIN. ARH means enemies and HANT means destroyer. The enemies are the four Ghati (destructive) karmas namely

(2nd - 3rd Century AD)
Mathura

A Portrait of Jain Religion
Jnanavarniya (knowledge obstructing) karmas, Darshanavarniya (perception obscuring) karmas, Mohaniya (deluding) karmas and Antaraya (obstructing) karmas. These karmas are called Ghati or destructive because they deviate from the true nature of the soul. When these karmas are destroyed, the state of infinite knowledge (Anant or keval Jnana), infinite perception (Anant or keval darshan), and infinite conduct (Anant charitra), and infinite energy (Anant virya) is attained.

The Tirthankars acquire the above mentioned unique attributes called ‘Atishaya’ on attaining enlightenment (Omniscience). Additionally they are celestially endowed by eight other attributes (Pariharyas) reflecting their divine aura. They are Simhasan (divine seat), Bhamandal (halo), Chamar (angels waiving fans), Chhatras (three tier divine umbrella), Ashoka tree (under which Tirthankars sit in Samosharan), Pushpavrushti (auspicious shower of flowers), Dev-dundubhi (celestial heralding), and Divyatadvani (celestial music accompanying Tirthankar’s sermons).

Having attained enlightenment after renunciation followed by intense introspection, meditation and arduous penance, they took to preaching what they had practiced. In short, the message was that if one wants lasting happiness and bliss, one has to become soul-centric and self-reliant and through one’s own dedicated efforts seek liberation of one’s soul from overpowering materialistic attachments. There is no God sitting in heaven to bestow mercy or perform miracles. Jainism believes that every soul has the potential to upgrade itself through its own efforts to the status of a divine soul (Paramatma). The miracle lies in the steady upliftment and purification of one’s soul following the path shown by Tirthankars- the perfected human beings.

When Tirthankars attain Nirvana, they become formless completely liberated souls called Siddhas. In addition to the four ghati karmas (destructive karmas) already shed on the eve of becoming Tirthankars, the remaining bg four aghati karmas (non-destructive karmas) are shed to become Siddhas. These are Nam
(body determining), Gotra (status determining), Vedaniya (feeling producing), and Aayushya (life spanning) karmas.

The eight attributes of Siddhas are Anant gyan (infinite knowledge), Anant darshana (infinite perception), Avyabadha sukha (eternal bliss), Anant charitra (perfect conduct), Akshay stithi (immortality), Arupitra (formlessness), Aguru laghutva (formless—neither heavy nor light), and Anant Virya (infinite energy).

Spread over many centuries, the 24 Tirthankars, each in his turn, conveyed through “SHRUT” (oral or word of mouth) tradition their elaboration, interpretation and elucidation of the Jain doctrine in the context of the times and the circumstances in which they practiced and preached their religious philosophy. Very aptly it was called “SHRAMAN” tradition—a tradition anchored on voluntary and totally dedicated self-discipline, self-effort, self-study and self-realization. The shramana tradition was set in motion by the Tirthankars establishing in their times a Jain Sangha (four-fold Jain order) comprising Sadhus, Sadhavis, Shravaks (male householders) and Shrawikas (female householders).

This turned out to be a harmoniously integrated organizational framework, which has been carried forward by renowned Acharyas as heads of respective religious congregations and learned spiritual leaders endowed with 38 attributes in the interregnum between Tirthankars, and more particularly in the last 2600 years since the time of Bhagwan Mahavir, the 24th and the last Tirthankar in the present time cycle. Post-Mahavir period has been witness to the Jain community getting divided into Digambar and Shwetambar traditions, with differences in rituals and modes of worship, as well as scriptural heritage. Even among these two sects sub-sects have developed.

Yet it is remarkable that on most basic fundamentals of Jain philosophy, there is unanimity. What seems to divide the community is far less important than what unites it in terms of Jainism’s core principles. As will be elaborated in the chapter on
Jain scriptures, renowned Acharyas of all sects have enriched the religious tradition through their scholarly commentaries of original Jain scriptures bearing the heritage of Mahavir.

It is interesting that all the 24 Tirthankars, who preached total non-violence in thought, conduct and expression were born in the warrior class (Kshatriyas) in royal ruling families in the lap of luxury and surrounded by all trappings of power, wealth and command. Yet they chose to forsake them in a spirit of total renunciation to seek true enlightenment.

Cosmic Parshwanath 18th Century AD, Jodhpur (Rajasthan)

Jain scriptures give vivid life details of all the Tirthankaras including incidents from their previous birth, their royal parentage, significant events of their lives, birth, marriage, renunciation, enlightenment and finally nirvana. Each Tirthankar has a distinct name, color, symbol or emblem (lanchana) by which he is identified. It is also clear that all the Tirthankars hailed from north India, particularly from the region that is presently Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The units of time being different in Jain texts from the
ones used presently (days, months, years etc.), it is difficult to ascertain the precise time period of each Tirthankar in terms of presently prevalent time measurements. However, through collation of data renowned scholars have been able to determine definitive time frame for two or three Tirthankaras, notably Arishtnemi, the 22nd Tirthankar, Parshvanath, the 23rd Tirthankara, and of course Mahavir, the 24th Tirthankara. Mahavir lived from 599 BCE- 527 BCE, and achieved Nirvana at the age of 72. His predecessor Parshvanath is slated to have lived from 877 BCE-777 BCE. It was the erudite German Jain scholar Hermann Jacobi who established the historical authenticity of Lord Parshvanath, who lived 250 years prior to Lord Mahavir. The royal ancestors of both Mahavir and Gautam Buddha were followers of Parshvanath.

Jain literature vividly describes how various Tirthankars traveled far and wide on foot to spread the Jain doctrine. The proof of it is found in the many surviving ancient Jain temples all over India with ancient beautifully and delicately sculptured images of various Tirthankars together with their identifying symbols. The symbols are mostly other living beings or natural elements, and go to establish the outlook of the Tirthankars towards oneness of all life, and the divine interdependence between humans, other living beings and forces of nature.

The following table concerning the 24 Tirthankars is very illuminating in terms of their birth place, place of Nirvana, respective emblem and the number of Ganadhars (principal disciples), who carried forward their teachings to the successive generations in the well-set Shrut tradition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Emblem</th>
<th>Birth place</th>
<th>Nirvana place</th>
<th>Ganadhars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Rishabhnath</td>
<td>Bull</td>
<td>Ayodhya</td>
<td>Ashtapad</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ajitnath</td>
<td>Elephant</td>
<td>Ayodhya</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sambhavanath</td>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>Shravasti</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Abhimanishnath</td>
<td>Monkey</td>
<td>Ayodhya</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sumatinath</td>
<td>Rusty Goose</td>
<td>Ayodhya</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Padmaprabhu</td>
<td>Red Lotus</td>
<td>Kausambi</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Emblem</td>
<td>Birth place</td>
<td>Nirvana place</td>
<td>Gana- &lt;br&gt;hars</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Suparshvanath</td>
<td>Swastika</td>
<td>Varanasi</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chandraprabhu</td>
<td>Crescent moon</td>
<td>Chandrapuri</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Pushpadanta</td>
<td>Crocodile</td>
<td>Kakauni</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Shitalnath</td>
<td>Shrivatsa tree</td>
<td>Bhadrikapuri</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Shreyansnath</td>
<td>Rhinoceros</td>
<td>Simhapuri</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Vaskunjya Swami</td>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>Champapuri</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Vimalnath</td>
<td>Boar</td>
<td>Kampilya</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Anantnath</td>
<td>Bear or hawk</td>
<td>Ayodhya</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dharmanath</td>
<td>Thunderbolt</td>
<td>Ratnapuri</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Shantinath</td>
<td>Deer</td>
<td>Hastinapur</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Kuntunath</td>
<td>Male goat</td>
<td>Hastinapur</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Aranath</td>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>Hastinapur</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Mallinath</td>
<td>Water pot</td>
<td>Mithila</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Muni Suvrat Swami</td>
<td>Tortoise</td>
<td>Rajgrah</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Nama nath</td>
<td>Blue lotus</td>
<td>Mithila</td>
<td>Samet Shikhar</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Neminath</td>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>Dwarka</td>
<td>Mount Girnar</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jains celebrate with elaborate ritual five major events from the life of a Tirthankar. They are (i) the Garbha kalyanak (Conception event), (ii) the Janma kalyanak (Birth event), (iii) Diksha kalyanak (Initiation event), (iv) Kevaljnan kalyanak (Omniscience event), and (v) Nirvan kalyanak (salvation event). Of the 24 Tirthankaras, Rishabhnath, Shantinath, Neminath, Parshvanasth and Mahavir are the most extensively idolized and the most widely worshipped Tirthankaras.

Digambar tradition holds that women cannot become Tirthankar, since they cannot fully take to absolute Aparigraha mahavrata in view of the need to cover the body. As has been narrated before, Digambar ascetics are sky clad, and so are the idols of all Tirthankars. Shwetambar tradition interprets the Aparigraha mahavrata in a relatively flexible manner. Their monks wear the minimum cloth pieces in white primarily to cover their bodies and not as any form of attachment or possessiveness. In keeping with this they maintain that Mallinath, the 19th Tirthankar was a lady.
Jain literature also prominently mentions the widely-held belief that all the mothers of various Tirthankars had 16 (Digambar tradition) and 14 (Shvetambar tradition) dreams after conception indicative of the great soul which was going to be born as reflected in the auspicious signs. Thus Mahavir’s mother saw in her dream a white elephant, a white bull, a white lion, Goddess of Wealth, Lakshmi sitting on a lotus throne, two fragrant garlands, full moon, sun, two golden pots, two fish (Digambar list) or flag (Shvetambar list), lotus pond, ocean, jewel-studded throne (Digambar list), celestial plane, cobra (Digambar list), pile of precious stones, and fire without smoke.

Once again these dreams also link symbolically human destiny intertwined with other living beings, auspicious natural objects and items of prosperity. The dream signs also indicate that the new-born would be as strong as an elephant, as earnest as a bull, as powerful as a lion, graceful like the lotus and other flowers, deep as an ocean, and auspicious as a golden pot.

It is interesting that out of the 24 Tirthankaras, as many as 20 attained nirvan at Sammed Shikhar in Bihar, which has become one of the most prominent places of Jain pilgrimage. Jain Tirthankars traveled on foot all over the country. The existence of ancient Jain temples with their idols in north, east and west and south India testify to this. Jain art and architecture belonging to different periods of history is found in almost all parts of India and testifies to the widespread prevalence of Jain religion throughout India. In particular the states of Bihar, U.P., Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh abound in places of pilgrimage associated with Tirthankars.

Among the most prominent of pilgrimage centers (Teertha Kshetras) are Sammed Shikhar, and Pavapuri in Bihar, Hastinapur near Delhi, Girnar, Nakoda Parshvanath, Shankheshwar Parshvanath, Palitana (Shatrunjaya), Morvi and Shri Taranga Teerth in Gujarat, Dilwara temples at Mt. Abu, ancient temples at Ranakpur, Jaisalmer, Keshariyaji in Rajasthan, Shravanbelgola.
Helebid, Hampi, Bellery in Karnataka, Khajuraho, Nainagiri, Khandargiri, Chanderi, Deogarh, Sonagiri, Kundalpur, Thuvonji in M.P., Ajanta and Ellora caves, in Maharashtra, Khandgiri and Udayagiri caves and the Kharwel temples in Orissa. All these ancient temples together with idols are examples of captivating architectural and, sculptural tradition and command attention as ancient cultural centers of Jain religion.

![Jain Temple, Dilwara, Mount Abu (10th Century AD)](image)

Victoria and Albert museum and the British Museum in London, the Dahlem museum in Berlin and the Museum of Art in Los Angeles in U.S.A. in particular, are host to priceless collection of idols of Jain Tirthankars as well as Jain art.

Jainism has presented to the ordinary person the godhood represented by the idol of Tirthankaras - the perfected and enlightened human beings. It is this ideal of religion which can be easily understood by the common man. Renowned Jain scholar-author Professor A. Chakravarti maintains that probably the
Jains were the earliest to build temples and to instal idols representing the Tirthankaras. Temple worship is the logical result of the Jain contemplation of Godhood. The image installed in the temple being the representation of Omnicient Arihant or Tirthankar. It is in the shape of a man engaged in yogic contemplation either sitting or standing. Such a representation of omniscient human personality naturally avoids any abnormal or mythic ideas.

Vedic religion of early Aryans was not associated with temple worship. It came to be adopted by later puranic Hinduism, particularly in South India. Jain sacred literature describes Ashtapad temple built in Mt. Kailash in the Himalayas to mark the nirvana of the first and the founder Tirthankar of Jain religion, namely Rishabh Nath. The temple was built by his son Emperor Bharat, in whose name India came to be called Bharat from ancient times. As narrated in an inscription found on the rock in Hathikumpha Hill, Emperor Kharvella built a Jain temple during the third century B.C. installing the idol of Lord Rishabhnath.

Prof. Padmanabha Jaini observes, “We must understand Jain image worship as being of a meditational nature. The Jina is seen as an ideal, a certain mode of soul, a fate attainable by all living beings. Through personification of that ideal state in stone or marble, the Jains create a meditative support, as it were, a reminder of the lofty goal and the possibility of its attainment.”

Even after the split of the Jain society into two sects--sky-clad Digambaras and white-robed Shvetambaras, the practice of temple worship was kept up, but with a change in the form of the idols of Tirthankars. In Digambar temples, the idols are in sky-clad form. In Shvetambar temples, they are adorned with gold, silver and other ornaments as well as decorated eyelids signifying grandeur of the omniscient Lord and reverential awe of the worshipper who perceives them as kings of the universe.

Notwithstanding such differing practices, both the sects emphasize the aspect of total renunciation from worldly life as a role model
for the human society to be achieved in gradual and well-defined stages in the spiritual ladder. Sthanakvasis - a sub-sector of Shvetambar Jains do not practice idol worship. They merely build large prayer halls (sthanaks) where they go to pray and contemplate on the spiritual quality and attributes of Tirthankaras. This represents a complete anti-thesis towards the traditional temple worship, and puts emphasis on substantive ingredients of Jain philosophy.
Chapter - 5
Namokar Mantra

Namokar mantra is the essence of the teachings of the Tirthankars. It mirrors in a succinct manner the profound depth as well as the comprehensive range and reach of Jain philosophy. Followers of Jain religion have unshakable faith in it. They repeat it at all times individually or in groups on all occasions of joys and sorrows as well as during contemplation, meditation and worship. It is widely regarded as a divine protector and healer. Like all the original Jain scriptures, Namokar mantra is composed in Prakrit, the then language of the common people.

Etymologically the word ‘MAN’ means ‘mind’, and ‘TRA’ means ‘protection’. Thus, the mantra provides the key to control baser instincts and develop enobling divine nature. “NAMOKAR” means ‘deeply reverential salutations’ Over the centuries Namokar mantra has acquired a divine halo. In its words as well as sounds, it is soul-stirring, infinite energy giving, soothing and tranquility-generating. When pronounced or chanted, the mantra creates positive vibrations and destroys negativity.

Namokar Mantra is a deeply reverential salutation to Panch Parmeshthi (the five spiritual achievers, who are worthy of emulation). They are Tirthankaras, Siddhas, Acharyas, Upadhyayas, and duly initiated ascetics (both monks and nuns). The unique thing about the Namokar Mantra is that it does not salute any entity by personal name, but only by category. Thus the mantra bows before the five categories of spiritual achievers in terms of their spiritual attributes and the extent of their progress on the spiritual path. The inherent spirit is not merely to eulogise them but to emulate them for one’s own spiritual upliftment. This makes Namokar Mantra a universally relevant spiritual message.
The deep reverence for the Panch Parmeshthi is also symbolized in the five colors of the flag of Jain religion.

Namokar Mantra is as follows:

**NAMO ARHINTANAM**: Salutations to those enlightened, omnicient and perfected souls (arihant or tirthankar) who have attained spiritual perfection and become spiritual victors endowed with 12 unique attributes including 4 Atishayas viz., infinite perception, infinite knowledge, infinite energy and infinite bliss during their life as a human being with perfect conduct. On attaining Arihanthood, Tirthankars also get endowed with 8 Pratiharyas (celestial attributes), mentioned in Chapter 5.

**NAMO SIDDHANAM**: Salutations to those bodiless liberated divine souls who have attained the state of liberation from all karmic bondage as well as the cycle of birth and death. pleasure and pain, having broken every bond with the physical body. They are endowed with 8 attributes as explained in the previous chapter.

**NAMO AYARIYANAM**: Salutations to the Preceptors (Acharyas) who have acquired depth of knowledge and clarity of perception with complete mastery over all Jain scriptures and holy religious literature. As head of congregations, Acharyas provide inspiring spiritual and religious leadership, vision, direction and organizational discipline to the saints (Sadhus and Sadhavis) working with them as well as to the public at large. They are endowed with 16 attributes in the form of 6 external austerities, 6 internal austerities, 10 virtues, 5 codes of conduct and 6 avashyaks (essential duties), and 3 guptis (controls) as listed in the annexure to this chapter. These attributes taken together constitute a clear and strict code of conduct in keeping with their status in the upward going ladder of spiritual upliftment.

**NAMO UVAJHAYANAMA**: Salutations to those spiritual teachers who have studied and grasped the holy scriptures and learned commentaries on them as well as have been involved in research work in tandem with the work being done by Acharyas. They also provide constant help, inspiration and guidance to lay
persons both Shravaks and Shravikas for moving upwards on the path of steady self-realization and spiritual perfection. They have to have 25 attributes as listed in the annexure to this chapter.

**NAMO LOE SAVVASAHUNAM**: Salutations to all those ascetics who are spiritual practitioners, who have renounced all worldly attachments, and who have solemnly through initiation (diksha) embarked upon the path of renunciation from all worldly life in order to pursue the path of self-realization. Both Sadhus and Sadhavis have to acquire 27 attributes as listed in the annexure to this chapter.

**ESO PANCHA NAMOKKARO ::**

The five-fold obeisance mantra

**SAVVAPAVAPPANASANO ::**

Destroys all sins and negative vibrations

**MANGALANAM CHA SAVVESIM ::**

Of all auspicious forms of bliss

**PADHAMAM HAVAI MANGALAM ::**

This is the Supreme Bliss

The message radiating from the mantra is that the religion practiced and propagated by the Omnicent is auspicious and supreme. Hence we should take refuge in it by endeavouring to follow the footsteps of the supreme spiritual achievers. Taken together the Panch Parmeshthi have 108 attributes (Arhanta 12, Siddha 8, Acharya 36, Upadhyayas 25, and Ascetics 27). The 108 beads of the worship mala (Navakarvali) which the devout Jains use for daily meditation and puja are inspirational symbols of the 108 supreme attributes of the Panch Parmeshthi.

