

CHAPTER THREE

The Jain Vision

OVERVIEW

Jainism has had a major influence on all of Indian thought. Its philosophical explanations of how *karma* shapes the lives of living beings, its stress on virtuous conduct, and its emphasis on human experience and reason have helped shape the Indian philosophical tradition. The fundamental aim of Jainism is to awaken human beings to the plight of their suffering and to help them achieve liberation from this suffering.

Rather than relying on God for salvation, Jains look to the example and teachings of those human beings who have conquered suffering. These spiritual heroes are called Conquerors (*Jinas*). They are also called Ford-makers (*Tirthankaras*) because they show others how to cross over the stream of suffering caused by bondage. This Jain spirit of self-reliance, and the consequent emphasis on the need to understand the conditions of bondage and the way of release from bondage, led the Jains to develop sophisticated philosophical explanations of existence and a rationally based ethics.

According to Jainism, the fundamental cause of human suffering is bondage of the soul by karmic matter. The only way to liberate the soul from its karmically determined body is to stop the further accumulation of *karma* and to exhaust the karmic forces already accumulated. To accomplish this, a person needs to follow a path of purification incorporating knowledge, moral conduct, and ascetic practice.

MAHAVIRA

The beginnings of Jainism are lost in the dim reaches of antiquity, perhaps rooted in the Indus culture. Mahavira, twenty-fourth and most recent Ford-maker (*Tirthankara*) of the present age, was born at Kundagram (near Patna) in 599 BCE. His predecessor, Parshva, the twenty-third Ford-maker, lived in the middle of the ninth century BCE. But the twenty-two previous Ford-makers claimed by tradition have so far not been discovered by historical scholarship.

India was experiencing a cultural revolution in Mahavira's time, with exciting new developments occurring in philosophy and religion. The main ideas that shaped the major Indian traditions were already being debated between 800 and 500 BCE. By the fifth century BCE this revolution had culminated in the establishment of the great and enduring ways of Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

Although twenty-three Ford-makers are said to have preceded Mahavira, he is the great teacher of the present era. Little is known about his personal life, for the biographical facts that were deemed important concerned only his practice and his teachings. It was his accomplishments in overcoming samsaric bondage and his presentation of a path to be followed by other persons that was important to his followers. The tradition embellishes his biography with all sorts of achievements and accomplishments to illustrate important Jain attitudes and teachings, but most of these accounts are legend rather than fact.

The outline of Mahavira's personal life appears to be this: Born in 599 BCE, he renounced all worldly ties at age thirty, upon the death of his parents. For the next twelve years he lived a severely austere life, until, at age forty-three, he achieved omniscience (*kevalajnana*) and came to be recognized as a Conqueror (*Jina*) and Ford-maker (*Tirthankara*). For the next thirty years he led the community through teaching and example, gathering around him a great many monks, nuns, and devoted lay persons. According to one tradition, his disciple, Indrabhuti, collected and compiled Mahavira's words into the twelve collections (*Angas*) constituting the Jain scriptures.

KARMIC BONDAGE

The Man in the Well

There is probably no better illustration of the Jain conception of the human condition as one of karmic bondage than the parable of the man in the well. This story, focusing on the bondage of *karma*, is not unique to Jainism, although the version that follows is told by the great seventh-century Jain writer Haribhadra. He tells of a man, greatly oppressed by poverty, who decided to find a new life in another land. After several days he lost his way in a thick forest. Hungry and thirsty, surrounded by wild animals, stumbling along the steep paths, he looked up to see a mad trumpeting elephant charging straight at him with upraised trunk. Simultaneously, a hideous and wicked demoness, laughing madly and brandishing a sharp sword, appeared in front

of him. Trembling with fear, he searched for a way to escape. Seeing a great banyan tree off to east of him, he raced across the rugged terrain to its refuge. But when he reached it his spirits sank, for it was so high that not even the birds could fly over it, and its great trunk was unscalable.