**MANGALACHARAN**, recited on all auspicious occasions elaborates in lyrical and faith-arousing phraseology the reverence towards the five spiritual entities (the Panch Parmeshthi) for evoking their blessings:
Chattari mangalam,arihanta mangalam,siddha mangalam,sahu mangalam,kevalipannato dhammo mangalam.

Chattari loguttama,arihanta loguttama,siddha loguttama,sahu loguttama,kevalipannato dhammo loguttama.

Chattari sharanam pavajjami,arihante sharanam pavajjami,siddhe sharanam pavajjami,sahu sharanam pavajjami,kevalipannato dhamnam sharanam pavajjami.

(There are four auspicious entities in the universe. Arihantas are auspicious. Siddhas are auspicious. Sadhus are auspicious. The religion propounded by the Omniscient is auspicious.

There are four supreme entities in the universe. Arihantas are supreme. Siddhas are supreme. Sadhus are supreme. The religion propounded by the Omniscient is supreme.

I take refuge in the four entities of the universe. I take refuge in Arihantas. I take refuge in Siddhas. I take refuge in Sadhus. I take refuge in the religion propounded by the Omniscient.

In the mantra Arihant is named first out of respect and honor. Arihant symbolizes human perfection. As a Tirthankar, he has created a spiritual path or bridge or Teerth based on the courage of renunciation and the victory over four of the eight karmas namely MOHANIYA KARMA (deluding), ANTARAYA KARMA (obstructing), JNANAVARNIYA KARMAS (knowledge obscuring), and DARSHANAVARNIYA KARMAS (Perception obscuring).

After achieving enlightenment, Tirthankars moved around in the society all over the country actively guiding and initiating others in the process of spiritual awakening. Lord Mahavir did so for thirty years between his enlightenment and the eventual attainment of nirvana. Thus, Tirthankars have, in fact, laid the foundations of the Jain spiritual system.

That is why Tirthankars are addressed in common parlance as gods (bhawan) not in terms of those sitting in heaven, but those
actively guiding the humanity on the spiritual path as living symbols of human perfection. They have shown by their worthy example that in our human incarnation in the present life itself, every soul has the potential of achieving Arihanthood.

Next the salutations are addressed to siddhas who represent the supreme stage of eternal consciousness since they have broken every bond with the physical body, achieved complete liberation from karmic bondages, and freed themselves from the cycle of birth and death, pleasure and pain. Siddhas are, thus, the divine souls, who have conquered the remaining four karmas (aghati karmas). They are vedaniya karmas (feeling producing), nam karma (body determining), gotra karmas (status determining), and ayusha karmas (life span determining).

In the time-tested tradition of shraman culture, it is the acharyas as head of saintly congregations who have kept the flag of religion flying high particularly in the rather long intervening periods between tirthankars. Salutations to them are a recognition of their dedication to the Jain religion, their in-depth articulation of Jain principles and practices, their farsighted organizational flair as well as their spiritual wisdom and maturity.

Salutations to Upadhyayyas is a tribute to their profound scholarly pursuits including analytical studies of scriptures, and their proficiency in imparting spiritual guidance and religious education to ascetics as well as public.

Salutations to Ascetics (sadhus and sadhavis) in general are a tribute to their courage and resolve at having embarked on the path of renunciation as well as their unconditional commitment to the Jain faith.

The five salutations also represent obeisance to various stages in the evolution of the soul moving upwards in gradual stages from Ascetic to Upadhyaya to Acharya and then Arihant and finally Siddha.
ANNEXURE TO CHAPTER - 5
ATTRIBUTES OF PANCHA PARMESHTHI

Arihantas:
There are in all 12 unique attributes. Of these the foremost 4 are
Anant Chatushtaya comprising Ananta Gyan (infinite knowledge),
Ananta Darshana (infinite perception), Ananta Virya (infinite
energy), and Ananta Charitra (perfect conduct).
The 8 Pratiharyas celestially endowed on achieving Omniscience
are: Simhasan, Bhamandar, Chamar, Chhatras, Ashoka tree,
Pushpavrushi, Dev-Dundubhi and Divya Dhwani.
These 12 attributes, when elaborately explained are counted as
34 atishaya. The artishayas are birth related, celestially endowed
as well as realized on achieving Keval Gyan (Omniscience).

SIDDHAS:
There are in all 8 unique attributes, namely Ananta Gyan (infinite
knowledge), Ananta Darshana (infinite perception), Avyabhadha
Sukha (eternal bliss), Ananta Charitra (Perfect conduct, Akshaya
Stithi (immortality), Arupitva (formlessness), Aguru Laghutva
(No status—either heavy or light), Ananta Virya (infinite energy).

ACHARYAS:
Acharyas possess in all 36 attributes. Digambaras and Shvetambaras
list them slightly differently, but in essence they are similar.
Digambaras list them as follows:

6 external austerities comprising anashan (fasting), Unodari
(eating less than needed), Vruti-sankshep (eating only a certain
number of items, eating only within limits of a certain area, eating
only at a certain time, and eating food obtained or cooked by
certain means), Ras-tyag (eating non-tasty food-ayambil tapa,
Kaya-klesha (penance, voluntarily tolerating physical pain) and Sanlinata (staying in a forlorn place and using minimum space).

6 internal austerities comprising prayashchitta (repentance or remorse), Vinay (humility), Veyavachcham (self-less service to monks, nuns and the needy), Swaddhyaya (study of religious scriptures), Dhyana (meditation), and Kayotsarga (giving up physical activities and staying absorbed in the soul).

10 virtues comprising Kshama (forgiveness), Mardava (humility), Arjava (straightforwardness), Saucha (purity), Satya (truth), Samyam (restraint), Tapa (austerities and penance), Tyag (renunciation, Akinchan (non-possessiveness) and Bramhacharya (celibacy).

5 Achar (codes of conduct) comprising Darshanachar (codes of perception), Gyanachar (codes of knowledge), Charitrachar (codes of conduct), Tapachar (codes of penance), and Vityachar (codes of energy).

6 Avashyaks (essential duties) comprising Devapuja, Gurupasti, Swaddhyaya, Samyam, Tapa, and Dana.

3 Guptis (controls) comprising mano gupti (control over mind), Vachan gupti (control over speech). Kaya gupti (control over body).

UPADHYAYAS

There are 25 attributes of Upadhyayas relating to their knowledge of scriptures and canonical texts. They are listed separately by Digambars and Swetambars relating to the scriptures recognized by them respectively.

SADHUS AND SADHAVIS

There are 27 attributes of ascetics. Listing differs, but again in essence the attributes are common to both Digambar and Shwetambar sects. The most salient attributes are the five major vows (MAHAVRATA). Illustrative listing is as follows:
5 Mahavrata, 5 Samitis covering carefulness while walking, talking, getting alms, putting on clothes or any other objects, and while disposing excreta), 5 control of senses, 6 Avashyaks (same as for Acharyas), and 6 other attributes viz., Kesha loch (picking one's own hair), Anana (no bathing), bhumi shayana (sleeping on floor), Adantadhavan (no brushing of teeth), Uttisthan Ahar sewan (eating food in standing posture only) and eka bhukti (eating once a day only).

Shvetambar texts mention following 27 attributes:

5 great vows (Mahavrata), control of 5 senses, shedding of the 4 kashayas of anger, ego, deceit and greed, 3 : control over mind, speech and body, 3 : Bhava (dharma and Shukla dhyana), yoga and Karan (following prescribed activities and regulations, 3 : darshan, gyan and charitra, 1 : forgiveness, 1 : Samvega (disinterest in worldly affairs), conquering of Parishaha (enduring hardships with equanimity), and Sanilekhana (endurance and fearlessness towards death and associated pains.
Chapter - 6
The Legacy of Bhagwan Mahavir

Supreme spiritual leader

Bhagwan Mahavir, the 24th and the last Tirthankar of Jain religion in the present time cycle lived from 599 B.C. till 527 B.C. His 2600th birth anniversary (JANMA KALYANAK) was celebrated in the year 2000 A.D. with festive rituals as well as thought-provoking conferences in all major capitals of the world. Mahavir has emerged globally in the front ranks of spiritual masters as an ardent and inspiring messiah of non-violence, peace and compassion.

He made a distinct and ever-lasting contribution to the universal spiritual heritage through his elucidation and elaboration of Jain philosophy's principal tenets of Ahimsa (non-violence), Aparigraha (non-possessiveness), and Anekant (doctrine of manifold aspects and relative nature of truth) both as shaping an ethical art of living for humanity, as well as showing the path to eventual salvation.

He put focus on taking an integral view of life as propounded in the Jain philosophy. Neither faith nor knowledge alone could take the humanity to the path of true happiness and bliss. One needed a combination of right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. By knowledge, one understands the nature of substances (Vastu-Swabhava), by faith and perception one believes in it, by conduct one puts an end to the flow of karmas, and by austerity one attains purity.

Jain scripture Sutra Kratang describes him as follows:

"Just as Airawat (Indra's elephant) is regarded as supreme among all the elephants, lion among all the animals, Ganges among all the rivers, and Garuda (eagle) among all the birds,
in the same way Mahavir stands tallest among all the spiritual teachers in guiding humanity to take to the path of eventual salvation.”

Mahatma Gandhi, who drew abiding inspiration from Jain religion described Mahavir as an incarnation of non-violence, who spread the message of nonviolence as no other person ever did. Dr. Ernest Liey, a renowned German scholar paying a warm tribute to Mahavir has observed that he was a divine being, a paragon among the practitioners of penance, greatest among the thinkers, a leader among the evolutionists of soul, and a beacon light in all branches of knowledge. C. Rajagopalachri, former Governor General of India and a front-ranking freedom fighter has very thoughtfully observed that the message of Bhagwan Mahavir is not for any particular community or sect, but for the entire world. If one follows his preaching based on first practicing oneself, one can lead an ideal life of true happiness

Mahavir’s teachings strike a common universal chord since all the religions and faiths of the world recognize that protection of nature and all living beings and kindness towards all should be the basic essence of human behavior. The great Jain sage Kartikeya Swamy expounded the teaching of “JEEVANAM RAKKHANAM DHAMMO PARMODAYA VISHUDHO”, meaning preservation of all forms of life constitutes the purest form of religion.

Life prior to Renunciation

Mahavir was born in a royal family on the thirteenth day of the rising moon half of Indian calendar Chaitra month in 599 B.C. in the state of Bihar, India. This day falls in the month of April as per the Christian calendar. His birthplace was Kundalpur, which was part of the famous Vaishali (LICHHAVI) republic. The famous Chinese traveler has described with great admiration the highly prosperous and rich city of Vaishali. His father was King Siddartha the King of Kshatriyakund, and his mother was Queen Trishala. She was the daughter of the Emperor of Lichhavi
Republic. The royal family were devotees of Jain (then called SHRAMANA) religion and followers of the 23rd Jain Tirthankar Parshvanath. This left a deep impact on Mahavir’s perceptions in the course of his upbringing.

His birth marked a period of prosperity for the kingdom, and hence he was named as VARDHAMAN. Right from his early childhood, he displayed signs of great courage and fearlessness. Later during his penance as an ascetic, he wandered alone in the forests. Jain scriptures narrate several encounters with cruel men as well as beasts to illustrate his fearlessness. This earned him the name of MAHAVIR. His family name was Jinataputra. Buddhist scriptures refer to him as Nataputa, Nayaputta and Nirgrantha. Digambar holy texts also call him Sanmati signaling his inborn wisdom and equanimity.

During his over 12 years long penance and Sadhana, the intense and dedicated practice of SAMYA YOGA, the yoga of equanimity was pursued by him. Jain scriptures vividly describe significant details of his previous 26 life incarnations in the ongoing cycle of birth and death in human or animal forms in the course of which he went on steadily moving towards detachment from karmic bondages. It is said that in one of his early births, he was Marich, the grandson of the first Jain Tirthankar Rishabhnath.

His divine potential was signaled in the form of 14 (shwetambar tradition) or 16 (digambar tradition) auspicious dreams his mother had when she conceived him. Jain tradition has associated such dreams with the birth of all the Tirthankars. The highly auspicious dreams were forerunners of the birth of a child with divine moorings.

Although Mahavir grew up surrounded by all trappings of royal comforts and palace luxuries, instinctively he felt the urge for gradual detachment. The digambar tradition maintains that he did not marry at all, while according to shwetambar tradition he married Princess Yashodhara and had a daughter named Priyadarshini. After the passing away of his parents, he was all
set for renunciation, but he deferred it for two years on the request of his elder brother. Finally at the young age of 30, he left the palace renouncing all worldly relationships. His 30 years life as a householder and family man came to an end. He took to the path of achieving complete Samyakta (equanimous state of mind or super-consciousness).

> Ever-shining symbol of total Renunciation

Mahavir became the ever-shining symbol of the courage of total renunciation (VEETARAAG), self-restraint and intense discipline. He took to the ardent path of vrat (fasting) and tapasya (penance) to cleanse his soul of all karmic impurities, revitalize his inner soul energy, gain deeper knowledge and profound wisdom about eventual human destiny and purpose of life through contemplation and meditation. The austerities practiced by Mahavir, and the many trials and tribulations, hostility and harassment faced by him were far more arduous than done by his predecessor Tirthankars. It is noteworthy that in his 12-1/2 years of continuous penance, normally his fasts without food or water lasted for as long as six months.

Renowned Jain saint Acharya Mahapragyayaji has very thoughtfully observed that while embracing asceticism, Mahavir had resolved:

_I surrender this body for the sake of my soul. This body is not mine. With this feeling, I shall use my body. To cross a river, a boat is needed. I shall use my body as a boat to cross the river of life. I shall bear all the pangs of suffering by being immersed in the soul._

In his last sermon, Mahavir pointedly observed:

_“Varam me appa danto, sanjamena tanena ya maaham parehim dammanto, Bandhanehim vahehi ya”_
"A spiritual practitioner should think that it is better to conquer oneself by self-control and penance rather than allowing others to give you pain and suffering"

Elaborating it further he preached that:

Appa katta vikattaya, duhaha ya suhana ya;
Appa mittam mittam cha, duppattiya supatthio

Maker, unmaker of pleasure and pain for self
Is the self itself, none else’
Self again is friend and foe
That induces good or evil

➤ TRANSFORMATION AS AN OMNISCIENT TIRTHANKAR

Eventually after deep meditation and contemplation spread over 12ñ years, Sramana Mahavir broke the barrier to true, infinite knowledge, achieved Keval gyan and became Omniscient (Kevali). He achieved the status of JINA, the conqueror of self, an ARHAT, worthy of worship.

Samoshraran of Bhagwan Mahavir
He attained a state of infinite knowledge, infinite intuition, infinite energy and infinite bliss. He radiated unique peace, equanimity, tranquility, fearlessness and compassion. His human personality was shaped into a SARVODAYA TIRTH (Enlightened Center) and he emerged as a role model for all human beings. The unparalleled depth of his penance and meditation opened in his teachings wider vistas and deeper vision of ethical and spiritual thought and conduct and of rationally and scientifically tapping the immense potentialities of the human soul through self-restraint, self-purification and self-realisation.

Meditating in silence and deep contemplation under a sal tree called tree on the banks of river Rijkula, Mahavir delivered his first Sermon (Divya Dhwani) after achieving omniscience at a religious congregation. The congregation called Samavasharan in Jain scriptures was attended not only by human beings, but also a wide variety of species from the animal, bird and vegetable kingdom besides a number of celestial beings showering petals of flowers.

The gathering listening to Mahavir’s first sermon as Tirthankar was reflective of human destiny being entwined with other living beings as well as forces of nature in an ambience of mutual supportiveness very aptly described in Jain scripture TATWARTHA SUTRA as PARASPAROPGRAHA JEEVANAM. The concept became one of the fundamental tenets of Jainism in its comprehensive interpretation of Ahimsa (non-violence). Mahavir observed to his principal pupil (Ganadhar) Indrabhooti Gautam:

“One who ignores the existence of earth, water, fire, wind and vegetation, ignores in fact the very basis of one’s own existence which is entwined with them.”
**Spiritual mission as Tirthankar**

Recognised as Tirthankar (path-finder) at the age of 42, Mahavir began his spiritual mission as a teacher, guide and preacher for the next 30 years. During this period, he traveled on foot all over India, and delivered his sermons and discourses in Prakrit and Ardhamagadhi, the languages of the masses. Mahavir's coming heralded a significant era in the history of the age-old Jain religion. In his simple yet profound manner, he brought a lot of clarity and lucidity in the interpretation of the basic principles of Jain philosophy in a wider universal and environmental perspective.

He enunciated complex and deep philosophical thoughts cogently and persuasively by relating them to the day-to-day life of his devotees, and the prevailing contemporary environment. He continued to follow the tradition of previous Tirthankars of orally transmitting religious doctrines and philosophical concepts. Beginning with his first sermon the process of describing different facets of Jain religion and its practices was initiated to his eleven disciples (ganadhars) led by the renowned saint-scholar Indrabhuti Gautam.

Indrabhuti Gautam others were persuasively and convincingly won over by Mahavir after extensive debate. In fact Mahavir encouraged free debate, dialogue and discussion. He used to say that, "He who knows his doubts knows the world." It is interesting that after his very first sermon, he attracted to his fold 4400 disciples, and in due course as many as 14000 monks and 36000 nuns. Such was the impact of his endeavour to convince others by winning them over by logical reasoning.

**Nirvana and complete liberation**

At the age of 72, (527 B.C.), Mahavir attained Nirvana
and his purified soul left his body and achieved complete liberation. He became a Siddha, a pure consciousness, a liberated soul, living forever in complete bliss. Mahavir attained Nirvan at Pavapuri in Bihar after delivering his last sermon (deshana). Jains celebrate it as Diwali, festival of lights. Since his Nirvan, Jalmandir with Mahavir's footprints at Pavapuri has achieved great sanctity as a place of pilgrimage. It is said that his last sermon lasted for 48 hours in which he covered key aspects of Jain religious perceptions in 55 Adhyays (sections) in his final wrap up.

Bhagwan Mahavir, Patan, Gujarat
His teachings elucidated with clarity the 14 stages in the Jain spiritual path beginning from 1 to 5 stages as a path of steadily enhancing self-restraint and gradual detachment moving on eventually from stage 6 to 14 to become a religion of total liberation and bliss through perfected soul. Jain holy texts like Trsastisla Kalpurusa Charitra vividly describe the travels of Mahavir and how he inspired all strata of society wherever he went. Jain scriptures give details of his 13 Chaturmas (four month’s stay at one place during rainy season usually ordained for ascetics) between 569 B.C. to 557 B.C. before enlightenment and 13 Chaturmas between 557 to 529 B.C. after achieving omniscience in different cities and towns of India.