Finally, looking all around, he saw an old grass-covered well nearby. Frightened of death and hoping to prolong his life, even if for only another moment, he leaped into the dark hole, grasping a clump of reeds growing from its wall to support himself. As he clung to these reeds he saw beneath him terrible snakes, enraged by the sound of his falling, while hissing at the very bottom was a huge black python, thick as the trunk of a heavenly elephant, mouth wide open, looking at him with its terrible red eyes. More frightened than ever, the man thought, "My life will last only as long as these reeds hold."

But raising his head he saw two large rats, one white and one black, gnawing at the roots of the clump of reeds. In the meantime, the enraged elephant charged the great banyan tree overhanging the well, battering its trunk with his mighty head, dislodging a honeycomb swarming with bees. While the angry bees were stinging the poor defenseless man, a drop of honey chanced to fall on his head and roll down his face to his lips, giving him a moment's sweetness. Forgotten were the python, elephant, snakes, mice, bees, and the well itself, as he became possessed by the craving for still more drops of sweet honey.

Haribhadra interprets the parable with forceful clarity. The journeying man is the soul or life-principle (*jiva*) and his wanderings are the four types of existence in which the life-principle dwells: divine, human, animal, and hell-beings. The wild elephant is death, the wicked demoness old age. The banyan tree represents salvation, for it is out of reach of death, the elephant. But no person attached to the senses can achieve this refuge. The well is human life and the snakes are the passions that craze and confuse, preventing a person from knowing what to do. The clump of reeds is a person's allotted lifetime during which the soul is embodied in this form. The rats are the fortnights (bright and dark phases of the moon) that destroy the support of life, and the stinging bees are the many afflictions that torment a person destroying every moment of joy. The terrible python at the bottom of the well is hell, which seizes the person ensnared by sensual pleasure and imposes pains by the thousandfold. The few drops of honey are the pleasures of life that bind one to terrible suffering. "How," concludes Haribhadra, "can a wise person want them in the midst of such peril and suffering?"

REALITY

To Haribhadra it is clear that human suffering is caused by ignorance and wrong conduct. But how do ignorance and immoral conduct cause bondage? And how can knowledge and moral conduct achieve liberation? To answer these questions we must investigate the Jain vision of reality. According to Jainism, reality consists of two fundamentally different kinds of substances, souls and matter. Each has its own distinctive qualities and modes.

The essence of the soul (*jiva*) is life and its chief characteristics are perception, knowledge, bliss, and energy. In its pure state when it is not associated with matter, its knowledge is omniscient, its bliss is pure, and its energy is unlimited. But the matter that embodies the soul defiles its bliss, obstructs its knowledge, and limits its energy. This is why matter is seen as a fetter binding the soul.

The word for matter, *pudgala* (mass-energy) is derived from *pum*, meaning "coming together," and *gala*, meaning "coming apart," and reveals the Jain conception of matter as that which is formed by the aggregation of atoms and destroyed by their disassociation. Matter refers both to the mass of things and to the forces or energy that structure this mass, making and remaking it in its diverse forms.

The word *karma* means "to make," and in Jainism it refers to the making and remaking of the karmic matter that embodies the soul. But this making and remaking is not something separate from the mass and energy of the body which is constantly being made and remade.

The mass of karmic matter embodying the soul is constituted by an infinite number of invisible and indivisible atoms, each possessing the qualities that make possible seeing, tasting, touching, and smelling when the atoms are aggregated to constitute a person's body and mind. Most significantly, these material atoms also constitute the senses, mind, and speech that form the subtle body of the soul through which experience is possible. The matter constituting the senses, mind, speech, and volitional faculty is thought to be especially subtle and fine, as distinct from the coarse matter making up the physical objects in the world. This view of *karma* as a material force distinguishes the Jain view from other Indian views that take *karma* to be only a psychological or metaphysical force. Jains do not deny the moral, psychological, and metaphysical dimensions of *karma*, but they insist that the primary dimension is that of a subtle material force. Thus, Jains share with other Indian thinkers the idea of *karma* as a determinant of future existence, agreeing that each action leaves a residual force that inevitably expresses itself as a determinant of existence at a future time. They also accept the common analogy of this residual karmic force as a seed, which, given the right conditions, will grow and bear fruit according to its own nature. The implication is that each person will reap the results of his or her every action, in the form of either reward or retribution, and either immediately or in the future. This is the inexorable law of *karma* as understood by nearly every Indian thinker.

The uniqueness of the Jain view of *karma* is in the insistence on the material basis of this law of life. According to them, the universe is filled with tiny imperceptible particles of karmic matter, indistinguishable from each other and floating about freely until attracted to an embodied soul. In a way, the Jain view of *karma* is similar to the scientific view of the atmosphere as pervaded by tiny indistinguishable molecules of air that can be felt only when aggregated and set in motion as wind.

It is important to understand that the Jains view embodiment as karmic: the body, senses, mind, intelligence, and volitional faculty are all constituted by karmic matter and are not part of the soul itself. Instead, they obscure the omniscient knowledge, defile the pure bliss, and limit the energy that are

the soul's natural qualities, thereby constituting the bondage that obscures and limits the expression of these qualities.

Real knowledge is obtained not from the senses or the mind, but from the soul's inherent luminosity. The difference between a wise person and an ignorant person is that a wise person's mind blocks out less of the soul's natural knowledge than does the ignorant person's mind. A popular analogy suggests that just as when the fog and clouds are cleared away, the light of the sun illuminates the entire world; even so, when the karmic obstacles are removed from the soul, its natural omniscience will reveal everything.

But why, if the soul is inherently pure and omniscient, did it come to be embodied in matter and thereby subjected to the bondage of repeated births and deaths? The Jain assumption is that souls have always been embodied in karmic matter, just as gold has always been embedded in ore. Indeed, this analogy is taken a step further: just as gold can be separated from the ore containing it by a refining process, so can the soul be liberated from *karma* by a process of purification. Even as the nature of gold is different from the ore in which it is embedded, so the nature of the soul is different from the matter in which it is embodied.

In order to remove *karma* it is important to understand what causes the inflow of *karma* and how to prevent these inflows. Bondage is not limited to the human condition, but human embodiment is special, for it represents a unique opportunity to achieve liberation.

Elaborate theories of how karmic bondage works have been developed, describing the karmic process in great detail, for understanding the process of bondage is the first step toward eliminating it. Bondage begins with embodiment, a beginningless process that defiles the inherent bliss of the soul. Because of this defilement, the soul's natural energy, flowing out through the body by the conduits constituted by thoughts, speech, and actions, is obstructed and forms an energy field around the soul that attracts the freely floating particles pervading the universe. When the soul is infected with the passions of desire and hatred, these particles stick to it, like dust sticks to a moist jewel, obstructing its natural brilliance. Fettered by these new accumulations of *karma*, all of the actions of living beings, whether mental acts, such as thought or speech, or physical acts, accumulate a certain amount of additional karmic matter. Those actions prompted by desire or hate and those that hurt other living beings attract the greatest amount of defiling and obstructing *karma*. It is a difficult cycle to break, for the initial impurity leads to actions producing yet additional impurities in the soul, which lead to still more *karma*-producing actions, which, in turn, even further obstruct the knowledge, limit the energy, and defile the purity of the soul.

KINDS OF KARMA

Although the subtle karmic particles pervading the universe are indistinguishable from each other in their free condition, when they are attracted to the soul they take on the characteristics of the acts that attract them. This makes possible a classification of many different forms of *karma* into eight major kinds, according to the actions producing them and the effects that they will

have on a person. Four of these are known as destructive *karmas* because they have a directly negative effect, the other four as nondestructive because they bring about particular kinds of embodiment.

The worst kinds of *karma* are those that are attracted to the soul by actions proceeding from ignorance and a desire to hurt others. These are said to be destructive *karmas*, for they destroy the soul's insight into its own nature, generating false views of itself and the material world, and causing the passions of craving and hatred. Both craving, which is expressed as greed, dishonesty, and pride, and its opposite, hatred, which is expressed as anger and violence, destroy pure conduct and lead to further karmic entanglement. Because the destructive *karmas* defile the soul's purity, limit its energy, and obscure its knowledge, they allow the entry of a variety of secondary *karmas* to surround the soul, producing yet additional bondage. These secondary *karmas* produce the feelings of pleasantness and unpleasantness that help to direct actions along the paths of craving and hatred. They determine the particular birth of a soul and the life span of a particular incarnation. Finally, they also determine the particular circumstances that will either promote or hinder the quality of spiritual life in a particular incarnation.