Much later drawing inspiration from him, Mahatma Gandhi gave to the freedom movement a mass contact orientation, arousing the entire nation to come together in the peaceful and non-violent struggle for liberation from exploitative colonial rule.

An outstanding reformist

Mahavir gave the added-value orientation to Jainism of a reformist movement at a time when in the wider spectrum of Hindu society orthodoxy, dogmas, blind beliefs and violent sacrificial killings had become the vogue. He eloquently and ardently asserted the courage of non-violence as well as its practicality as an effective instrument to promote tolerance and fraternity. Far from being confrontational, his approach was one of synthesis, persuasive, logical and compassionate. He depicted religion as the purest form of piety and sublime love. He preached: conquer anger by forgiveness, ego by humility, deceit by straightforwardness, greed by contentment and detachment, and possessiveness by generosity.

At a time when violence was escalating in religious rituals
as well as power struggles among kingdoms, Mahavir clarified that to establish peace in the world, man should move away from the direction of conflict towards interdependence. The essence of his teachings was that in our lives there are much fewer moments of struggle or conflict and many more moments of mutual supportiveness, peaceful coexistence and cooperative endeavour.

Streamlining of Jain religion

Mahavir's intense devotion, utter tenacity, unbounded enthusiasm, limitless energy, profound scholarship and enlightenment led to the streamlining of Jain religion. Personal equanimity and social equity were his twin fundamental tenets. Self-restraint and social discipline as well as tolerance and compassion were the key to his vision of social restructuring.

Responding to the crisis of spirit in that period, Jain religion emerged as an ethical way of life for all humanity instead of remaining confined within the narrow walls of a religious text. His sermons were full of deep wisdom, lucid expression and wide-ranging inspiration. Dr. L.M. Singhvi observes:

"Mahavir was a great prophet and teacher who systematized the Jain doctrines and embodied them in a comprehensive constitution of the faith. He built the edifice of Jainism by renovation, modification, extension and synthesis. But most of all he infused new life and vitality in the Arhat tradition."

Mahavir put great emphasis on the democratic nature of Jain religion. One did not have to be born as Jain to practice Jain religion. The religion was open to anyone to embrace it irrespective of caste, color, creed, sex or territorial location. Jain religion rejected the growingly rigid and
increasingly discriminatory and exploitative caste system. Jainism was presented not as a narrow closed sectarian creed with set rituals and dogmas, but as a rational and ennobling way of life open for all humans to follow.

*Mahavir proclaimed:* "A person does not become a monk by merely tonsuring, nor a Bramhin by reciting mantras, nor a Muni by living in the forest, nor a hermit by wearing woven kusa grass apparel. One becomes a monk by developing equanimity, a Bramhin by celibacy, a Muni by knowledge and a hermit by austerity."

**VISIONARY ORGANIZATIONAL FLAIR**

Mahavir infused fresh vigour into what had been dubbed as an austere religion followed by a small minority. He displayed highly effective organizational flair and attracted a large number of learned Sadhus and Sadhavi in his Sangha led by Indrabhuti Gautam (who had earlier been an authority on vedic philosophy, but was won over in the discussions by Mahavir, and became his prime disciple (first among the 11 Ganadhars). Mahavir strengthened the organizational base of the religion by streamlining and strengthening his four-fold congregation (Chaturvidha Sangha) comprising on the one hand monks and nuns, and on the other lay men and women devotees. Among the monks and nuns, lay men and women from a variety of backgrounds from royal families, warrior classes, Brahmmins, business community, farmers, craftsmen, fishermen and several others including from downtrodden classes. Among his followers were 38 Kings, out of whom as many as 11 became ascetics.

Mahavir emerged as an ardent supporter of the emancipation of women. He accepted food from poor Chandanbala, victim of exploitative society. Her life was transformed by becoming sadhavi and rising to the post of Pravartini. The sadhvis in Mahavir's Sangha were
learned women like kali, Krsna, Devananda Brahmi, and Sundari. Sadhvi Yaksa and Arya Payani were literary figures, while Princess Auve of Chu was a renowned Tamilian poetess.

Like all his predecessor Tirthankars, Mahavir presided over a totally unified Jain religion. In the spirit of Anekant philosophy, he respected differences in perceptions, but persuasively forged synthesis among them by emphasizing that what united them was far more important and basic than what may appear to divide them. The split into Digambar and Swetambar sects came about some 160 years after Mahavir's nirvana, when Bhadrabahu Swami was the head of the religious order. At that time there occurred a twelve year famine around 350 B.C. He along with his sangha of 12000 digambar ascetics left for the south with Emperor Chandra Gupta accompanying them as an ascetic as well.

The shramana sangha reached Sravanabelgola and further strengthened the already existing Jain religion there from earlier centuries. The huge monolithic statue of Bahubali at shravanbelgola built in the 11th century is witness to the blossoming of Jain religion there. In the meantime shvetambar tradition took its roots with differing rituals in north India, and shvetambar saints took to the practice of putting on two pieces of white cloth to cover their bodies in contrast to sky-clad Digambar munis. However despite differing interpretation of the extent of detachment, both the sects share the common philosophical basis of Jainism with Mahavir's teachings as the fountain source of inspiration and direction.
CHAPTER - 7
JAIN SCRIPTURES

Although Jain religion owes its origin to the teachings of the first founder Tirthankar Rishabhnath, its sacred literature was, for the first time, given an organized and systematic format by the last and 24th Tirthankar Mahavir in about 600 B.C. Until then principle tenets, doctrines, rituals and practices as they kept evolving remained preserved in memory as per the then prevalent oral tradition and passed on from generation to generation by sramana ascetics and Tirthankars.

Indrabhuti Gautam, the chief disciple of Bhagwan Mahavir codified and classified the teachings of Omnicient Mahavir based on his innumerable sermons and long philosophical debates and discussions with his principal disciples called the eleven Ganadharas led by Indrabhuti Gautam. Learned Ganadhars followed by Sruta Kevalis and later Daspurvis methodically compiled, composed and preserved these teachings in the oral format during 150 years after the nirvana of Mahavir in form of 12 main texts (sutras). When they were originally revealed by Bhagwan Mahavir, the medium of revelation was Ardhamagadhi, otherwise called Prakrit, the language of the common public.

These 12 main texts came to be called Anga-Agamas. Anga-Agamas or Dvadasang are the oldest scriptures and they constitute the soul and the backbone of the extensive canonical literature developed by both Digambar and Swetambar Jain traditions. It is noteworthy that Jain religion does not have one single sacred book like the Koran in Islam and the bible in Christianity. Its scriptural literature together with learned commentaries written on them in later centuries by learned ascetics runs into volumes.
The twelve Anga Agamas give comprehensive coverage to detailed enunciation of Jain religion, its basic tenets and philosophy, modes of worship and code of conduct for the ascetics as well as the lay followers. They provide a treasure house of information in a rationally presented and scientifically articulated manner of the spiritual and philosophical aspects reinforced by relevant knowledge base of yoga and meditation techniques, cosmology, metaphysics, astronomy, astrology, mathematics, literature, history, geography, art, logic, music, stories and event narration. They also mirror the then prevailing socio-cultural environment, customs, traditions and the folklore.

Out of the 12 Anga Agamas, 1, 7 and 10 deal with Samyak Charitra (rational conduct), while 2 compares Jain philosophy with contemporary philosophies during Mahavir’s time. 3, 4 and 5 deal with Samyak Darshan and Samyak Gyan, while 6, 8, 9, 11 and 12 provide guidelines and lay down the road map for proceeding on the spiritual path leading to eventual salvation.

Digambar tradition maintains that in the long passage of time all the 12 Anga Agamas were gradually lost in their precise form. Swetambar tradition maintains that 11 agamas remained intact in memory, and were documented in oral tradition by swetambar monks during the two conferences held in Pataliputram (320 B.C.) and Mathura and Vallabhi (380 B.C.), and for the first time in writing at Valabhi in 520 B.C. The 12th Anga-Agama viz Dristivad was lost. It comprised fourteen Purva texts, also called the Purvas or Purva-agamas.

Sruta Kevalis inheriting knowledge of Dvadasasang created additional Sutras (texts) further interpreting and elucidating the contents of the Anga Agamas. These texts came to be called Anga-bahya Agamas. As per Digambar tradition, there were in all 14 Anga-bahya agamas which were lost starting about 200 years after Mahavir’s nirvana. Swetambar Murtipujak, Sthanakvasi and Terapanthi sects however maintain that there were respectively 34, 21 and 12 texts, all of which survived in memory and later rendered in writing.
In the absence of full texts of authentic scriptures, Digambar tradition uses two main texts, three commentaries on main texts and four Anuyogas comprising 20 texts as its scriptural base. These scriptures were put in writing by great acharyas between 100 to 1000 A.D. based on memory-versions of original Agama sutras inherited from their distinguished predecessors.

The scriptural base of the Digambar tradition is *SHATKHANDAGAMA* in six parts containing the essence as well as the substance of the original Anga Agamas as passed on by erudite Shrut-jnani Acharya Bhadrabahu (around 364 B.C.) to Acharya Dharsen and Ganadhar, and later on reduced to writing by Acharya Pushpadant and Bhutibali around 160 A.D. It has become a hoary tradition to celebrate the date of completion of Shatkhandagama as *SHRUT PANCHAMI*. Acharya Ganadhar also composed *KASAYAPAHUDA*, which is rated in importance next to Shatkhandagama in Digambar scriptures.

Around 780 A.D., Acharya Virsen wrote a learned Commentary called Dhavla-tika on Shatkhandagama comprising 20,000 stanzas, while remaining portion comprising 40,000 stanzas called MahadHAVala-tika was completed by his pupil Acharya Jinsen after his death. Likewise Jaya-dhavalata-tika was written as commentary on KASAYAPAHUDA. Abiding contribution to Jain religious literature was made during 100 A.D. by Acharya Kundkunda. He wrote 23 books among which *SAMAYASAR*, Panchastikaya, Pravachansar, Niyamsar, Ashtapahuda, Moolachar and Dwadasanupreksa are highly rated as of quasi-scriptural status reflecting creative and in-depth interpretation of Jain spirituality and its various facets.

*TATVARTHASUTRA* written in Sanskrit language is another renowned religious book highly regarded by all the Jain sects and traditions. It was written by Acharya Umaswati in 200 A.D. and contains the entire essence (*TATVA GYAN*) of Jainism. In the centuries that followed many renowned saints in both Digambar and Swetambar traditions wrote commentaries on it.
Around 500 A.D. Pujiyapad-swami wrote the famous *Sarwartha Siddhi*. In 600 A.D. Acharya Samantabhadra Swami wrote the famous *Ratnakaranda Shravkachar*, now regarded as an authoritative text on conduct code for the lay persons. Between 600 to 1000 A.D. Padmapurana, Harivansha Purana, Adi Purana, Uttara Purana, Mahapurana, Mulvara, Gommatsara and such other significant religious books were written which enriched Digambar Jain literature. Poet Banarsidas and Pandit Todarmal revitalized the Digambar tradition through their writings in 16-17th century deeply inspired by Kundakundacharya.

It is relevant to note that around 350 B.C., a 12 year famine in Magadha (Bihar) led to major schism in the Jain community through parting of ways between Digambar and Swetambar sects. *Acharya Bhadrabahu* led a group of some 12000 digambar sky-clad munis including Emperor Chandra Gupta as one of them in their migration to South India in order to be in a peaceful place where unaffected by famine conditions and social upheaval, they could follow all the austere rituals as well as pursue writing of commentaries on original scriptures. Jain religion was already being followed in South India. Migration of ascetics from north gave fresh vigor to it. By the time most of them returned to the north, Swetambar tradition saints had gone ahead with differing versions and interpretations of original scriptures, modes of rituals and rules of conduct.

Swetambar *Acharya Sthulibhadra* presided over the first Swetambar conclave of saints at Pataliputra in 320 B.C.. He had been a disciple of Acharya Bhadrabahu from whom he imbibed the knowledge of Dvadasanga and Purvas. *Acharya Bhadrabahu* was venerated both by Digambars and Swetambars, and was the fountain source for both to secure the knowledge about ancient Jain scriptures. This was the first organized effort to preserve intact in memory the original Anga Agamas except the 12th which was regarded as lost in its precise format. The second
such conference led by Acharya Skandil was held in 380 A.D. after the great famine in Mathura as well as Valabhi, where serious thought was given to the preservation of the original scriptures.

Svetambar sect deeply venerates Acharya Sthulibhadra for his pioneering work in preserving the holy scriptures. In the Mangalacharan, his name is included following the names of Bhagwan Mahavir and Ganadhar Gautam Swami:

Mangalam bhagavana viro, mangalam Gautam prabhu Mangalam Sthulibhadradya, Jaina dharmostu mangalam.

In a similar way, Digambar sect deeply venerates Acharya Kundakundacharya for his substantive interpretation of the ancient Jain scriptures through his 23
works. Among them Samayasaar stands out as the most original contribution to the digambar jain philosophy. In the Mangalacharan, Digambars include his name after Bhagawan Mahavir and Ganadhar Gautam Swamy as follows:

Mangalam Bhagwan Viro, mangalam Gautam gani Mangalam Kundakundaryo, Jaina dharmostu mangalam.

However, it was only 150 years later at the third conference in Valabhi in 520 A.D. led by Acharya Devardhigani Kshamashramana that the Mathura and Valabhi versions were synchronised, and the process of writing them down commenced. This historic conference was attended by renowned saints like Nagarjuna, Kalkacharya, Jinabhadraguni, Skandilacharya, Dhaneshwar Suri, Haribhadra Shilank and others. The tradition of constantly enriching religious literature continued in the coming centuries. Notably, Acharya Sidhasen Diwakar wrote KALYAN SUTRA and SANMATHI-TARKA systematically explaining in particular the principle of Anekantvad. Acharya Haribhadra Suri (705-755 A.D.) wrote 1444 books among them DASA VAIKALIKA-Tika, ANUYOGADWARA and Yoga Drishti Samuchchaya. Silanka Suri wrote commentaries on Acaranga and Sutrakrtanga in 700 A.D.

Acharya Haribhadra Suri wrote Shravaka Dharma Samas in 900 A.D. Abhayadev Suri wrote commentaries on 9 out of 11 Angas in 1100 A.D. Hemchandra Suri composed over 30 million shlokas (stanzas) and the renowned Vyakaran with 3568 sutras in 900 A.D. Between 10th to 19th centuries, noteworthy literature was created by great saints like Jineshwar Suri (11th century), Upadhya Jnapal (13th century), Shekhar Suri (15th century), Acharya Hemchandra Suri (11-12th century), Acharya Jawaharlal, Devbhadra Suri and others. It was on the inspiration of Acharya Hemchandra that King Kumarpal issued a Declaration on Ahimsa, and propagated universal adoption of vegetarianism and practice of compassion in his kingdom.
Hirvijay Suri was a well-known Acharya of the 16th century who persuaded Emperor Akbar to issue proclamation prohibiting animal slaughter on certain Jain religious days. Yogi Anandaghani and Upadhyay Yashovijay wrote extensively during that period in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Gujarati. Srimad Rajchand wrote ATMASIDHDHI SHASTRA and MOKSHAMALA in the 19th century. He also deeply influenced Mahatma Gandhi and planted in him abiding faith in the principle and practice of Ahimsa.

In the 20th century, notable creative contribution in highly enlightening style in enriching Jain literature as well as interpreting and establishing relevance of Jain principles and philosophy in contemporary times has come from Acharya Tulsi and his successor Acharya Mahapragya from the Terapanth Swetambar sect, Acharya Vidyanandji and Acharya Vidyasagarji from the Digambar sect, Sthanakvasi Pattadhar Acharya Devendra Muni and Acharya Shiv muni. Songarh Acharya Kanji Swami, Srimad Rajchandra, Acharya Chandanaji, Gyanmati Mataji and Sadhvi Kanak Prabhaji. Acharya Chandanaji’s VEERAYATAN movement has successfully put focus on serving the poor and the needy and in participating in disaster relief efforts.

Acharya Sushilkumarji, originally from the Sthanakvasi sect and Gurudev Chitrabhanuji chose to break the conduct rules of the monks and traveled abroad to spread the message of Jainism. Both have made distinguished contribution towards Jainism’s global spread and impact inter-alia by popularizing techniques of yoga and meditation as well as vegetarianism. Acharya Sushilkumarji pioneered the establishment of SIDDHACHALAM in New Jersey in U.S.A. as a pilgrimage center (Tirth) jointly for all the Jain sects and traditions. It is welcome that all over U.S.A. and Canada, Jain temples have followed that tradition which has served to keep the Jain community abroad united and cohesive.
CHAPTER - 8
THE FUNDAMENTAL APPROACH OF JAIN RELIGION

Jains believe that Jain religion is an eternal religion embracing the entire universe and in keeping with the assumption that time is eternal and cyclical with an ascending (Utsarpini) and a descending (avasarpini) period in each cycle. In each cycle, each period has six divisions, and it is in the fourth division (unhappy-happy time) that 24 Tirthankaras appear to preach the Jain path of self-purification and liberation from karmic bonds.

THE JAIN UNIVERSE

1. Upper world (Urdhva Lok), Abode for celestial beings.
2. Middle world (Madhya Lok), Abode for humans, animals, plants and other forms of life (Terrestrial world).
3. Lower world (Adho Lok), Living place for hell beings – Hell.
Since there have been innumerable such cycles throughout eternal time, Jain belief is that their religion is at the heart of this eternal cycle. Indeed, Jain scriptures mention the names of Tirthankars in the previous cycle as well as in the next cycle to follow in the next cycle. Many ancient Jain temples in different parts of India have choubisi idols depicting 24 Tirthankars each in the past, present and future cycle of time.

Jain religion stands out from other religions with its unique feature of not being a one-Book or one-God religion like Christianity or Islam, or a religion of multiple Gods and Goddesses like Hinduism. In the Jain conception, there is no God sitting in heaven directing or regulating the universe as creator, preserver or destroyer. The universe has always existed and will continue to exist in exact adherence to the laws of the cosmos. There is nothing but infinity both in the past as well as the future.

THE EMBLEM OF JAIN RELIGION

The Emblem of the Jain religion mirrors the Jain perception of universe in the shape of a polygon. The Swastika in the emblem represents the four innate qualities of the eternal soul, namely Infinite knowledge (Anant Gyan), Infinite perception (Anant Darshana), Infinite bliss (Anant Anand), and Infinite strength (Anant Veerya). The four dots in the Swastika stand for the four gatis (destinations) for a soul in the ongoing cycle of birth and death, namely heaven (celestial), human beings, animal beings (tiryanch), and hell beings. The single dot on the very top represents the liberated souls- the Siddhas. The three dots just below it stand for the three jewels of the Jain spiritual path viz., Samyak Darshana, Samyak Gyan, and Samyak Charitra.