It is not necessary to go into the minute details of karmic classification to appreciate the main point: all karmic bondage is earned by the actions producing it. Furthermore, the specific characteristics and effects of the attracted *karma* are determined by the nature of the act attracting it.

The length of time the attracted *karma* will bind a person is determined by the intensity of the passions motivating the act as well as the nature of the act itself. Once the *karma* has produced its full effects, it falls away and returns to a free and undifferentiated state.

But those *karmas* that have not yet produced all their effects continue to adhere to the soul, constituting a subtle body within the physical body. When the karmically determined life span is up, the soul departs from the physical body and, embodied by the unspent karmic matter, is reborn into another physical body of precisely the kind merited by the accumulated *karma*. This is why Jains recognize all living things as equal, treating them as members of the same global family.

This is also why the goal of liberation dominates Jain life, for karmic bondage means not only the life of a human being, but also the untold lifetimes spent embodied in other forms of life.

WAY OF LIBERATION

For a devout Jain, the quest for liberation is the central focus of life. The four restraints of body, senses, speech, and mind, along with the five great vows of non-hurting, nonstealing, sexual purity, truthfulness, and nongrasping, are willingly undertaken to check the inflows of *karma*. In addition, every Jain undertakes a variety of penances to burn up the karmic forces already accumulated.

Liberation, as a process of stopping the influx of new karmic matter and eliminating existing bondage, can be seen as a path of progressive purification. Traditionally, fourteen stages on this path have been distinguished.

Stage One. The first stage marks the beginning of the path. At this stage the soul is spiritually asleep, ignorant of its own karmic bondage, characterized by uncontrolled passions and wrong views.

Stage Two. At the second stage, a small amount of faith, which quickly disappears, triggers a slight movement toward insight. The unusual characteristic of this stage is that it is a stopping place for the soul on its way down from the fourth stage, where it had achieved its first glimpse of enlightenment. It is called the stage of "lingering vision" because the soul retains a motivating impression that will make it easier to again experience the flash of enlightenment that marks stage four.

Stage Three. At stage three, there is stronger faith, but because of powerful doubt the soul cannot yet achieve true insight. However, at this stage the soul's innate capacity to throw off its karmic burden enables it to see, for the first time, the ignorance and the passions that bind it to the sufferings of the body and mind. This awareness makes it possible for the soul to confront and resist its bondage, enabling it to achieve a momentary flash of true insight. When this occurs the soul undergoes a series of purifications that dramatically reduces the power and duration of the bondage of old *karmas* previously accumulated, as well as new *karmas* that will be accumulated in the future. However, if the karmic burden is too great to be resisted at this time, the soul will fall back to stage one, rather than advancing to the fourth stage.

Stage Four. At stage four, the soul experiences its first genuine awakening, a brief, but true and joyous glimpse into its real nature. However, because this vision is due to the suppression, rather than elimination, of the deluding *karmas* it lasts only a brief moment, after which the soul invariably slides back to stage two. Gradually, as further purification removes more and more bondage-producing *karmas*, there will be more experiences of enlightenment, and of longer duration, as the soul makes its spiritual journey toward final liberation.

Stage Five. At stage five one experiences the power to control the passions and is able to at least partially restrain them. At this stage one takes the vows to abstain from violence, falsehood, stealing, possessiveness, and improper sexual activity, as part of the effort to cultivate right conduct.

Stage Six. At the sixth stage one's moral discipline makes it possible to achieve greater restraint of the passions.

Stage Seven. At the seventh stage self-restraint is perfected, and anger overcome. Here carelessness and moral laxity are overcome and meditative powers increased, allowing one to live in greater awareness, restraining the actions that perpetuate karmic bondage. A person at the fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh stage who reexperiences a temporary enlightenment, either by partially suppressing and partially eliminating the vision-obscuring *karmas* or by completely eliminating them, can then enter the eighth stage.