Six Fundamental Entities (Dravyas) and nine Tatvas

Six fundamental elements or substances or entities (dravya) constitute the creative and constantly interactive force. They have existed in perpetuity and are eternal. No one has created them nor can anyone destroy them. The six fundamental elements
broadly consist of living beings (*Jiva*) on the one hand and five non-living objects (*Ajiva*) on the other. These six entities of the universe are eternal, but continuously undergo countless changes. During the change, nothing is lost or destroyed. Everything transforms into another form.

Jain religion is rooted in the realization of the intrinsic nature of the soul (*Vastu Swabhavo dharma*). *Jiva* (the animate souls) embody infinite perception, knowledge, consciousness, energy and bliss, and have inherent in them the energy, eligibility and opportunity to shed karmic accumulations, attain salvation and become supreme all-knowing (*Sarvagya*) and all-pervasive (*Sarva-darshi*) souls (*Parmatma*). The other five elements are *AJIVA* (inanimate or non-soul) viz., matter (*pudgal*), space (*akasa*), time (*kala*), the medium of motion (*Dharma*) and the medium of rest (*Adharma*). A liberated soul has the ingredients of eternity, consciousness and bliss respectively called *sat, chit and anand* or *sachchidananda*.

**Mahavir preached:**

*Every being has infinite latent energy. Activating it depends on individual’s endeavours. If one becomes aware of one’s potential and resolves to progress, then one can change the fruits and consequences of karmas and even destroy them.*

By itself, the *Jiva* (soul) has no form. It is intangible, colorless, odorless and formless. Scriptures describe it as Neti—Neti (not this—not that). It can only be experienced by dwelling deep within oneself. However, during its worldly life, it gets invested with a physical body, and becomes the object of the inflow of karmic dust (*asravas*). These are subtle material particles that are drawn towards a soul because of its worldly activities.

Jain religion has elucidated *nine tatvas* or fundamentals that are basic to the theory of karma, which provides the basis for the path of liberation. Without proper understanding of these nine tatvas, a person cannot progress spiritually. The nine tatvas are:
Jiva (consciousness), Ajiv (non-living substances), Asrava (influx of karma), Bandh (bondage of karma), Punya (virtue), Pap (sin), Samvar (stoppage of the influx of karmas), Nirjara (partial exhaustion of accumulated karmas), Moksha (total liberation from karmas). Of these, Jiv and Ajiv are ‘Jneya’ (to be known), Asrava and Bandha are ‘Heya’ (to be avoided), Samvar, Nirjara and Moksha are ‘Upadeya’ (to be adopted), Pap is ‘Heya’, and Punya is upadeya.

The Jain Theory of Karma

The souls go through several incarnations in varying life forms since they get entrapped in the unending cycle of birth and death. Depending on the merit or otherwise of their respective karmas, rebirth could be in any one of four forms or destinies (gatis) viz., celestial being (deva), human being (manushya), plant, animal or insect (tiryanch) and hell being (naaraki). In these various life forms also, according to Jain religion, the soul passes through as many as 8.4 million yonis (incarnations).

Every living being is a single ‘jiva’ entrapped in a material body. Jivas interact with Ajivas, and become impure and polluted. Karmic bondage to material attractions keeps them in an illusory mirage of happiness, which is transient. Pudgal or matter has form and consists of individual atoms (parmanu) and conglomerates of atoms (skandha), which can be seen, heard, smelt, tasted and/or touched. The energy or the phenomenon of sound, darkness, light, shade and heat etc. are produced by the conglomerates of atoms.

Worldly soul does not realize that its physical embodiment and all its surroundings have resulted from its past karmas. It tends to identify itself with all those situations and pudgals ignoring the fact that they are all transient. This has been the root cause of continuous bondage of karmas to the soul and the resulting transmigration.
ASRAVA-INFLOW OF KARMAS

Inflow of karmas (asrava) - good or bad is caused by ‘Mithyatva’ (ignorance and false perception), ‘Avirati’ (lack of self-restraint and self-control), ‘Pramada (unmindfulness, idleness and addiction), ‘Kashaya’ (passions like anger, conceit, ego, deceit, delusion, greed and attachment (krodh, maan, maya and lobha), and ‘Yoga’ (activities of mind, speech and body).

BANDH-the process of karmic attachments

Following ‘asrava’, ‘bandh’ comes up as the continuous process of attachment of karma particles to the soul through physical, verbal or mental activities. These activities may be done by oneself or by asking or encouraging others to carry them out. Karma bandha, thus, attached could be Prukruti bandha (nature of karma), Pradesha bandha (quantity or location of karma), Stithi bandha (duration), and Ras bandha (intensity).

TYPES OF KARMAS

Karmas are grouped in eight categories. Four among them are called Ghati karmas (destructive karmas), and the other four Aghati or non-destructive karmas. As explained in other chapters, ghatti karmas are knowledge obscuring (Jyanavarniya), perception obscuring (darshanavarniya), obstructing (antaraya), and deluding (mohaniya) karmas. Of these the mohaniya karmas are the most difficult to overcome. It is well-known that Indrabhuti Gautam could not attain Omnicience as long as he harboured ‘moha’ (attachment) for Lord Mahavir. For achieving Omnicience, it is imperative to overcome all the four ghatti karmas completely.

The four ‘aghati karmas’ are ‘vedaniya karma’ (feeling producing like good or bad health, happiness or sorrow), ‘Nam karma’ (body determining like healthy or unhealthy physique), ‘Gotra karma’ (status determining like higher or lower status in the society), and ‘Ayushya karma’ (life span determining in all the four gatis. Siddhahood is achieved as soon as the soul gets rid of these
four aghati karmas in addition to the already eliminated four ghati karmas.

The duration of karmic bondage is determined by the quality and intensity of our passions at the time of their enactment. If our desires were mild, the duration of the bondage would be for a shorter period than otherwise. The intensity (ras bandh) could be loose, tight, tighter or tightest. The impact of karmas may not be necessarily felt immeadiately in the same life, but may spread over the ongoing life cycle depending upon the pace of ‘nirjara’ (extinguishment of accumulated karmas) through dedicated effort.

**SAMVAR-STOPPAGE OF KARMIC INFLUX**

‘Samvar’ is the process that stops fresh karmas from attaching into the soul. It is a reverse process of ‘asrava’ It can be accomplished by right belief, observance of vows, passionlessness and peacefulness of activities. Jain scriptures enunciate 57 practical ways of stopping the influx of karmas. They are 5 Samitis (carefulness in walking, speaking, taking, keeping, giving and begging), 3 Guptis (control over thoughts, speech and body), 10 yati dharma (practicing virtues like forgiveness, humility, straightforwardness, contentment, truthfulness, self-restraint, penance, renunciation, non-attachment and celibacy), 12 bhavanas (thoughts about impermanence of the world, no permanent relationships, solitude of the soul, impurity of the body, influx, stoppage and shedding of karmas, consistent and dedicated endeavour required to attain right faith, knowledge and conduct, and choosing the right preceptor, and religion; 22 Parishaha (facing sufferings like hunger, thirst, harsh words, diseases, cold, heat, insect bites etc. with patience and equanimity; and 5 Charitra (rational and right conduct, taking to ascetic life, practising penance and eliminating all passions (kashayas).
NIRJARA- ERADICATION OF ALL KARMAS

“Nirjara” or eradication of karmas is a process of soul-purifying endeavour through resort to penance and austerities. The six types of internal penance are repentance, humility, self-less service, self-study, meditation and renunciation. The six external forms of penance are ‘anashan’ (total fasting for a set period of time), Unodari (eating less than appetite), Vrutti sankshep (eating within limits of pre-determined restrictions on number of items, area, time, source of cooking etc., Ras tyag (giving up tasty food), Kaya klesha (tolerating physical pain voluntarily) and Sanlinata (staying in forlorn places and occupying limited space). Fasting depends on one’s capacity and will power and could range from ekasan, biyasan, ayambil to upavas, navakarashi, porsi and varshitap and so on.

Soul’s essential characteristic is consciousness. The qualities of Jiva are obvious through a physical body when the soul is present in it. But when the soul departs, the physical body perishes. Thus the body and the soul are two distinct entities. Souls can be classified into two main categories: Liberated or Siddha jiva, and non-liberated or Sansari Jiva. Liberated souls have no karmic bondages, and have gone out of the cycle of birth and death. Siddhas are formless, but with perfect knowledge and perception, and possess infinite vigor and bliss.

FEATURES OF WORLDLY SOULS

Worldly or sansari soul is covered by karmic particles. Unlike Siddhas, it has the following characteristics:

(1) Limited knowledge, vision, power and bliss;
(2) Possesses a body (human, animal, insect, plants, hellish or angel;
(3) Is caught up in the cycle of birth and death;
(4) Suffers from birth, death, pleasure and pain;
(5) Doer of all kinds of karmas-good and bad;
(6) Enjoyer of the fruits of all karmas—good or bad;
(7) Innumerable number of worldly soul caught up in the process of transmigration;
(8) Have the potential of liberation from worldly life.

EQUALITY OF ALL SOULS

Jain religion believes in the equality of all souls, irrespective of their life form. Based on mobility, all Jivas are divided into two categories: non-mobile or sthavars with only one sense (of touch). And mobile or trsas that can move on their own and are endowed with two to five senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. The lowest form of physical body has only the sense of touch. Trees and vegetation have souls with sense of touch, and are therefore, able to experience pleasure or pain. Above the single sense Jivas are microorganisms and small animals with two or three or four senses. The highest in the order are the Jivas with five senses. The highest grades of animals and human beings also possess rationality and intuition (manas). As a highly evolved form of life, human beings have a great moral responsibility in their mutual dealings as well as in their relationship with other living beings and the universe.

The review of the Jain theory of Karma is amply illustrative of the scientific orientation of Jain philosophy. Indeed, Jain religion is an ensemble of scientific spiritual techniques to know and realize the eternal self. Inbuilt in its schientific and rational vision (Samyak Drsti) is the methodology with a clear road-map of achieving liberation through a life based on renunciation and detachment from material bondages, self-introspection, contemplation, meditation, penance, restraint, austerity and practice of comprehensive non-violence in thought, deed and expression.

Baraha Bhavana (The twelve spiritual perceptions)

Widely recited Jain prayer frequently in usage particularly on the sad occasion of the death of near and dear ones contains the essence of the Jain theory of Karma. There are several versions in
poetry-rendering of 12 Bhavana, but the most popular is the one written by poet B hudardas in the 19th century. Its translation in English rendered by the author together with the original poem in colloquial Hindi language of 19th century (in Roman script) is as follows:

(1)
Nothing is eternal (Anitya Bhavna)
All persons
Even elephant-riding
Emperors, rulers and chieftains
Have to die one day
When it is their turn

Raja Rana, Chhatrapati
Hathin ke aswar
Marna sabko ek din
Apni-apni bar.

(2)
There is no savior (Asharan Bhavna)
Gods and Goddesses
Collective might and power
Family, father and mother
None can save a mortal
From the jaws of death ever

Dal-Bal Devi Devata
Mat-pita parivar
Marti biritan jeeva ko
Koi na rakhan haar.

(3)
The world is an illusion (Sansar Bhavna)
Unhappy all are
The poor without purchasing power
The rich is shackles of desire
All the world over
Happiness is nowhere

Daam bina nirdhan dukhi
Trishna-vasha dhanawan
Kahun na such sansar mein
Sab jag dekho chhan.

(4)
One is alone (Akatva Bhavna)
One is born alone
One dies alone
A living being
Has truly none
Real relation or companion

Aap akele avatare
Mare akela hoy
Yun kabahun es jeeva ko
Sathi-saga na koy.
Nothing belongs to you (Anyatva Bhavna)
When even your body
Is not yours for ever
How others surrounding you
For your riches
Could ever be yours

Jahan na deha apni nahin
Tahan na apno koy
Ghar-sampati par pragat ye
Par hain parijan loya.

Ugliness of body (Ashuchi Bhavna)
Though wrapped in
Glowing white or dark skin
The body is a mere skeleton
Of all worldly things
Most ugly within

Dipe cham-chadar madhi
Haad pinjara deha
Bheetar ya sam jagat mein
Aur nahin ghin geha.

Inflow of Karmas (Asrava Bhavna)
Intoxicated by attachment
Complacent living beings wander
Drifting around
Blissfully unaware
Of creeping in Karmas

Moha-neend ke jor
Jagwasi ghumen sada
Karma-chor chahun oor
Saravas lootien sudha nahin.

Preventing karmic inflow (Samvar Bhavna)
When enlightened saints awaken
You from attachment slumber
Realization begins to dawn
For preventing accumulation
Of fresh karmic burden

Satguru deya jagayyy
Moha-neend jab upshame
Tab kachhu babahi upaya
Karma-chor avat rukin.

Shedding karmic burden (Nirjara Bhavna)
Only the lamp of wisdom
Lit by penance and meditation
Leads to soul purification

Gyana-deep tap-tel bhar
Ghar shodhe bhrama chhor
Ya vidhi bin nikase nahin
By removing all delusions
And entrenched karmic intrusions
Five ‘Mahavratra observance
Five Samiti adherence
Conquering five indriyas
Is ‘Nirjara’ essence

(10)
Universal perspective (Lok Bhavna)
From times immemorial
In this universe of huge dimensions
Living beings are drifting round
Devoid of true knowledge perception

(11)
True knowledge is rare (Bodhi durlabh Bhavna)
Gaining access in this world to gold
And hold off ruling power
Luxuries of wealth and health
Is a lot easier
Than gaining access to rare true knowledge wealth

(12)
The Elixir of faith (Dharma Bhavna)
Miracle tree (kalpataru) when invoked
May fulfill one’s wishes
Contemplation may rid you of nights sleepless
But faith alone without crutches of miracles
Could bring you total bliss and happiness

Paithe poorab chor.
Pancha mahavrata sancharan
Samiti pancha parkar
Prabala panch indriya-vijaya
Dhar nirjara saar.

(10)
Chaudaha raju utanga nabha
Lok purush-santhan
Tamen jeeva anaaditen
Bharamata hain bin gyan.

(11)
Dhana kana kanchan raj such
Sabahin sulabhakar jaan
Durlabha hai sansar mein
Ek yatharat gyan.

(12)
Jaanche sur-taru deya such
Chintan chahta rai
Bin jaanche bin chintaye
Dharma sakal such dain
TIRTHANKARS AS PATH-SETTERS

Jain religion offers hope and equal opportunity to all souls irrespective of their life form. The 24 Tirthankaras have shown the way by blowing out all karmic impurities, becoming Omnicient while alive, and then reaching the exalted state of attaining Moksha and becoming Siddha. In common parlance, Tirthankars have been called ‘JIN’ or ‘Jinendra’, i.e., conquerors of self. The popular form of social greeting among Jains is ‘Jai Jinendra’. This underlines the fact that human initiative and endeavour to seek purification of soul through weeding out of karmic bondage as per path shown by Tirthankars is central to the Jain world view. In common parlance, Tirthankars are addressed with reverence as Bhagwan, whose example can and needs to be emulated. The system expounded by JINAS has come to be called the Jain religion, and its adherents as JAIN.

All Jains deeply adore all the 24 Tirthankaras, and offer their eulogy and respects in a variety of Pujas (worships). Mentioned below is the oft-recited reverential offering to them for their unique attributes as included in the Mangalacharan:

Tubhyam namastribhuvananartiharaya natha,
Tubhyam namah ksititalamalabhusanaya,
Tubhyam namastirijagatath parameshvaraya,
Tubhyam namo jina bhavodadhishshanaya.

Lord, we bow to you, the eradicator of the misery of the three worlds;
We bow to you the adorable ornament on the face of the Earth;
We bow to you, the Lord of the three worlds;
Omniscient Lord, we bow to you the destroyer of the
CHAPTER - 9
THE THREE JEWELS OF JAINISM

The concept of religion in the Jain philosophy is rooted in the realization of the intrinsic nature of the soul: "Vatthu sahavo dharma". The eternal or abiding nature of soul is 'chetana' (consciousness). Caught up in the ongoing cycle of birth and death (Samsara), it transmigrates from one life form to another and in the process becomes impure and corrupted through its constant interaction with non-living particles (Ajiva pudgal). It accumulates knowledge-obstructing particles of transient and illusory material attachments and passions. True happiness and bliss begins to elude the soul on account of the false perception of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain.

Integrated pursuit of Rational perception (Samyak darsana), Rational knowledge (Samyak jnan), and Rational conduct (Samyak charitra) constitute the foundation of Jain philosophy and are reverentially called "RATNATTRAYA", the bejeweled trinity. This indivisible and logically-knit trinity reflects a uniquely articulated approach to strike a healthy and wholesome balance between logic and faith, reason and belief. The much-revered second century Jain scripture "TATTVARTH SUTRA" begins by emphasizing "rational world view, knowledge and conduct are the three essential elements for liberation." The very first verse of the Tattvartaha Sutra reads:

"Samyak-darsana-jnan-charitrani Mokshamargah"

"The trinity of Samyak darsana, Samyak Jnan and Samyak Charitra is the path to Moksha (liberation of the Soul)"

Hemachandraracharya writes in Jain Yogashastra:

The enlightened consciousness or Self sees clearly its own Self with the light of its own Self, the moment it comes out of
clinging and confusion dropping away the veils of ignorance;

Final liberation is none other than experiencing the trinity of right knowledge, right perception and right conduct as the very nature of the Self in its purity”

Uttaradhyanan Sutra 27/31 quotes Lord Mahavir in this regard as follows:

“There is no knowledge without right perception; no right conduct is possible without right knowledge; without right conduct, there is no liberation; and without liberation, there is no deliverance.”