Stage Eight. With carelessness overcome and self-restraint perfected, a deeper enlightenment is experienced and one attains the stage of unprecedented spiritual progress. Here pride is overcome, harmful *karma* diminished, and the power of beneficial *karma* increased through positive motivation.

Stage Nine. The spiritual progress of stage eight leads to advanced spiritual activity and greater purification of the soul. More conduct-obscuring and vision-obscuring *karmas* are eliminated at this stage and deceit is overcome.

Stage Ten. The tenth stage of spiritual development is called "complete self-restraint with flickering greed," because moral purification reaches the stage where even gross greed is eliminated. However, the subtlest form of greed, the greed to possess a body, is not yet eliminated but merely restrained.

Stage Eleven. At this stage one moves beyond restraint to at least the partial elimination and total suppression of even the subtlest form of greed.

Stage Twelve. Stage twelve is called "complete self-restraint with eliminated passions," because all of the obscurations of the passion-producing *karmas* have been removed with the elimination of these deluding *karmas*. With the complete elimination of even the passion known as "subtle greed for a body," all of the *karma*-producing passions have been eliminated.

Stage Thirteen. Here the perception, knowledge, bliss, and energy of the soul are full, pure, and unlimited. However, *karmas* are still accumulating because the soul is still embodied. That is why this stage is called "omniscience with physical activity."

In order to enter stage fourteen, the final stage of "omniscience with no activity," the soul must stop all activities, gross and subtle, of the body, speech, and mind. This is accomplished through deep meditation.

Stage Fourteen. In the final stage, with the last residue of karmic matter eliminated, the soul is free of all activity. Here, in the last instant before death, the soul has completed its spiritual development. The next instant it experiences *moksha*, perfect freedom, attaining disembodied eternal liberation.

Progress through these stages is achieved by a combination of deep faith, right knowledge, and pure conduct—the "three jewels" of Jain practice by which the influx of destructive *karmas*, caused by delusion, false views, and the passions, can be halted.

Deep faith is traditionally considered the first of the three jewels because its realization marks the moment in life that decisively turns the individual away from the path of further bondage and toward liberation. We will consider the Jain view of knowledge first, however, in order to appreciate both the nature of, and the need for, faith.

KNOWLEDGE

Ignorance produces *karmas* that destroy the soul's insight into its own nature and generate false views of itself and the world. This ignorance, caused by the soul's initial defilement, obscures its omniscient knowledge and makes it dependent on perception, reason, and the authority of others for its knowledge. But these kinds of knowledge are extremely limited, obscuring more of reality than they reveal.

According to Jain metaphysics, reality is constituted by innumerable material and spiritual substances, each of which is the locus of innumerable qualities. Not only are there innumerable substances, each with innumerable qualities, but each quality is susceptible to an infinite number of modifications. Clearly ordinary knowledge (nonomniscient) cannot fully comprehend this complex reality, for it is limited by the senses and reason, the perspectives adopted by the knower, and by the conditions of space, time, light, and so on.

Recognizing the incredibly rich and complex nature of reality, Jains developed the notion of the "many-sidedness" (*anekanta*) of existence, in opposition to the Vedanta claims that *Brahman* alone, because it is permanent and unchanging, is ultimately and absolutely real. The notion of *anekanta* is also opposed to the Buddhists' claim that nothing is permanent, and that changing processes are the only reality. This concept of the many-sidedness of existence enabled Jain thinkers to affirm both permanence and change. What things are in themselves, as substances, is permanent. But the forms or modes of these substances are continuously changing.

Emphasizing the limits of ordinary knowledge, Jainism developed the theory that truth is relative to the perspective (*naya*) from which it is known. Furthermore, because reality is many-sided and knowledge true only from a limited perspective, all knowledge claims are only tentative (*syat*), having the form "*X may be Y*," rather than "*X is Y*."