**SAMYAK DARSANA**

Samyak Darsana or rational perception of the true intrinsic nature of a substance- both living and non-living helps in removing false illusions, prejudices and bias. The key element of rational perception is to seek true knowledge and understanding and avoid false perceptions regarding the seven fundamental attributes of the universe, namely JIVA, AJIVA, ASRAV (inflow of karmas), BANDHA (bondage of karmas), SAMVAR (stopping inflow of karmas), NIRJARA (elimination of karmas through meditation, contemplation, penance and total detachment, and MOKSA (liberation of the soul)

For attaining Samyak darsana, Jain scriptures preach avoiding 25 possible faults. These include three elements of ignorance or false perception viz., ‘Dev mudhta’ i.e., allegiance to false Gods, ‘Lok mudhta’ i.e., mistaking blind beliefs and false rituals and customs as true religion, ‘Pakhandi mudhta’ i.e., being influenced by ill-motivated and conceited so-called saints. The eight egos to be avoided are knowledge ego, status ego, family level ego, racial ego, power ego, wealth ego, penance ego and influence ego. The six ‘anayatan’ refer to the false perceptions created by ill-motivated guides and the followers of their misconceived faiths. The balance eight faults relate to the negation of the following eight attributes of Samyak darsana:
‘Nihsaukita’ implies elimination of all fears and apprehensions about the fundamental truths; ‘Nikhanksa’ implies steering clear of succumbing to material temptations and attachments mistaking them for happiness; ‘Nirvicikitsa’ implies focusing on the virtues of others and not their shortcomings; ‘Amudhadrsti’ implies not deviating from the true path of religion by pinning faith in preachers of false perceptions; ‘Upaguhana’ implies respecting and learning from virtuous persons and rejecting overtures of ill-intentioned and selfish persons; ‘Stithiikarana’ implies adhering to the path of righteousness even in the face of difficulties; ‘Vatsalya’ implies nurturing friendly feelings for the virtuous and avoiding egoistic behavior towards others; ‘Prabhavana’ implies assiduously promoting in a noble and self-less manner adherence to true faith among people.

**SAMYAK JNAN**

Samyak darsana is the essential prerequisite and crucial step in developing a rational mind-set and vision. Without it, it is not possible to move on the ladder to Samyak jnan. Lord Mahavir observes (Mulachar 5/71):

“That which subdues passions leads to bliss and fosters friendliness is called right knowledge.”

Rational knowledge is devoid of doubt, misapprehensions, misconceptions, delusions and prejudices. Objective approach inherent in it stems from the doctrine of manifold truth viz., SYADVAD and ANEKANTVAD. Truth is and cannot be absolute. It is always relative since it is seen from different angles and attitudes by different persons at different time and place settings.

One needs to develop appreciation of different viewpoints and arrive at a synthesis, which would promote harmonious perception of multifaceted aspects. This would provide an objective basis for getting to the core truth. Comprehensive knowledge is definite and determinate, but may not be absolutely perfect, or complete. It is relative.
Rational knowledge could be of five dimensions. **MATI GYAN** (non-verbal sensuous cognition which is instinctive, memory-based, contemplative and estimation-inspired empirical knowledge; **SHRUTI GYAN** (articulate verbal knowledge based on hearing and listening to others. It implies the presence of Mati gyan to comprehend it; **AVADHI GYAN** (extra-sensory knowledge which is time-less and time tested acquired through Sadhana (meditation, contemplation and penance); **MANAH-PARYAY GYAN** (mind-reading knowledge acquired as a result of reaching pinnacle of detachment and self-restraint. This comes to very remarkable and intensely devoted saintly persons).

**KEVAL GYAN** (knowledge at its highest peak amounting to the purest form of self-realisation and omniscience. It is obtained after very hard penance, deepest contemplation, meditation and concentration after renouncing all material attachments and abuse of resource, giving up all possessive instincts and ego-centric thoughts and actions. Keval gyan opens the doors to soul enlightenment and becoming an all-knowing omniscient Arihant or Tirthankar.

**SAMYAK CHARITRA**

If rational perception is the root of the religion, rational conduct is the religion. In his sermons, Mahavir used to emphasize that:

"Mere clever talking will not protect; nor will philosophical disciplines do so. One must first practice and then only preach. Rational conduct is as important as rational perception and rational knowledge."

It includes both conduct in perception (**NISHCHAYA**) as well as practice (**VYAVAHAR**). Practice of **ANUVRAT** (small five vows of restraint) by lay persons (Shravak), and **MAHAVRATA** (major five vows of restraint and self-control by saints) fall under Vyavahar Charitra. Scriptures say: "**CHARITTAM KHALU DHAMMO**"
Ancient Jain scripture Tattvartha Sutra has listed six basic and essential attributes for attaining rational conduct. They are **SAMYAM** (Self-restraint and Equanimity), **SWA-NIYANTRAN** (self control and discipline), **SAKARATMAK SOCH** (positive thinking), **NAITIK DRSTIKON** (ethical mind-set), **KARMA VJAYA** (victory over karmic bondage) and **APARIGRAHA**.

Self-restraint needs to be comprehensive embracing thought, expression and action. Self-control implies meeting bare needs, avoiding greed, wasteful or destructive consumption, exploitation, misuse or abuse of resources, shunning violence and persuading others also not to resort to violence. Positive thinking implies realization of the need to proceed towards ethical way of living which will also pave the way for soul upliftment and eventual salvation from the cycle of birth and death. Ethical mind-set implies forgiveness, humility, love for truth, compassion towards other living beings, and self-less kindness and generosity towards the needy. Aparigraha embraces giving up greed, ego, attachment and possessive instinct, taking to restrained living in every ways, controlling one’s desires, wants and passions, and repentance for ill thoughts, deeds and words towards others.

Jain scripture **SAMAYASAR** has emphasized that one may or may not be a profound scholar, but if one pursues with rational conduct, he will be the eventual winner. The access to the trinity of rational perception, knowledge and conduct is the key to be liberated from the karmic bonds and attain self realization. Moreover rational approach makes the present life much more meaningful, happy and content. The trinity of rational outlook can be like radar which could help us at every step to save ourselves from degeneration, enslavement to passions, immorality and unethical behavior.
Chapter - 10

The Ladder of Jain Spiritual Journey

The Jain spiritual ladder is a steadily escalating voluntary effort towards the goal of the soul realizing its true and intrinsic nature of a pure spiritual eternal being.

The Jain Spiritual Ladder

14. Ayog Kevali (Siddha)
13. Sayoga Kevali (Arhat)
12. Kshina Moha
11. Upasant
10. Sukshma Samparava
9. Anivriti Karan
8. Apurva Karana
7. Appamatta Virati
6. Surva Virati
5. Desa Virati
4. Avirati
3. Samvak Mithya Drsti
2. Sasadna Samvak Drsti
1. Mithya Drsti
It is a self-disciplining process of seeking liberation from karmic bondages that keep the soul tied to the cycle of birth and death through incarnations in different forms of life. It is a process of Sadhana - an intensely devotional pursuit with required degree of austerity (tapa), self-restraint (samyam) and will-power (ichha shakti) imbued with a spirit of rational enquiry and introspection and whole-hearted involvement with zeal and enthusiasm. Jain religion lays down 14 Gunasthanas (Stages) of step-by-step going up on the ladder to the required heights of spiritual awakening.

The 14 stages constitute a conceptually well-articulated roadmap for grasping and absorbing in an integrated manner in thought, conduct and practice the fundamental tenets of Jain philosophy. They also become the fountain source for designing and shaping a soul-centric, socially responsible as well as environment-friendly way of compassionate life style and culture during one’s life on earth.

The Jain Sadhana path mirrored in the 14 stages has given the look of too much austerity being identified with the Jain religion. However, the 14 stages also amply illustrate the pragmatic approach of practicing them within one’s capacity and environmental limitations and constraints particularly as lay persons need to co-exist with others in a society and community, and may have unavoidable family and social obligations and responsibilities. Also the austere path is not forced upon anyone, but is to be willingly taken up with a feeling of internal delight, serenity and abiding commitment.

The first five Gunasthanas are applicable to lay persons and can be proceeded with while leading normal family and social life. They are:

1. **MITHYA DRSTI** - stage of spiritual ignorance, and starting point for spiritual awakening;

2. **SASADNA SAMYAK DRSTI** - Transition stage with confusion between ignorance and rational perception;
(3) **SAMYAK MITHYA DRSTI** – stage of spiritual oscillation between false and rational perception- a wavering intermixture of error and truth;

(4) **ASAMYAT SAMYAK DRSTI or AVIRATI** – Beginning of spiritual understanding, but without the required degree of self-discipline and control;

(5) **SAMYAT ASAMYAK DRSTI or DESA VIRATI** – Stage for taking introductory vows (vratas), and getting set for the **11 step climb of PRATIMA ladder**. The eleven Pratimas are as follows in order of ascent: Darsana (awakening), Vratas (taking vows), Samayika (Practising meditation), Posadha (practicing ascetic life for limited duration), Suchitta- Tyaga (food restraints), Ratribhakta (sexual restraint, and Bramhacharyya (celibacy), Arambha tyag (leaving profession), Parigraha Tyag (leaving possessions), Anumati (detachment from family). and Uddista tyag (leaving family and entering ascetic life). The eleven Pratimas of a lay person’s spiritual progress is between the fourth and the sixth spiritual stages (Gunasthana).

**11 STEPS**

**PRATIMA LADDER**

(Between 4th and 6th Gunasthanas)

- UDDISTA TYAG 11
- ANUMATI 10
- PARIGRAHA TYAG 9
- ARAMBHA TYAG 8
- BRAMHACHARYA 7
- RATRI BHAKTA 6
- SUCHITTA TYAG 5
- POSADHA 4
- SAMAYIKA 3
- VRATAS 2
- DARSANA 1
The next seven GUNASTHANAS (6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12) apply to ascetics, and reflect escalated degree of Sadhana for soul purification and achieving true knowledge and right and rational perception. They are:

1. **Pramatta Samyat or Sarva Virati** – Stage of taking Mahavrat (five major vows of an ascetic) with wholehearted mind-set, but may not yet be totally free from tempting desires and impulses;

2. **Apramatta Virati** – Critical stage with intense and dedicated practice of Mahavrat and strengthening vigilance;

3. **Apurva Karana** – At this stage the soul achieves Shukla Dhyan indicative of almost total self-control. The soul acquires a unique psychic force for targeting total annihilation of karmas;

4. **Antvritti Karana** – Intense spiritual activity, heightened self-control, and beginning of thought and conduct eluding karmas;

5. **Sukshma Samparaya** – The stage is now set for total rooting out of karmic impulses and not merely suppressing them. There may still remain subtle degree of attachment to life;

6. **Upasanta Moha** – Stage for intense effort to eliminate lingering passions that could still tilt the scale of spiritual equanimity achieved so far;

7. **Kshina Moha** – This is the point of no return having attained total equanimity after destroying both gross as well as subtle psychic impulses. This is just one step before achieving enlightenment.

The last two GUNASTHANAS (13 and 14) take the soul to its supreme realization. They are:

1. **Sayoga Kevali** – This is the stage of spiritual
perfection, having attained KEVAL GYAN (omniscient knowledge). The soul becomes ARHAT or TIRTHANKAR while still being in a human form. Tirthankar is venerated by the people for his supreme achievement and He begins to preach to them the path for seeking true perception (SAMYAK DARSANA), true knowledge (SAMYAK GYAN), and true conduct (SAMYAK CHARITRA). Tirthankar becomes a ROLE MODEL to follow and emulate;

(2) **AYOGA KEVALI** – This is the ultimate and highest stage with the soul achieves Moksha and becomes SIDDHA i.e., totally perfected and liberated eternal being beyond pleasure and pain, birth and death. The yoga of mind, speech and body disappears and the soul becomes Ayoga kevali with total bliss

**PATH FOR LAY PERSONS**

Jain religion prescribes a much less rigorous religious dispensation for lay persons (householders) than for the monks and nuns. Within a family or a society, a person has multifarious duties to perform and responsibilities to discharge. The main emphasis, therefore, is on adherence to the Jain ethical way of life emanating from the fundamental Jain principles of non-violence, self-restraint and equanimity in the face of differing viewpoints. This is a starting point undertaken voluntarily imbued with both reason and faith in the journey towards spiritual awakening, and there have been instances where lay persons have persisted on getting on to more and more advanced levels of Jain spiritual path and eventually renounced the worldly environment to become monks or nuns.

The vows prescribed for lay persons, called in religious terminology as shravaks and shravikas, are minor and limited and are basically introductory, voluntarily assumed and motivational. **Arunvrat** in its five dimensions is a milder version of the **Mahavrata** meant for the monks and nuns. The **five vows**
are:

**Ahimsa vrat** (non-violence in thought, deed and expression),

**Satya vrat** (adherence to and pursuit, of Truth),

**Asteya or Achaurya vrat** (non-stealing and not getting anything through illegitimate or unfair means),

**Bramhacharya or Sheel vrata** (practicing due restraint in personal conduct in the matter of sex), and

**Parigrahara parimana vrata** (limiting one’s needs and possessions and curbing desires and possessive instinct.

The next logical step is taking **three Guna vratas** (**merit vows**), which take religiosity alittle further by enhancing and deepening the implementation of anuvrat. The three vows are: (1) **Dik Vrata** (limiting one’s area of activity; (2) **Bhoga-upabhoga vrata** (limiting use in variety and quantity of consumables and non-consumable items, and the time spent on such habits; (3) **Anartha danda vrata** (avoiding purposeless sins, which may be harmful, inconsiderate and ethically wrong to other living beings or natural environment.

The **four Shiksha Vratas** (**disciplinary vows**) provide disciplined mode for strengthening one’s spiritual orientation. They are (1) **Samayika** (meditation for limited duration; (2) **Desavakasika** (voluntary limits on range and distance of travel; (3) **Paushadha** (following ascetic level of vows and life style for a limited duration; and (4) **Atithi Samvibhog** (charity and compassion vow).

Initiation in the faith in and practice of non-violence in day-today life envisages extending it to all living beings. Premeditated violence is prohibited for all. Defensive violence as well as vocational violence is permitted for lay persons, as long as they are unavoidable, unintentional and not revengeful. Common violence towards one-sense living beings like plants may be unavoidable for survival, but need to be minimized in daily activities such as preparing food, cleaning the house etc. This
explains Jain practice of drinking duly filtered water, sticking to vegetarian diet, not eating after sun set and abstinence from alcohol and addiction.

Mahavir instructed: “One should not injure, subjugate, enslave, torture or kill any living being including animals, insects, plants and vegetation.”

Jain scriptures prescribe five essential duties for lay persons. They are (1) Deva puja- both mentally (bhava puja) and physically (dravya puja); (2) Gurupasana (veneration of the holy teachers); (3) Svadhyaya (self-study of scriptures and religious texts); Samyam (self-discipline) (4) Tapa (austerities such as fasting, restricted consumption, giving up use of some consumables for ever etc.); (5) Dan (charity and philanthrophy with compassionate feelings).

Eleven steps taken one after another take the desirous laymen, who has by now prepared himself for moving with steadily advancing spiritual orientation towards the stage of final renunciation and detachment and entering monkhood. The eleven PRATIMAS are Darsana (awakening). Vrata (taking vows, Samayika (Practising meditation, Pasadha (practicing ascetic life for temporary periods, Sachchita-tyag (food restraints). Ratribhakta (sexual restraint), Bramhacharya (Celibacy), Arambha-tyag (leaving profession), Parigraha-tyag (leaving possessions), Anumati-tyag (family detachment) and Uddhista-tyaga (leaving family) and entering ascetic life.

THE JAIN PATH FOR ASCETICS

When a person renounces all worldly ties and is initiated into monkhood, the monk is called sadhu, shraman or muni, and the nun is called sadhvi, shramani or arya. Their renunciation is total in terms of observance of Gunasthanas (stages) particularly 6 to 12 out of the 14 enumerated earlier. They spend their time, energy, intellect and dedication not only for further perfecting their own spiritual awakening, but also inspiring and guiding lay persons
through discourses, discussions, seminars and religious camps in the righteous direction. Among the Jain monks and nuns, there have been all through its history profound scholars, researchers, writers, and poets whose works and commentaries have enriched the interpretation and elucidation of Jain philosophy both in its logical as well as ritual aspects.

Ascetics have to undertake, strictly comply with and remain totally committed to the observance of five Mahavratas (major vows) in thought, conduct and expression. The five vows are:

1. **Ahimsa** - vow of absolute non-violence;
2. **Satya** - vow of absolute truthfulness;
3. **Asteya or Acharyya** - vow of absolute non-stealing;
4. **Bramhacharya** - vow of absolute celibacy;
5. **Aparigraha** - vow of absolute non-attachment

They are the same as provided in the ANUVRAT for lay persons with the important difference that these vows have to be practiced in absolute terms without any compromises. The range, extent and depth of perception and implementation of these vows for monks underline the spiritual intensity of Jain religion. This spiritual intensity has come to be vividly mirrored in the glorious shraman culture and tradition strenuously maintained throughout the long history of Jain religion.

Indeed, shramanic traditions of self-restraint, penance, deep introspection, meditation and contemplation have cast their beneficial impact on practices of Hindu religion, at a time when ritualistic orthodoxy was beginning to dim the compassionate thrust of Hindu philosophy by glorifying violent practices like animal sacrifices. It is also important to note here that the practice of the five major vows is not restricted to their observance by the monks for their own soul purification.

They are expected not to approve or endorse anyone committing sins involving violence, falsehood, stealing and robbing, indulgent
and unrestrained or illegitimate sexual passions and possessiveness exceeding one's legitimate and reasonable needs. Monks and nuns are destined through their prescribed code of conduct to guide and inspire the community. Jain monks do not keep any money ever with them, nor do they control or own any wealth or property, movable or immovable. They limit their necessities to the barest minimum for survival, and go on reducing their range and variety as they go up the ladder towards enlightenment. Jain monks and nuns also follow other special rules of conduct flowing from the practice of major vows. They never consume food or water after sunset or before sunrise. They have to devote daily time for meditation, seeking knowledge and acquiring steadily perfecting self-control and spiritual discipline. There are also specific modalities laid down for them in regard to Ahara (food), Vihar (travel), Vastra (clothing), Kesh-Loch (plucking of hair) and keeping of auxiliaries. These modalities are illustrative of the range and scope of self-denial and soul-centric devotion.

**AHARA**: In the digambar tradition, digambar monks do not keep any utensils for food, not do they go from house to house for collecting food. When they proceed for Ahara, they choose one household from many offerings depending on their intuition, and accept food offered in that household by family members and friends. What is remarkable is that Jain munis accept and eat their food taking it in the palms of their hands folded together. They eat and drink only once a day standing in one position except on the days they observe fast.

In the shvetambar tradition, sadhus and sadhvis go to different households to collect food in small quantities from each household within the limits of self-imposed restrictions and vows. This is called Gochari.

**VIHARA**: Jain monks and nuns always walk bare-footed and do not continuously stay at one place except in the four months of rainy season when they spend their Chaturmas at one place.
usually timed with the observance of the annual Paryushan festival. This provides sustained opportunity of delivering religious discourses to community followers and interpreting to the wider public the spiritual dimensions of the compassionate Jain philosophy. In recent years with Jain business persons, professionals, doctors and engineers settling abroad in Americas, Europe, Africa and elsewhere in large groups, some Jain monks like Acharya Sushil Kumarji broke the tradition and traveled abroad to guide their followers as well as to spread the Jain message of comprehensive non-violence in foreign countries. Now on a regular basis many shvetambar monks and nuns are going abroad on religious missions.