Limiting Perspectives

The limitations of knowledge are illustrated with a popular Jain story, involving five blind men and an elephant: A king once brought five blind men into his courtyard where he had fastened a large elephant and asked them to tell him what it was. Each man touched the elephant, and on the basis of his perceptions, told the king what he knew this thing to be. The first felt the trunk and declared that it was a huge snake. The second touched the tail and said that it was a rope. The third felt the leg and called it a tree trunk. The fourth took hold of an ear and called it a winnowing fan, whereas the fifth felt the side of the elephant and declared it to be a wall. Because each insisted that his claim was correct and truly described the object in question, the five men were soon in the middle of a heated argument, unable to resolve the dispute because they failed to recognize that each of their claims was true only from a limited perspective.

Like the blind men, each person perceives things only from his or her own perspective. When it is understood that knowledge is limited by the particular perspectives from which it is achieved, it becomes easy to see that knowledge claims are conditioned by the limitations of the perspective that

is assumed and should always be expressed as only tentatively true. For example, in the Jain story, the blind men should have been more circumspect, saying, for example, "Standing here, touching the object with my hands, it feels like a winnowing fan. It *may be* a winnowing fan." Likewise, because all knowledge is from limited perspectives, everyone should understand that knowledge claims should be asserted only conditionally.

Conditional Predication

Analyzing the logic of conditional assertion, the Jains came up with a seven-fold schema for making a truth claim about any particular object. For example, the following assertions are possible with respect to, say, the temperature of a glass of water:

1. It may be warm (to someone coming in from the cold).
2. It may not be warm (to someone coming from a very warm room it will feel cold).
3. It may be both warm and not warm, depending upon certain conditions.
4. Independent of all conditions, the water is indescribable (all knowledge rests on certain conditions).
5. Indescribable in itself, the water may be said to be warm subject to certain conditions (a combination of 1 and 4).
6. Indescribable in itself, the water may be said not to be warm, subject to certain conditions (a combination of 2 and 4).
7. Indescribable in itself, the water may be said to be warm and not warm, depending upon certain conditions (a combination of 3 and 4).

The reason why the last three assertions all begin with the claim "indescribable in itself" is that every substance known and described possesses an infinite number of qualities, each of which also possesses an infinite number of modifications. Although ordinary knowledge reveals some of these qualities and modifications, it cannot reveal them all. Thus, all descriptions of reality are only partial. The substance itself, with its infinite qualities and modifications, can be fully known only when all the limitations to knowledge are overcome. The sevenfold schema of conditional assertion enables us to recognize the partial and incomplete nature of ordinary human knowledge.

FAITH

Understanding the partial nature of ordinary knowledge makes Jains more appreciative of the knowledge of the Ford-makers. It encourages faith in their teachings and motivates effort to emulate their lives in the hope of achieving similar omniscience, purity, and bliss. This in turn, awakens a deep longing for true insight and knowledge that may serve as a catalyst to activate the soul's natural inclination toward freedom and to direct its energies toward recovery

of its omniscience, making possible the momentary flash of insight (*samyak darshana*) that marks the beginning of the way out of bondage. Although this initial awakening experience is only the fourth stage on the path of liberation, it is extremely significant. It is this momentary flash of insight that directs the energies of the soul to overcome bondage, setting it on its way toward liberation. This momentary illumination of the soul is thus the critical turning point in the quest for liberation.

Most important, this momentary vision of the true nature of the soul enables a person to cease identifying with the body-mind and its actions, bringing the realization that the soul's only pure and proper activity is that of knowing. This realization brings an inner peace that fosters the pure conduct needed to overcome the tendencies toward anger, hatred, pride, deceitfulness, and greed.

This flash of insight also reveals the universal community of souls, engendering a strong feeling of brotherhood for all beings. This realization generates a pure compassion, which expresses itself in the inclination to avoid hurting any beings and, more positively, in the inclination to help all beings to salvation.

Faith (*darshana*), awakened in a momentary flash of insight, is constituted by a vision of reality and an affirmative attitude toward life and liberation. It replaces skepticism about the teachings of the Jinas with a positive, though critical, outlook that affirms the truth of these teachings and eliminates desires for gain and profit as sources of motivation. Aversion to ordinary kinds of evil and suffering are replaced with a deeper feeling that regards as unpleasant only that which produces bondage. Faith provides security in Jain beliefs and practices and motivates one to act in a way that will illuminate and exemplify the Jain teachings and, ultimately, to follow the example of the *Jinas*. Faith also moves a person to become protective of the Jain order.