**VASTRA** : Digambar Jain monks are sky-clad. Shvetambar monks wear unstitched or minimally stitched white cotton clothes viz., Cholapattak, Uttariya vastra and Kamli. They also carry a bed sheet and a mat to sit and sleep. Invariably they keep a muhapatti on their mouth to prevent insects getting in. They carry a Rajaharan- a broom of woolen threads to clear insects from where they sit or walk. Digambar monks carry a Morpichchi (broom of peacock feathers). They also carry a kamandal with water for their ablutions.

**KESH-LOCH** : After receiving diksha (initiation into monkhood), hair cannot be cut, but only plucked with fingers twice a year or atleast once a year during Puryushan festival. Kesh-lochan is a painful exercise and is an integral part of the severe austerities practiced by Jain monks.
CHAPTER - 11
PARYUSHAN PARVA

Among the festivals celebrated in Jain religion, Paryushan parva occupies the pride of place. While other festivals are symbolic (Naimittik) occasions, Paryushan parva in a substantive (Nitya) occasion of vital religious significance coming once a year, and Ashtanikas coming periodically three times in a year. The symbolic festivals include celebration of anniversaries of conception (Garbh kalyanak), birth (Janma kalyanak), renunciation (Diksha kalyanak), attaining omniscience (keval Jnana kalyanak), and salvation (Nirvana kalyanak) of the 24 Tirthankars. Shrut Panchami, Akshaya Tritiya, Jin Shashan day are among other symbolic festivals.

By tradition, Paryushan parva is celebrated in Bhadrapad (August-September). The Shvetambar paryushan comes first with duration of eight days from Bhadra Krishna 13 to Bhadra shukla panchami. On the eighth and concluding day Shvetambars observe Samvatsari (day of Forgiveness). On this very day (Bhadra shukla panchami) commences the Digambhar paryushan with a duration of ten days. It is popularly called Dasalakshan Parva. The tenth and the concluding day is Anant Chaturdashi. After an interval of a day comes the Kshamavani (Day of Forgiveness).

Paryushan is a retreat to one's inner-self. All the days of the parva are dedicated to penance, meditation, self-introspection, worship, study of holy scriptures and strict observance of all religious principles governing one's conduct. The word “Paryusha” means ‘awakening’. Paryushan is, thus, a time for spiritual upliftment and soul purification with intense effort to move towards mental peace, tranquility and equanimity. One looks within and tries to correct wrong perceptions and conduct.
Another meaning of Paryushan is to burn all types of karmas.
Paryushan comes during Chaturmas when at each place groups of Jain sadhus and Sadhvis stay for a longer time because of the rainy season. Thus, Chaturmas and more particularly Paryushan provides a valuable opportunity for listening to their sermons as well as their interpretation of holy scriptures, and clearing doubts about principles and practices prescribed in the religion. Paryushan offers an opportunity for complete and unwavering concentration on religion and spirituality, and more particularly observance of ahimsa, apatigraha and anekant as well other ingredients of anuvrat with sincerity and dedication.

**SHWETAMBAR PARYUSHAN**

The eight days of the Paryushan are dedicated to Ahar shuddhi, Sahakar shuddhi, vyapar shuddhi, sanskar shuddhi, aachar shuddhi, vichar shuddhi, vyavahar shuddhi, and atma shuddhi. There is an organized effort to rectify wrong practices and perceptions and take to the right path in all respects ranging from food, thoughts, life values, dealings with others, business practices and above all one’s inner conscience. During these days, one tries voluntarily to control one’s passions, and avoid being egoistic, greedy, cruel, exploitative and violent. One is inspired to strengthen qualities of humility, piety, tolerance, compassion and equanimity.

Fasting is very common and many people fast for all the eight days or one or more days depending on their will power. Many stop their professional or business activities to devote total time to religious pursuits. On all the eight days, special emphasis is placed in the sermons for inner self-criticism and introspection, admission of one’s wrong conduct towards others, seeking forgiveness from others and forgiving them and genuinely repenting for wrong deeds done.

At the temples and Sthanaks, Jain saints recite Kalpa Sutra which contains a detailed account of Mahavir’s life in addition to the
lives of other Tirthankars. On the third day of the Paryushan, the Kalpa Sutra receives very special reverence, and may be ceremonially taken out in a procession. On the fifth day at a special ceremony, the replicas of the 14 dreams of Mahavir’s mother Queen Trishala are displayed and honoured. Shrawaks and Shrawikas are expected to give special attention to activities like Amari Parivartan (spreading the message of Ahimsa; Attham Tapa (fast for three consecutive days, chaitya paripati (visiting the temples and Sthanaks for worship and prayers; Swami Vatasalya (honoring and respecting fellow Jains); and Kshamapana (asking for forgiveness from all by performing Pratikraman.

On the final day namely Samvatsari, Jains perform Samvatsari Pratikramana and ask for forgiveness to family, friends and even foes for any wrongful acts or behavior. Many perform different austerities and penances as per their volition in these eight days. Forgiveness (Kshama) is asked for and given with the following utterance:

*Khameni Savva Jiva, Savve Jiv khamantu Me Mitti me savva bhuueshu, veram majjiham na kenai.*

*I forgive all living beings of the universe
May all the living beings forgive me for my shortcomings
I do not have any animosity towards anybody, and
I have friendship for all living beings.*

**DIGAMBAR PARYUSHAN**

Digambars celebrate Paryushan as DAS LAKSHANA PARVA by emphasizing the following ten cardinal virtues, namely Kshama (forgiveness), Mardava (humility), Arjava (straightforwardness), Shaucha (absence of greed), Satya (truth), Samyam (restraint and self-discipline), Tapa (penance and austerities), Tyag (sacrifice), Akinchan (non-possesiveness. and Bramhacharya (celibacy). In the Jain scriptures, these ten virtues are described as yati dharma- part of 57 ways of stopping the influx of karmas (Samvar).
The ten virtues highlighted during the 10-day Digambar Paryushan are virtually like ten commandments, which if cultivated in thought, conduct and expression would be instrumental in not only helping in one’s soul awakening, but also promote ethical social values as conceived in the compassionate Jain philosophy. Renowned Digambar Jain Acharya Vidyasagarji has observed that all the ten virtues are intertwined and need to be practiced together. They are all equally important, and together constitute the essence of Jain teachings.

As during Shvetambar Paryushan, during Digambar Paryushan also one witnesses intense religiosity in the form of regular reading of or listening to extracts from holy scriptures particularly Bhaktamar Sutra, sermons of saints present during Chaturmas, observance of rituals in elaborate forms of worship, penance through fasts or food restraint in strict conformity with Jain teachings, self-study, Pratikramana, active participation in religious discourses, and undertaking acts of compassion towards other living beings.

Sugandh Dashmi, the fifth day of the Paryushan is a festive occasion when Jain families visit a number of temples to offer scented powder symbolizing spread of fragrance all around in the presence of the idols of Tirthankars. On the 10th and the last day Anant Chaturdashi is celebrated usually with fasting in honor of the birth anniversary of Tirthankar Anantnathji. After the gap of a day comes the Kshamavani. Festival for seeking forgiveness from others for any hurt caused to them by one’s thoughts, conduct or expressions. The day brings to a climax the paramount importance in Jain philosophy of Forgiveness.

It is pertinent to review the significance of the ten virtues highlighted during the Digambar Paryushan as follows:

(1) **Forgiveness (Uttam Kshama)**

Forgiveness, if practiced to perfection, is the most important ingredient for soul purification. Forgiveness promotes tolerance,
forbearance, patience, cordiality, open-heartedness and above all equanimity. It eliminates ego, greed, jealousy, anger and delusions. Thus, it emerges as an invaluable attribute for strengthening the spirit of non-violence not only in an individual, but also permeating it to the society as a whole.

Sincerely given and taken, Kshama is enabling both the forgiver and the forgiven. Mahavir used to say that, “By forgiving, one triumphs over one’s sufferings and hardships.” The emphasis during the entire Paryushan is one of seeking forgiveness from one and all living beings of the universe. Following words are recited during daily Pratikraman ritual as mentioned in Pratikraman Sutra:

Khamia kamavia mai khamavia mai khamaha  
Savvaha jiva nikaya  
Siddhaha sakha aloyena  
Ujja vaira na bhava

I forgive everyone wholeheartedly;  
May every living being be willing to forgive me’  
I call upon the purified and perfect Siddhas  
To witness my declaration that  
I hold no ill-will towards any one in the entire universe.

Samvatsari on the 8th day of Shwetambar Paryushan and Digambar Kshamavani have become unique occasions for solemnly highlighting the cardinal importance of Forgiveness in the Jain concept of comprehensive and active non-violence.

(2) **Humility (Uttam Mardava)**

Jain scriptures extol humility as one of the sheet anchors of religion. Humility calls for giving up ego, false pride in one’s status in family, community or society, in one’s wealth or intellect6 or accomplishments. Humility wins over feelings of hostility, revenge, anger and exploitation.
(3) **Straightforwardness (Uttam Arjava)**

Straightforwardness and transparency in thought, conduct and expression promotes tremendous amount of energy for mutual trust and confidence, reconciliation, and clearing of doubts, suspicions and reservations. It helps in getting rid of deceitful, insulting, unfair and unethical mindset and behavior. Uttam Arjava has been reflected in recent times in the personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Vinoba Bhave.

(4) **Purity (Uttam Shaucha)**

Uttam Shaucha relates itself to both internal as well as external purity in dealings with others without being shackled by false attachments, possessive instincts and unending desires. Purity is achieved through self-restraint and self-discipline.

(5) **Truth (Uttam Satya)**

Truth lies at the heart of spiritual and ethical growth. Scriptures extol truth as Godliness. Acharya Shrivmuni, the head of the Sthanakvasi sect has very thoughtfully observed:

"It is imperative to lead a truthful life. Only speaking the truth is not enough. Truth must permeate our individual and social conscience as its inseparable ingredient. In recent times, Mahatma Gandhi has emerged as a living example of the practitioner of the comprehensive culture of truth."

As a result of the efforts of the Jain delegation of Saints and Scholars comprising twenty and representing all sects to the historic Centennial Session of the Parliament of World’s Religions held in 1993 in Chicago (U.S.A.), the Declaration of Global Ethics included the following words on Truth:

"We must cultivate truthfulness in all our relationships instead of dishonesty, dissembling and opportunism. We must courageously serve the truth"
and we must remain constant and trustworthy, instead of yielding to opportunistic accommodation to life.”

(6) **Self restraint (Uttam Samyam)**

Uttam Samyam envisages both intense restraint and control over one’s senses (Indriyas), as well as Prani Samyam (restraint towards other living beings. Self restraint lies at the root of practising Ahimsa, Aparigraha and Anekant not merely in thought but in conduct and expressions as well.

(7) **Penance (Uttam Tapa)**

Penance cleanses one’s soul, removes impurities and promotes the feeling of bliss. It is a potent weapon for shedding karmic attachments and bondages.

Penance is both internal as well as external. Internal penance takes the form of Prayashchit (repentance) for past misdeeds, sincere and well-focussed self introspection, respecting saints and elders, and engaging in study of scriptures and other holy texts. Internal penance is aimed at moulding one’s mindset, outlook and attitude in the direction of limiting desires, controlling wants, and increasingly engaging in noble deeds for the needy and the deprived in the society.

External penance takes the physical form of controlling one’s body and its wants and desires. This is achieved by undertaking periodic fasts, voluntary restrictions or giving up consumption of some items of food or daily necessities.

(8) **Renunciation (Uttam Tyag)**

For Uttam tyag, the pace has been set by ascetics who after renouncing all worldly attachments endeavour to move up on the ladder of spiritual upliftment which could take them to the final stage of enlightenment by achieving Omniscience.

For the lay persons, the progress towards the ladder of 14 Gunasthanas is slow and steady depending upon limitations of
family and social obligations, and their own preparedness and will power to finally renounce the world. In the meantime, developing an outlook of renunciation enables lay persons to succeed in acquiring self restraint and self discipline of an increasingly high order.

(9) **Non-possession (Uttam Akinchanya)**

The instinct of non-possession, non-attachment and non-possessiveness is at the core of Jain religion. Jain faith inspires its followers to move away from too much clinging to material things of life as well as passions and desires. Acharya Kundakunda observes that even if one has acquired mastery over all holy scriptures, if one has not practiced aparigrahga, one cannot hope to get liberation from the bondage of karmas. The entire emphasis during Purusha is to learn to give up as much as possible and make one’s soul feel lighter and purer. Akinchanya mirrors the realization that in the ultimate analysis, the soul comes alone and leaves the world alone, and all attachments and possessions are left behind.

(10) **Celibacy (Uttam Bramhacharya):**

Observing sexual restraint is a vital part of practicing aparigrahga. Sexual passions tend to enslave not only physically but also mentally and emotionally. Passion makes a soul move away from the oath of rationality and balance, restraint and discipline. Practice of celibacy to whatever extent helps one to control one’s sensual desires and the insatiable appetite for them. Eventually Bramhacharya may appear to be a denial of available sexual pleasures, but it is essentially a step towards a discipline which enables a person to get closer to his soul and at the same time recognize his social responsibilities and obligations. Practice of sexual restraint and discipline goes to make a society more ethically alive, harmonious and value based. It is in this wider interpretation of Bramhacharya that Mahavir added it as the fifth vow both in Mahavrata as well as Anuvrata.
ECTION – IV: 

TEACHINGS OF BHAGWAN MAHAVIR

CHAPTER - 12

AHIMSA - THE SUPREME RELIGION

Jain religion is unique in as much as in its long existence, it has never compromised on the principle and practice of non-violence. While the important role and moral value of Ahimsa has been recognized in almost all religions of the world, it is in the Jain religion alone that Ahimsa has been regarded as the sheet anchor of life’s philosophy both for thought as well as action. In Jain religion, Ahimsa is regarded as the Supreme Religion. Indeed Jainism is Ahimsa and Ahimsa is Jainism.

Jain philosophy does not consider Ahimsa as a mere religious doctrine or principle. Fundamentally it is in consonance with the nature (Vastu Swabhava) of all living beings. The holy text ‘Tattavartha Sutra’ sums it up in the phrase PARASPAROPGRAHA JEEVANAM which means all living beings are interdependent and need to be mutually supportive and to coexist peacefully. YOGASHASTRA describes it as Atmavat Sarva Bhuteshu i.e., look upon others as you would at yourself.

The three As of Jainism viz., Ahimsa, Anekant and Aparigraha constitute an integrated and comprehensive definition of Ahimsa. Ahimsa (non-violence strengthens the autonomy of life of every living being, Anekant (Non-absolutism) strengthens the autonomy of thought of every individual, and Aparigraha (Non-possession) strengthens the interdependence and mutual-supportiveness of all existence. Together these three strengthen the comprehensive culture of non-violence and fortify the foundations of peace and equanimity.
Mahavir observed:

There is nothing so small and subtle as the atom,
nor any element so vast as space;
Similarly, there is no quality of soul
more subtle than non-violence and
No virtue of spirit greater than reverence for all life.

Jaina Yogashastra gives a comprehensive definition of Non-violence:

Reverence for life is the supreme religious teaching,
Non-injury to life is the supreme moral guidance,
Giving freedom from fear to life is the supreme act of giving
Non-violence to life is the supreme renunciation.
Acharya Shubhachandra writes in his memorable work 'JNANARNAVA':

“All the scriptures regard Ahimsa as the core attribute of religion and the contrary as sin. Ahimsa is the fountain spring of all virtues like learning and meditation, compassion and charity, non-attachment, pursuit of truth and ethical conduct.”

For centuries, Jaina teaching of Ahimsa has been passed on from generation to generation as a positive life force legacy equally worthy of all. Niragrinth Pravachan containing account of answers given by Mahavir to his chief disciple, Indrabhuti Gautam says in gatha 18 that “One who regards this life as transient and considers all small and big living beings as like him is the real learned with due restraint.” In essence Jain religion presents in its conception of Ahimsa a truly enlightened perspective of equality of all souls irrespective of differing physical forms of living creatures ranging from human beings to animals and infinitesimal living organisms.

Inherent in it is the concept of love for all of creation. Thus, non-violence is not mere negation or elimination of violence. It is even more a vehicle to promote positive and rational approach and attitude to life in relation to others. Inspired by this philosophy, Mahatma Gandhi used to say:

Keep your thoughts positive and nonviolent
Because your thoughts become your words,
Keep your words positive
Because your words become your habit,
Keep your habits positive
Because your habits become your behavior,
Keep your behavior positive
Because your behavior becomes your destiny
Bhagwati Sar quotes Mahavir preaching that

"Unless we live with non-violence and reverence for all living beings in our hearts, all our humaneness and acts of goodness, all our vows, virtues and knowledge, all our practices to give up greed and acquisitiveness are fruitless."

In Dasavaikalika scripture, Ahimsa has been defined as establishing unity with all the living beings without any kind of distinction. Mahavir said,

"I have friendship with all the living beings; I have no revenge nor enmity with anybody. molest no one, not even your own soul."

Thus, the Jain concept of Ahimsa covers both "PARA-HIMSA" (violence towards others) as well as "SVA-HIMSA" (violence towards oneself). The reasoning is that if you practice non-violence towards others, it is in the first place for your own good, as it would make you a nobler human being full of large-heartedness, compassion and generosity. Scriptures say that "He who negates or ignores, or harms other beings, negates, ignores and harms one's own self". In essence, Ahimsa is a true and unconditional surrender of our own identity for the welfare of others.

In his sermons, Mahavir always insisted upon the observance of non-violence in thought, expression and action both at the level of the individual as well as the society. He envisaged its observance not only among humans, but on the wider plane among all life on the planet and the elements of nature that nurture and sustain it. Jain religion regards that both scientifically as well as spiritually all life on earth is harmoniously interdependent. There is a common organic chemistry, a shared evolutionary heritage and a common destiny passing through the cycle of birth and death towards eventual emancipation. Jain scriptures have vividly stressed on how and why Nature's bounty such as soil, forests, trees, minerals and water should be used judiciously "as the bee sucks honey in the blossom of a tree without hurting the blossom".
Mahavir’s greatest contribution was to articulate with great clarity, comprehension and thrust the wide-ranging vision and definition of Ahimsa. He transformed the concepts of Oneness of all Creation and the doctrine of LIVE AND LET LIVE into compassionate life ethics. Integrating practice of non-violence simultaneously in thought, expression and action was a challenging task both for the individuals as well as the society as a whole. Mahavir felt that without such an integrated approach, the culture of non-violence would not become all pervasive. American Jain scholar Michael Tobias has very aptly observed that in no other religion, has thought and action been so intricately merged into a unity of behavior.

It may perhaps be easier to curb physical violence (DRAVYA HIMSA), but it is far more difficult to control violent instincts, thoughts, intentions and expressions (BHAVA HIMSA). Anger, pride, ego, vanity, deceit, greed, suspicion, fear, revenge, cruelty, malice, hatred, hostility are all constituents of violence in attitude, thought and behavior. By contrast, non-violence is equated with attributes such as peace, compassion, piety, sympathy, harmony, faith, fraternity, fearlessness, forgiveness, tolerance, generosity and mutual supportiveness. In one word, Jain concept of Ahimsa represents all virtues and the concept of violence all the vices. It boils down to a choice between the good and the evil. Jainism has been rightly described as a “philosophy of biological ethics and spiritual ecology”.

Deeply influenced and inspired by Mahavir’s teachings, Mahatma Gandhi came to believe in the courage and potency of non-violence. He observed:

“No religion of the world has explained the principle of non-violence as deeply and systematically in its applicability to life as Jainism.”
In a similar vein, renowned American scientist Carl Sagan writes:

“There is no Right to Life recognised in any society on earth today nor has there been at any time with a few rare exceptions such as the JAINS of India.”

Mahavir lucidly explained the rationale of non-violence with a simple logic by saying:

“In happiness and suffering, in joy or grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self. We should, therefore, refrain from inflicting upon others such injury, suffering or pain as would be undesirable or unbearable if inflicted upon ourselves. We must endeavor to develop equanimity towards all living beings and elements of nature. I cannot take what I cannot give back. No one can give back life. Therefore, no one should take it.”

Acaranga sutra quotes the constant refrain in the teachings of all the Tirthankars:

“All breathing, existing, living sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented nor driven away.”

In order to understand and realize the true essence of Ahimsa, Jain scriptures have in-depth analysed the entire anatomy of Himsa or violence. Himsa can be internal as well as external. The actual act of harming, hurting or killing is DRAVYA HIMSA; while the intention to do so is BHAVA HIMSA. There could be, broadly, four forms of violence arising out of this classification. These are (1) Both intention and act of killing, (2) Only intention, but no killing or physical hurting, (3) Only act of killing minus intention to kill and (4) Neither the act of killing nor the intention to do so.
From this it should be clear that violence in the first place arises in one's mind as a negative ego-centric emotion or feeling of revenge and then gets translated into expression and action. Violence takes the worst form when the intention gets combined by the actual act of hurting or killing. Only violent intention is also not desirable even though it may not be accompanied by violent action. It is so because it betrays an attitude of ill-intention which creates disharmony and sows the seeds of violent behavior. Without intention to kill or hurt, if violent action occurs, it may be accidental like a patient dying in an operation performed by the doctor with the noble intention of curing him. When there is both no intention as well as no action to hurt or kill, it is a very aggereable situation away from violence.

Violence can, thus, be (1) Intentional (Sankalpi), (2) At work (Udyogi), (3) Initial in process of construction (Aarambhi), and (4) In defence (Suraksha). Intentional violence is worst. At work, it may be unavoidable type, like a tiller tilling the land and in the process several life forms getting destroyed. However, morality requires it to be kept to the minimum unavoidable. In defence violence is justified, but here again effort should be to keep it within limits for achieving one's aim of defence. The sum and substance of the detailed exposition of different forms of violence is to guide the people to restrict violence to the bare minimum, and never have the intention to indulge in it. If the culture of non-violence and a compassionate attitude gets developed in an individual or society, violence shrinks.

In order to provide a solid and substantive base to strengthening non-violence culture, Jain religion provides scientific biological facts about all living organisms in order to work for their due protection. Besides humans, animals, birds and plants, there are one-sensed living elements like earth bodies (Prithvikaya). Air bodies (Vayukaya), (3) Water bodies (Jalkaya). Fire bodies (Agnikaya) and Vegetations (Vanaspatikaya). There are also a variety of two-sensed, three-sensed, four-sensed and five-sensed creatures.
The Jain Pratikraman Sutra prescribing the ritual of Pratikraman for seeking forgiveness from all living beings very vividly illustrates the depth of the Jain philosophy of Ahimsa:

"While walking, I may have pained living beings; while coming and going, I may have crushed living beings such as live animate seeds, green grass and plants; I may have crushed beings living in the dew, in the anthills, in the living moss and in water particles; the live earth, web of spiders, I may have harassed or crushed; Whomsoever may have been crushed, tormented or hurt by me: beings with only one sense, the sense of touch (such as earth, water, fire, air and plant life); beings with only the two senses of touch and taste (like worms and shell creatures); beings with only the three senses of touch, taste and smell (like ants); beings with the four senses of touch, taste, smell and sight (such as bees and other insects); beings with all five senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing like fish, mammals, animals of all kinds and human beings;

Whomsoever may have been caused to collide accidentally with one another; whomsoever may have been tormented, whomsoever may have been caused pain, to whomsoever I may have given agony; whomsoever I may have frightened; whomsoever I may have shifted causing hurt from one place to another; whomsoever I may have separated from life and made lifeless;

May all of you who suffered because of me forgive me. May the ignorance in me that caused pain to other beings cease and be brought to an end; May all be forgiven and forgotten."

Ahimsa is the top most vrata (oath) among the five Mahavrata for the ascetics and the five Anuvratas for the lay persons. Ascetics have to follow most rigorously the discipline of avoiding even the minutest kind of dravya himsa in the manner of living, traveling, eating and talking and communicating and conducting their other activities. In their case Bhav-himsa avoidance is also of strictest standards and parameters.
It will be seen that on the one hand Ahimsa implies negation or minimization of violence, on the other hand on the positive side, Ahimsa mirrors piety, compassion, sympathy and love towards all. Secondly Ahimsa in Mahavir’s teachings is also ‘active ahimsa’. Far from being a bookish doctrine, it needs to be pursued in an integrated and consistent manner in thought, expression as well as conduct. Integrated approach creates the non-violent mindset and makes the individual as well as the society pursue the path of equanimity and harmony.

Acharya Mahapragyaji has put this in the wider perspective as follows:

"The world needs a healthy society and a healthy individual. As long as violence remains a medium for the solution of problems, the society and the individual will remain sick with distorted vision and misguided perceptions."
CHAPTER - 13
APARIGRAHA
(NON-POSSESSION AND NON-ATTACHMENT)

In Jainism, Aparigraha ranks in importance next only to Ahimsa, and is integrally related to it. Growth of attachment and possessiveness in a human soul is the beginning of violence. By the same token, the practice of aparigraha is the beginning of the development of the culture of non-violence. Aparigraha, inbuilt in the spirit of renunciation paves the way towards lasting happiness and genuine contentment. Mahavir explained this to his chief disciple, Indrabhuti Gautam in the following very meaningful manner:

One who has conquered unhappiness
Gains freedom from attachment
One who has conquered attachment
Gains freedom from desires
One who has conquered desires
Becomes full of equanimity

Non-possession implies non-attachment as well as a mindset of non-possessiveness. Mahatma Gandhi used to say

“Live by need and not by greed. Take from the mother Earth what you need. The Earth will then be able to serve and support living creatures longer.”

Thus, non-possessiveness and non-acquisitiveness are vitally linked to the concept of ‘caring and sharing’, which is also at the root of non-violence.

In the broader perspective, Aparigraha represents a highly egalitarian and ethical aspect of Ahimsa. Material objects may
be necessary for a person’s living, but it is not right to develop excessive attachment towards them. Owning a material object may not be as much of parigraha as one’s covetousness for it. Unethical needs, excessive or wasteful consumption, exploitative use of resources either by an individual or the society lead to injustice and violence. Thus violence and unjust exploitation arise from an attitude of excessive possessiveness. Mahavir’s message is

“Any person who accumulates more than his legitimate requirements commits a theft on society”.

Renowned philosopher Arnold Toynbee has said:

‘Many a time the thought has occurred to my mind that some day the civilization could come to an end not by an atom bomb or famine, but by man’s loss of self-control, his unrestrained and continually multiplying wants, exploitative and abusive harnessing of resources and wasteful and often over-consumption. Such are the tensions of our growingly artificial and superficial civilization.’

Aparigraha acts as a radar for non-violence since it inculcates self-restraint, self-control and self-discipline, controls greed, promotes virtues of charity and generosity as well as piety and compassion towards others. Aparigraha helps in moulding one’s life style within well-defined limits (Maryada) and restraint (Samyam). It strengthens the concept of mutual supportiveness enshrined in Jain religion as PARASPAROPAGRAHO JEEVANAM. Aparigraha provides a rational, objective and equitable foundation for the practice of Ahimsa. Aparigraha provides strength to the philosophy of “give more and take less”. Both in individual as well as community life this culture has the potential of bringing true contentment and happiness.
Acharya Haribhadra observes in ‘Upadesa Tarangini 1/8 :

‘A person cannot be liberated on grounds of being a Digambar or a Shvetambar, by belonging to a particular sect or by adherence to any particular logic or thought attribute. A person attains emancipation only if he frees himself from the clutches of attachment and passions.’

For ascetics taking to the renunciation of all worldly ties, Aparigraha like Ahimsa is a MAHAVRAT (major oath). Its practice is very rigorous and demanding in order to wean them away totally from materialistic attachments and attractions. They have to practice Aparigraha not piecemeal but in entirety in thoughts and perceptions as well as conduct and practice. They have no possessions, no permanent abode, no monetary dealings. Their apparel is limited to two pieces of unstitched cloth for shvetambar monks and none for Digambar monks. They have to travel on foot only. They cannot stay long at one place except for four months of rainy season. This is called Chaturmas during which they preach religion to the devotees and strengthen religiousness in them. They depend for their food on Ahara given by devotees.

Thus, even rigorous aparigraha for the monks does not necessarily require them to become hermits and retire to mountains. Even after becoming Tirthankar, Mahavir moved among the people for 30 years arousing spiritual awakening in them and showing them the enlightened path of knowledge, perception and conduct.

On the other hand for lay persons, Jain religion defines Aparigraha in a more flexible manner. The vow of aparigraha as an Anuvrat seeks limitation of possession (Parigraha Parimana), and control over consumption (Bhogopbhog Parimana). The degree and extent of non-attachment would depend on how far one is prepared to proceed in distancing oneself from attachment to property and material elements as well as restraining oneself from succumbing to endless desires and wants.
Bhagwan Parshwanath, Jain Temple, Dilwara, Mount Abu
For lay persons, the concept of aparigraha is not to suffer from shortages or unreasonable denial of one’s legitimate needs appropriate to one’s station in life, but to develop the spirit of detachment from unrestrained desires and accumulative outlook. Renunciation is not measured by the quantum of one’s possessions. It is determined by the attitude of dispossessing and detachment towards one’s possessions.

Mahavir laid down the standards governing desires and prescribed the limits of consumption. As detailed in previous chapters, the five anuvratas are abstinence from unnecessary violence, abstinence from such acts of falsehood as may lead to the destruction of any property, taking away things not given, illicit sexual relationship, and acquiring wealth and other possessions beyond a limit.

The seven supplementary vows are refraining from movement beyond a limited area, restricting movement to an even more limited area, refraining from wanton destruction of the environment by thought, word or deed, keeping aloof from sinful conduct for a set period of time, fasting on sacred days, not eating after sunset, limiting the use of consumable and non-consumable goods, observing special restrictions at secluded places and offerings to wandering ascetics.

Proceeding on the path of Aparigraha needs tremendous restraint and formidable will-power. The great Jain sage Kundakundacharya observes in SAMAYA SAAR:

“Howsoever much you might consume, the urge and craving for more never leaves you, much like the insect which goes on sucking contaminated blood till it dies.”

Swami Samantabhadra writes in the Jain holy text “Ratnakarand Shrawakachar”:

“Just as the fire is never satisfied with any quantity of wood,”
Just as the ocean is never content even with the waters of thousands of rivers, In the same way human beings never feel satiated with the satisfaction of their wants”.

Jain religion divides parigraha broadly into external and internal. External attachment (Dravya Prigraha) refers to possession of land, property, building, wealth, ornaments, industrial establishments, vehicles, pet animals and such other goods and services beyond a judicious limit. Attributes like lust and passion, greed, jealousy, anger, ego, malicious intent, deceit, betrayal and various kinds of indulgence come under internal or Bhav Parigraha. Jain scriptures repeatedly emphasise that it is not enough to renounce the use of any item or to limit its consumption. Aparigraha demands that one should give up the feeling of wanting it or craving for it.

In Jain philosophy, Parigraha has been classified under three major heads, namely (1) Karmic bondages (Karma Upadhi), (2) Physical bondages (Sharir Upadhi), and (3) possessiveness of material things and accumulative urges (Bhandopkaran Upadhi). The process of practicing non-attachment starts from detachment from material pleasures, commodities and services, and the mindset of accumulation of wealth.

The next stage is realization that while the soul is eternal, the body is perishable and transien. Hence one should not ignore one’s soul purification by getting entangled in physical comforts and sensuous pleasures. The third stage is moving on to the Jain spiritual path of self-realization and soul awakening in order to liberate oneself from the schackles of Karmas. Karmic bondages, thus, constitute the most basic and challenging attachment.

Jain religion lays down 12 types of penance in order to develop required self-restraint for aparigraha. Six internal penance comprise of developing qualities of repentance, humility, compassion, self-introspection, meditation and intuitive non-
acquisitiveness. Six external penance are periodic fasting, eating below appetite, giving up consumption of some items of food, clothing, living comforts either completely or limiting their quantity, regular devotion to religious activities and facing suffering or disability with equanimity and without tension.

Developing the instincts and practice of generosity and charity also promotes the mind-set of non-possessiveness. Charity may take the form of AHAR (giving food to the needy), AUSHADHI (distributing medicines to the needy), GYAN (impacting knowledge to others), and ABHAYA (refuge and protection to the deserving). Tatwartha Sutra says that charity lies in helping others in a self-less manner without expecting anything in return. Such acts undertaken voluntarily and with pleasure tend to purify one’s soul as well as create goodwill, fellow-feeling and fraternity in the society. Consistent with this concept, Gandhiji enunciated for the rich classes the Trusteeship principle and exhorted them to share their wealth for the welfare of the poor.

 Practiced with strong will power and enthusiastic resolve, aparigraha brings tremendous soul-satisfaction and peace of mind, strengthens one’s self-confidence, and builds invaluable inner reserve of strength to withstand crisis situations. Thus, aparigraha-inspired charity or generosity is not only helpful to the recipient, but in the first place rejuvenating and joyous for the donor by bringing contentment to him. Symbolising large-heartedness, aparigraha promotes social harmony and mutual supportiveness in the society.

Basically inspired by the philosophy of Aparigraha, Jain community in India as well as now abroad has emerged in the front ranks of philanthropists with exemplary record of helping the poor and the needy in the fields of education, healthcare, disaster relief and social welfare. The psychology of aparigraha is not one of feeling forced to do it as a religious ritual, or a kind of suffering imposed, but of a task undertaken with enthusiasm, willingness, conviction, delight and positive orientation.

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A Portrait of Jain Religion
CHAPTER - 14
ANEKANT
(RELATIVITY IN THINKING)

The Jain philosophical concept of ANEKANT has vitally enriched the wide-ranging and comprehensive perception of Ahimsa in thought, expression and deed. Anekant is the doctrine of relativity in thinking (Syadvad) that brings about appreciation of the multifaceted nature of truth. Truth is multidimensional with an inbuilt coexistence of opposites—each dimension being as plausible as another. It is with relation to other factors like time, place and context that one dimension gains predominance over another. A person can be a son, father, husband, and uncle at the same time. The truth of his being a father will be relevant to his son only, while that of being a husband only to his wife.

Thus, Anekant promotes sympathetic understanding and harmonization of related interpretations of facts, situations and events. Indeed, the modern theory of relativity is based on the same assumptions as the doctrine of Anekant. It rejects any absolutist view of any animate or inanimate substance or situation. Absolutism projects a totally one-sided view, and ignores the fact of existence of any other attributes, facets or realities. Anekant approach makes for a open-minded liberal interpretation of different facets, and opens the door for finding synthesis, arriving at the core truth nature and rejecting the false or distorted versions.

Jain religious text Dwatrishatika beautifully portrays the attribute of synthesis inherent in Anekant, the doctrine of manifold aspects

"Just as many rivers flow into and join the ocean, similarly variety of views can be seen in an integrated perspective in the doctrine of Anekant which provides a total picture of the nature of any substance (vastu swabhava)."
In the ego-centric world of today, situations and problems are quite often perceived, viewed and assessed with a one track absolutist approach. It is, however, important to realize that there is nothing like an absolute truth as such. Truth and reality to be clearly understood have to be seen in a relative context in all its multifold aspects and from multiple angels. An absolutist approach tends to ignore overall reality in its comprehensive setting. The inherent nature of truth about any person, situation, commodity or problem could well have manifold aspects of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Anekant approach seeks resolution of such contradictions in order to determine the core and fundamental element of truth.

For instance in the life history of a tree, one witnesses first growth from seed to sprout, and then to a little plant and from it to a growing tree. At every stage there is a change of structure as well as change of functioning of particular parts. Thus there is continuous change in the same organism, which is otherwise unchanging and permanent. In the growth of a tree, one observes both identity as well as difference. Forgetting or ignoring the multi-dimensional aspect of reality and attempting to describe it piecemeal and absolutist isolation would end in a similar confusion as the description of an elephant by five blind men, each describing the animal from his own point of contact and thus distorting the reality.

Anekant maintains that each individual entity has its unique perception of the world which is a mixture of truth and ignorance. All perceptions may be valid in their place, but may be incomplete, prejudiced, subjective and inadequate view of the reality. The approach of Anekant projects awareness at all times of the multidimensional relativity. It seeks interpretation of a fact or a situation as seen from various related angles. The objective is to initiate an effort to understand and harmonize different points of view in order to bring to surface the core truth from among them.

Thus, it will be seen that Jain metaphysics has got a more rational
view in its approach to reality than other schools of thought that obstinately cling to one particular aspect only. It rejects EKANTAVAD or a dogmatic assertion of one’s own prejudice and an effort to squeeze truth into a preconceived readymade framework. Seen in this light, Anekant is of paramount value in self-evolution, because it stimulates synthesis (Samanvaya), equanimity (Somyata), sympathy (Sahanubhuti), cooperation (Sahayog), and tolerance (Sahishnuta).

Anekant helps in shaping thought orientation not only in terms of self-salvation but also towards creating a collective conscience of society for peace, harmony, compassion, piety, fearlessness, fraternity, equity and justice. Tatwartha Sutra affirms this by saying that

“Souls influence each other through service which may be favourable or unfavourable, beneficial or harmful. They create a common environment and live together in weal and woe.”

Anekantvad or Syadvada rationalizes human thought and behavior and equips it with a spirit of reconciliation, mutual understanding and accommodation. In a deeper sense it elevates the individual self to the realm of the universal or the cosmic self. If anekant technique is used to untangle the complex social, religious, cultural, economic or political strategies, the world could hope to be free from the tense and bitter confrontational atmosphere. Such is the potential power of this principle of omni-perception.