It must be emphasized that, although faith is indispensable to the Jain way, this faith is a vision of reality, not a blind faith in scriptures or persons. The basis of faith is an experience of a momentary flash of insight into the true nature of the soul, which introduces a positive approach to life and motivates one to work for liberation.

Furthermore, the understanding provided by faith needs to be clarified and tested carefully by experience and reason. Jainism has placed great emphasis upon philosophical vision and reasoning as means to salvation and has placed equally great emphasis on personal effort and right conduct as means to salvation. The vision provided by faith gives direction for life and releases the soul's energies needed to stop the karmic accumulations, but only prodigious human efforts of moral and ascetic practice can eliminate bondage.

CONDUCT

Although faith and knowledge prepare the way and provide the necessary direction, it is right and pure conduct that brings a halt to the passions causing karmic bondage and achieves the progress toward liberation marked by stages five, six, and seven. This understanding has resulted in a strong Jain commitment to moral principles and practice. Not only is the honesty of Jain businessmen proverbial, but the high moral standards of the entire Jain

community have affected and influenced all the peoples of India and many outside of the subcontinent.

Pure conduct means living a virtuous life. Every Jain vows to practice the five primary virtues of nonhurting, truthfulness, nonstealing, sexual purity, and nongrasping as the core of right conduct. Many Jains, especially those advanced in their practice, also vow to practice a long list of secondary virtues.

Nonhurting. *Ahimsa*, or nonhurting, is the basis of Jain morality, for ultimately all questions of good and evil and right or wrong come down to whether or not the thought, speech, or action in question hurts any life-form. Although Buddhists and Hindus also recognize the principle of nonhurting as a fundamental rule of life, the Jains have developed this principle most fully and have carried its application the furthest. The term *nonhurting* is negative, but the principle is entirely positive, being rooted in a philosophy that recognizes the community of all living organisms and that sees love as the basis of a relationship between all the members of this community. It embodies the realization that all life belongs to the same global family and that to hurt others is to destroy the community of life, which is the basis of all sacredness. Umasvati, the great Jain teacher of the second century, defines the purpose of souls as that of helping each other: "Souls exist to provide service to each other."¹

Ahimsa implies both action and intention. Hurting is defined as harming other living organisms either deliberately, or by carelessness or neglect, or through actions motivated by pride, greed, hatred, prejudice, or desire. But the very intention of harming others, even if the physical action is not carried out, is regarded as hurting them. All actions rooted in anger, pride, hatred, greed, and dishonesty are regarded as forms of violence and must be renounced and abandoned.

Truthfulness. The second great vow is that of truthfulness (*satya*), which requires that great care be taken to ensure that speech is always used to promote the well-being of the community of life. The virtue of truthfulness is closely related to that of *ahimsa*, for the rule is that speech resulting in hurting is to be avoided.

Truthfulness requires complete honesty in all business and professional activity, encouraging the scrupulous behavior of Jain businessmen that has earned them the respect of nearly everyone. Also precluded by truthfulness are speech acts that might hurt others through unkindness, harshness, rudeness, gossiping, breaking confidences, slander, or even idle chatter.

Nonstealing. The third vow, nonstealing (*asteya*), requires that a person refrain from taking what belongs to another, whether in the form of outright theft or in more subtle forms, such as adulterating a product, tax evasion, black marketing, providing improper weights and measurements for exchanged products, failing to provide full value of goods or services exchanged, and so on. One must not accept stolen or lost goods or buy goods at a lower price if they were obtained wrongfully in the first place. The general rule is not to take anything that is not offered to one. Stealing, in any form, is regarded as hurtful activity stemming from greed, and the positive virtue of

nonstealing consists in being completely satisfied with what you have so there is not the slightest desire for somebody else's possessions.

Sexual Purity. The fourth vow is that of sexual purity (*brahmacharya*). The rationale for this vow is that sexual activity proceeds from the desires that create bondage. The Jain ascetic abstains not only from all sexual activity, but from all thought about sex as well. For lay persons, celibacy means that no sexual activities or thoughts are allowed outside of the relationship between husband and wife.