Renowned Jain saint Mahaprayagyaji has described Anekant as the practical philosophy emanating from enlightened and rational perception (Samyak Gyan). Dogmatic views or arrogant assertions have resulted in creating most world problems. Anekant is the bridge that will take us beyond these problems and crisis situations. Acharya Sushilkumarji has analysed the significance of Anekant in terms of its being a unique tool that prevents distortion or falsification of truth, promotes liberal, conciliatory and yet ethically correct environment in the society, rejects blind
beliefs, encourages objective assessment, strengthens soul energy and self-confidence as well as self-restraint.

Bhagwan Mahavir put the utmost focus on the philosophy of anekant for providing root support to the Dharma of Ahimsa. In his time he came face to face with as many as 363 differences of interpretation of religion. There was growing disillusionment with the cult of violence which had penetrated Hindu religious rituals and customs. Several reformist initiatives came up to counter this trend and to reassert the compassionate nature of spirituality. Jainism and Buddhism were the two most prominent religions that gave reformist orientation to their teachings, but avoiding confrontation and hostility, and persuasively pursuing their mission in a logical yet conciliatory manner. The approach of Anekant made their mission rational, objective and convincing.

In a very thoughtful observation, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, former President of India once said that the Jain philosophy of Anekant had richly contributed to the blossoming of the concept of “unity in diversity” in India’s culture. The spirit of cultural pluralism was also strengthened thanks to the spirit of tolerance promoted by the approach of anekant. Dr. Sharma also saw great possibilities of strengthening the functioning of parliamentary democracy by bringing to bear in an effective and persuasive manner the anekant approach of reconciliation and accommodation between the ruling party and the opposition. In the present times with fundamentalist forces raising their head, it is important to promote the spirit of anekant in all spheres of life.

A poet has put it very succinctly:

“There is something bad in the best of us;
There is something good in the worst of us;
It beholds us to find out without prejudice or fuss;
The best that exists in all of us”.

charm
Chapter - 15

Vegetarianism - The Jain Tradition

Vegetarianism is a unique Jain tradition since it is regarded as a very vital element of the practice of active non-violence and an integral part of Jain ethics. It has become a way of life and basic culture for Jains. Jains have been the leading exponents of vegetarianism in India. Jain communities settled abroad now are also actively propagating it.

In the last 50 years or so, the cult of vegetarianism is gaining ground in the growingly ecologically conscious western world both on grounds of health and nutrition as well as on grounds of compassion for other living beings. A study made in the Cornell University has revealed that there are 7 million vegetarians in U.S.A.

Jain holy scripture Acaraanga Sutra says:

"All breathing, existing, living sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away. This is pure unchangeable eternal law."

Far from being a food habit, vegetarianism is linked to human compassion and kindness towards other living beings in the spirit of mutual supportiveness. Jain teachings stress that spiritually violence towards others is violence towards oneself. Do not kill or hurt others to survive and live. Nature provides enough for all of us to share and prosper without hurting, exploiting, abusing or slaughtering animals, birds and other living beings - big or small. They may be voiceless and defenceless, but have souls and sensitivities flowing from it like the humans.
Lord Mahavir observed more than 2500 years ago:

“*He who looks upon
The creatures of the earth, big and small
As his own self
Comprehends this immense world
Among the careless, he who restrains his self
Is enlightened.*”

“The instinct of self preservation is universal.
Every animate being wants to live and avoid untimely death. Nobody likes suffering. Therefore, do not inflict suffering on anybody. This is non-violence. This is equality.”

In principled terms, vegetarianism preached and practised by the Jain community symbolizes the recognition of “the right to life for all living beings” It is not enough to talk about human life or human rights alone. It is equally important to talk about prevention of cruelty to birds and beasts, to heal their wounds and to cure their diseases. Far more important is not to wipe them out of existence, not to cut short their life span prematurely, and not to eat their dead flesh for one’s sustenance. Famous playwright George Bernard Shaw, a vegetarian himself has put it in memorable words:

“I AM A HUMAN BEING AND NOT A GRAVEYARD FOR DEAD ANIMALS”

Charles Darwin observed :

‘Sympathy for the lowest animals is one of the noblest virtues with which a man is endowed’

Leo Tolstoy has written:

‘Thou shall not kill’ does not apply to murder of one’s own kind only, but to all living beings and the commandment was inscribed in the human breast long before it was proclaimed from Sinai.
Jain holy text “Purushartha Siddhupai written by Acharya Amritchandra says:

“Meat cannot be available without killing the animals. Hence for a meat eater, violence becomes necessary. Although it may be true that meat can be taken from naturally-dead animals, but in fact in that dead meat also there are innumerable living elements- which when killed and eaten generate violence. Any one who touches and eats any kind of raw or cooked meat causes violent injury to many living elements.”

An American lady converted to vegetarianism under Jain inspiration writes:

“I have come to realize that for me and my family, the vegetarian way of life is not only removing ourselves from supporting the machines of violence and the mentality of callousness towards helpless creatures, but it has also been able to give us a new and fresh outlook on life. I feel one with creation. I feel a deep kinship with the beings with whom I share this planet. I see them as energies, conscious, living, growing evolving energies in a myriad of different forms. They are as much my brothers and sisters as the downtrodden, persecuted, suffering humans.”

Jain concept of vegetarianism also prohibits eating of even root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, onion, garlic or honey sucked from bees There is constant emphasis also on eating fresh food as well as properly filtered and/or boiled water. Jains also do not eat after sunset. The spread of vegetarianism in the western world in recent years has also witnessed the emergence of a strong VEGAN MOVEMENT, which prohibits consumption of milk and milk products both on grounds of avoiding cruelty to cows as well as on health grounds.
It has been established now by Vegan movement protagonists that for producing more milk, cows are kept pregnant continually. 70 to 80 per cent of baby calves are slaughtered within six months by Veal industry or within five years by beef industry. Mother cows are being slaughtered after only five years of their fertile life as against their average life expectancy of 15 years. Nearly 130,000 cattle and 7000 calves are being slaughtered every day.

The practice of vegetarianism by Jains is also an integral part of highly disciplined restraint (Ahar achar and ahar shuddhi) in food consumption. Jain scriptures lay down clear guidelines for avoiding over-consumption as well as eating below one's appetite, observing periodic fasts, giving up or restricting consumption of certain food items, eating food cooked in a healthy and clean ambiance, eating fresh food items and avoiding junk food, stale food and fat-rich food.

On nutritional grounds also, vegetarian food is gaining popularity. Cornell University studies have shown that wisely chosen vegetarian diet is fully nutritional. Those who ate the large quantity of protein from animal sources were found to have the highest rates of heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

Jain religion puts considerable emphasis on the emotional and ethical perspective. Human beings detest with revulsion at the very thought of eating human flesh. Cannibals are regarded barbaric and inhuman. Then how it is that eating animal flesh does not raise the same sensitivities. It only reflects exploitative, distorted and illogical greed and vanity of human beings. It is also the subtle desensitization that consumerism, taste buds, and not wanting to know is covering the non-vegetarian world.

One also needs to pause and think about the ordeal of the animals being slaughtered in slaughter houses, howsoever modern and equipped,. The intense feeling of horror, anger, hurt, pain and suffering which goes into the freshly dead meat goes to shape the emotional fibers of meat eaters, and develops in them the psychology of callousness, anger, revenge, hate, disgust and
intolerance. “Ogonoyok”, a Russian magazine published a research paper highlighting that over 70 per cent of a group of violent and hardened criminals had as children burnt, hanged or stabbed domestic animals. A study of 17000 men and women conducted showed that in U.S.A. and Finland highest deaths were due to high consumption of meat products.

Jain community in India has mounted a big campaign for the closure of slaughter houses and banning of the export of meat. Renowned Digambar Jain Acharya Vidyasagarji has been a strong advocate and has urged Jains and others ton give up use of leather items like shoes, purses, belts, suitcases etc. He has emphasized that Jeev Daya (compassion for animals) also includes ‘Jeeva Raksha’ (protection of animals from being killed).

What lends greater urgency to propagate vegetarianism is the fact that in western countries, animal are being bred and brought up only for being killed to provide food for the non-vegetarians. This flourishing industry of ‘animal farms’ has totally ignored that animals have also souls, sensitivities and emotions. A study done in U.S.A. has also shown that there is much greater drain on natural resources, because to produce a single pound of meat takes on an average 2500 gallons of water- as much as a typical family uses in a month. Rice takes more water than any other grain, but even rice requires only one-tenth as much water per pound of production of meat. One acre of land can grow 20,000 pounds of potatoes, but if it were to be directed to produce cattle feeds, it can produce only about 165 pounds of beef. A cow takes in 16 kgs of food grains to produce one kilogram of beef.

In this age of increasing pressure of population on limited food resources, it is alarming that over 70 percent of the food grains produced in U.S.A. are consumed by pigs and cows for producing meat for human consumption. In a very revealing article in Economic Times (India) in the month of May, 2008. Mr. Arun Firodia has pointed out that an average American eats 125 kgs of meat every year and all Americans consume in all 35 million
tonnes of meat annually. An average Chinese consumes 70 kgs of meat annually. All Chinese put together consume 100 million tonnes of meat annually.

In India, the per capita consumption of meat is presently around 3 kgs, and overall annually one million tonnes of meat is consumed. This figure is steadily rising with standard of living going up particularly in affluent classes of society. This calls for an immediate and well-sustained plan to ensure that vegetarianism does not get a sharp setback in India. Indeed world meat consumption has surged five-fold in the last 50 years forcing diversion of food grains to feed the animals. Little wonder that the demand for food grains is racing ahead of supply of food grains and global prices are rising.

This critical situation underlines the need to strengthen the movement for vegetarianism. Not only in terms of ethics and piety, but on sound economic grounds, it is imperative to drastically reduce consumption of meat and take to increasingly vegetarian and fruit diet. If humans were to directly consume grains rather than cycle them through animals to eat their meat, there would be enough to feed the world and there would be no food shortage.

Jain religion also highlights the environmental perspective of vegetarianism. Wiping out of a large number of species at the rate of over 1000 species a year now threatens the global life system pattern of interdependent and mutually supportive growth. Rapid and reckless deforestation all over the world has led to adverse climatic change. Jain philosophy recognizes that trees are also living elements and have souls—even with limited sensitivities. Protecting vibrant natural flora and fauna is an integral part of the Jain non-violence culture.

Jain experience has been that vegetarianism strengthens the moral and ethical fiber and reinforces qualities of tolerance, piety and kind-heartedness. It is simultaneously nourishing for the body as well as tonic for the soul. It becomes an element in the spiritual
upliftment of human beings while serving to satisfy their appetite as well as taste buds.

Vegetarianism as the Jain perception recognizes that we need to avoid the misery we inflict on helpless sentient beings eventually slackens and distorts human evolution, as all life on this planet is closely intertwined and interdependent in a harmonious divine balance. Jains regard vegetarianism as a celebration of communion with all forms of life on our planet.
CHAPTER - 16

CONCLUSION : SONG OF THE SOUL

I have endeavored to present in the four sections of this book a comprehensive portrait of Jain religion with interlinked information and analysis of Jain philosophy, doctrines, rituals, practices and beliefs. The presentation has been made keeping in view the growing universal relevance particularly in contemporary times of the fundamental tenets of Jain religion, namely Ahimsa, Aparigraha and Anekant. Together they have come to define the Jain concept of translating spirituality into day-to-day art of ethical living.

In its core essence, Jain religion, is a Song of the Soul that inspires you, guides you, persuades you to pursue spirituality both in thought and practice. It provides a recipe for an ethically and morally satisfying life in the present human incarnation. At the same time, it is a preparation for eventual emancipation from the eternal cycle of birth and death, pain and pleasure. This has come to be reflected very vividly, and in an enchantingly compact manner in 'MERI BHAVNA' a widely popular and frequently recited poem-prayer written in Hindi language in the early part of the twentieth century by Pandit Jugal Kishore “Yug Veer”. The 11 stanzas express the yearnings of the soul to rise higher in the spiritual and ethical realms. This Song of the Soul, therefore, depicts succinctly the portrait of Jain religion presented by me in this book.

Hence, I have translated it into English and the same is being presented as the Conclusion of this book together with its original version in Hindi.
SONG OF THE SOUL (MERI BHAVNA)

One who has risen beyond Earthly bonds, ill feeling and passion
One who has shown to all living beings
The path to salvation
Call him Mahavir Jin or Buddha
Haribar or Brahma
Or a soul attaining emancipation
Let my mind dwell deep within
Absorbed in deep devotion to him

Wise saints succeed in resisting
All material temptations
Inspired by equanimity
They constantly pursue promotion
Welfare of all without distinction
They engage in selfless arduous penance
Without any hesitation
Such saints succeed in overcoming Worlds multiple sorrows burden

May I always be in their noble company
May they always be in my contemplation
May I seek from their life pattern
Constant motivation and inspiration
May I not hurt any living beings
May I never utter a lie
May I not be tempted by others wealth or women
May I be content with
The nectar of satisfaction

Jisme raga-dwesh kamadik jeete
Sab jag jan liya
Sab jeevon ko mokshamarg ka
nispraha ho upadesh diya
Buddha, Veera, Jina, Harihar.
Brahma
Ya usko swadhin kaho
Bhaktibhav se prerit ho
Yah chitta usi men leen raho

Vishyon ki ashha nahin jinke
Samya bhav dhan rakhte hain
Nija-para ke hita-sadhana men jo
Nish-din tatpar rahte hain
Svartha-tyaga ki kathin tapasya
Bina khed jo karte hain
Aise jnani sadhu jagat ke
Dukha-samooha ko harte hain.

Rahe sada satsang unhin ka
Dhyana unika nitya rahe
Unki jaisi charya men yeh
Chitta sada anurakta rahe
Nahin sahaun kisi jiva ko
Jhoot kabhi nahin kaha karun
Para-dhan vanita par na lubhaun
Santoshamrit piya karoona.
SONG OF THE SOUL (MERI BHAVNA)

- 4 -

Let me not harbour
Any egoistic pretensions
Or towards others anger
manifestation
Let me not be jealous of
Others’ success or elevation
Natural and truthful behaviour
Be my mental orientation
Doing a good turn to others
Be my life’s mission

- 5 -

Let me be to all living beings
Constantly of friendly inclination
For the deprived and the distressed
Let my heart be
The fountain spring of compassion
For the bad, wicked and deprived
Let me not have any contempt
emotion
With equanimity towards them
Let there be my attitude
transformation

- 6 -

Encountering virtuous persons
Let my heart be filled
With loving affection
Let me feel happy and content
Serving them to satisfaction
Let me never be ungrateful
Nor indulge in recrimination
Ignoring failings of others.
Let me pick up their good traits for
inculcation

- 5 -

Ahankar ka bhav na rakhkun
Nahin kisi par krodh karoona
Dekh doosron ki badhti ko
Kabhi na Irshya-bhav dharoon
Rahe bhavana aisi meri
Sarala, satya vyavhara karoona
Bane jahan tak es jeevan men
Auron ka upakar karoona

- 6 -

Maitri bhav jagat men mera
Sab jeevon par nitya rahe
Deen-dukhi jeevon par mere
Ur se karuna srota bahe
Durjan, kruka, kumarga-raton par
Kshobha nahin muzhko aaye
Samya bhav rakhkhoon mein un par
Aisi pariniti ho jaye

Guni jano ko dekh hridaya men
Mere prem umad aaye
Bane jahan tak unki seva
Karke yeh mana sukhya paye
Hovoon hain kritaghna kabhi mein
Droha na mere ur aaye
Guna-grihan ka bhav rahe ait
Drishti na doshon par jaye.
SONG OF THE SOUL (MERI BHAVNA)

- 7 -

Whether anyone speaks ill or well
Whether wealth comes
Or goes away
Whether I live for long years
Or if death should come my way
Let no fear or temptation
Never make me sway
From the path of justice
And fair play

Koyi bura kahe ya achcha
Lakshmi aaye ya jaye
Lakhon varshon tak jeeyun ya
Mrtyu aaj hee na jaye
Athawa koyi kaisa bhi bhaya
Ya lakach dene aaye
To bhi nyaya-marg se mera
Kabhi na pad digne paye.

- 8 -

Let me not be overjoyed by happiness
Let me not feel upset in distress
Let me not be afraid of
Terrifying mountains and rivers
Burial places and forests
Let my inner self grow strong
Unflinching even when things go wrong
May fortitude be my armour
The face life's vicissitudes without murmur

Hokar sukhna men magna na foolen
Dukh men kabhi na ghabaraven
Parvat, nadi, shamsan bhayanak
Atavi se nahin bhaya khaven
Rahe adol-akampa nirantar
Yeh mana drudhatar ho jaye
Ishta-viyog, anishta-yog me
Sahan- shilata dikh laye.

- 9 -

May all living beings on earth
Be happy and tension free
May the world get rid of vanity and hostility
Ushering in the ever-renewing auspicious sprees
May there be in every home
Always awareness of religion
May ill deeds become rare exception
May human life be made worthy and come to fruition
Taking ever once knowledge and character to higher elevation

Sukhee raahen sab jiva jagat ke
Koyi kabhi na ghabrayen
Vaira-bhay, abhiman chhod jag
Nitya naye mangal gayen
Ghar-ghar charcha rahe dharma ki
Dushkrita dushkar ho jayen
Jnan-charita unnata kar apna
Manuja- jann- phala sab payen.

A Portrait of Jain Religion
SONG OF THE SOUL (MERI BHAVNA)

May the world not be engulfed by disasters
And may the rains come when due
May the ruler be righteous and just
To people of all hues
May there be no outbreak of disasters and disease
May the people always live in peace
May non-violence reign
As the Supreme Religion
Radiating happiness for all without distinction

Let love for one another
Spread with speed
Let human beings give up
Possessive greed
Let no one utter harsh and hurtful words
Let all the people be caring and confident
Taking the nation ever forward
Let people face suffering and sorrow gladly
Appreciating true nature of all things clearly

Iti-bhitī vyāpe nāhin jag mein
Vrishti samaya par hua kare
Dharmanishtha ho kar Raja bhi
Nyaya praja ka kyi kare
Roga, mari, durbhiksha na phaile
Praja shanty se jiya kare
Parama Ahimsa Dharma jagat mein
Phaila sarva hita kyi kare.

Phaile prem paraspar jag men
Mohā door hee raha kare
Aprīya-katuka-kathor shabda nahin
Koyi much se kaha kare
Bana kar sab ‘Yugveer’ hridaya se
Aatmonnati-rata raha Karen
Vastu-swaroop vichar khushi se
Sab dukha-sankat saha karen