NongrASPing. The fifth vow taken by every Jain is that of nongrASPing (*aparigraha*). An attitude of nonattachment must be cultivated to put an end to action that seeks identification with the external world of karmic bodies. Thus, *aparigraha* is much more than simply nonpossession, though this is the most obvious external sign and the first requirement. The mendicant is required to give up all wealth and possessions upon joining the order and the lay person must observe numerous restrictions and conditions on wealth and possession and their means of acquisition. But physical renunciation by itself is not the goal. The goal is to get completely rid of all thoughts and attitudes that are the agents and vehicles of the desire and the aversions proceeding from a perspective distorted by karmic accumulations. The vow to eliminate thoughts and actions rooted in desire or aversion is based on the insight that this is an effective way of eliminating the desires and aversions themselves.

These five basic vows are strengthened and expanded by a series of secondary vows that (1) curtail travel; (2) prohibit drinking unfiltered water, eating certain kinds of food, and using certain methods of preparing foods; (3) proscribe brooding, mischief making, giving harmful advice, and watching or listening to unedifying events or performances; (4) obligate fasting; (5) require meditation; (6) enjoin almsgiving; (7) temporarily restrict one's activities to a given location; and, finally, (8) commit one to a holy death through meditation and fasting.

IMPACT OF JAIN THOUGHT

Finally, it should be pointed out that the Jain way of liberation has made important cultural contributions to Indian life. Jain emphasis on the importance of human knowledge led to important accomplishments in philosophy, logic, literature, architecture, art, mathematics, and the sciences, encouraging non-Jains to develop and refine their own systems and methods. The contributions of Haribhadra (seventh century), Hemacandra (twelfth century), and Mallisena (thirteenth century) to Indian logic were impressive enough to stimulate the thinking of major Buddhist and Hindu philosophers and to result in important conceptual breakthroughs.

Using the vernacular languages to create stories, narratives, and poems to present Jain teachings to the lay community, Jain monks contributed a great deal to the development of literature in the vernacular languages. The Jain penchant for writing and collecting texts resulted in impressive libraries that

served the larger community and saved many ancient texts on astronomy, mathematics, and grammar from destruction. Hemacandra's poetic history of the world as contained in myth and legend, his Sanskrit and Prakrit dictionaries and grammar, and his science textbooks, for example, contributed much both to the ongoing study of these subjects and to their preservation.

But perhaps the greatest contributions to Indian life were made by Jain exemplars of moral virtue and careful reasoning. Their migrations from the Ganges Valley to the southern tip and over the western borders of the subcontinent allowed them to spread the best of Indian culture to these parts of India through their exemplary lives. Jain adherence to the rule of nonhurting has been a major factor in the importance that this moral principle has assumed in Buddhist and Hindu life over the centuries. Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindu saint whose adherence to nonhurting in his successful efforts to throw off the yoke of British colonial rule, bringing the principle of nonviolence to the admiring attention of the whole world, gratefully acknowledged the great impression made on him by the virtuous Jains he knew as a youth.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How does Jainism conceive of karmic matter? Discuss its mass aspect, its force aspect, and its atomic constituency.
2. What is the soul? What are its principal characteristics?
3. What is bondage? How does bondage occur? How is it constituted?
4. In what does liberation consist and how is it achieved? Discuss how faith, knowledge, and conduct work together to enable a person to attain the various levels of purification.
5. What is the Jain theory of knowledge? Explain the conditional nature of knowledge (*syadvada*).

FURTHER READING

Ahimsa, Anekanta and Jainism, edited by Tara Sethia (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), is a collection of essays on the contemporary significance of Jainism by key scholars in the field.

Collected Papers on Jaina Studies, by Padmanabh S. Jaini (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), is a collection of essays on important topics, including *ahimsa* and *karma*, by one of the world's foremost Jain scholars.

Tattvartha Sutra: That Which Is, by Umasvati, translated and introduced by Nathmal Tatia (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994), is an excellent translation of this foundational Jain text and its three most important commentaries.

The Jaina Path of Purification, by Padmanabh S. Jaini (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), is by far the best book on Jainism. Sympathetic, but unbiased