

## The Value and Heritage of Jain Religion

Albert Einstein remarked that the eternal mystery of the world is its intelligibility. True religion fastens to this element of intelligibility and creates a system of thought and action which leads to true harmony and bliss. And it is indeed so with Jainism.

Jainism is one of the oldest living religions of the world. The term Jaina means the devotee of Jinas (Spiritual Victors). Jinas are called so because they have won victory over passions of attachment, aversion, etc. that defile the soul. As a result, they have attained omniscience and supreme bliss. They are enlightened human teachers. They are also called Tirthankaras (Ford-makers), Here in the context, ford means tirthankara's words and teaching which help living beings to cross the ocean of misery or transmigratory existence. In every half-cycle of Time there flourish twenty-four Tirthankaras. The twenty-fourth Tirthankara of, the present half-cycle of time is Vardhamana, known as Mahavira.

Mahavira was born in 599 B.C. in a royal knightly family in Kshatriyakunda, a well known city of the ancient kingdom of Videha (modern Bihar). At the age, of thirty, to find out the path to Ultimate Release from all misery he renounced the world, he embarked upon a spiritual career and lived a life of a Jaina ascetic. After twelve years of severe spiritual discipline of self-culture, self-control, austerities and deep meditation, he totally exterminated attachment completely and attained omniscience (*kevalajnana*). He became a perfected soul and prophet (*Tirthankara*). During the next thirty years of his career as a prophet he traveled on foot from place to place giving his message of peace and goodwill for the welfare of all living beings, without any discrimination of race, class, caste or sex. Eleven men accepted his spiritual leadership and became his chief disciples - *ganadhara*). He founded the order of nuns with Candanabala as its first member. The number of male and female ascetics increased and reached up to about 50,000. The lay followers were about half a million.

Mahavira's parents were followers of Parshva, the penultimate Tirthankara, who lived about 250 years earlier in Varanasi. The historicity of Parshva is proved by the modern historians and scholars. So Mahavira was not the founder of Jaina religion. He was the rejuvenator, propagator and exponent of Jaina religion which had been taught by Parshva and other omniscient teachers of his ever present and imperishable Jaina tradition.

Initially the followers of Jainism lived throughout the Ganges Valley. Around the time of Ashoka (250 B.C.) most Jainas migrated to the city of Mathura on the Yamuna river. Later, many traveled westward to Rajasthan and Gujarat and southward to Maharashtra and Karnataka, where Jainism rapidly grew in popularity.

The Jaina canon contains some sixty texts and is divided into three main groups, the Purva (old texts 14 books), the Angas (limbs 12 books) and the Angabhaya (subsidiary canon). Not all are extant. In addition to the threefold canon itself, there are extensive commentaries written in Prakrit and Sanskrit by the monk scholars. The Tattvartha Sutra, written in the second century A.D., belongs to this group. Its author Umasvati is held in high esteem by both Svetambar and Digambar tradition. It for the first time presents in Sanskrit the entire canonical material on various subjects in aphoristic style and in classified form, succinctly and systematically.

In Jainism the essence of religion lies in an intuitive apprehension of the purity of consciousness. According to Jainism, the love of truth is inherent in each self, but it requires spiritual exercise for its manifestation. Once this love of Truth is manifested it will lead the self to liberation sooner or later.

The conduct of a person, in the Jain view cannot be isolated from his way of life. For the true Jaina, Truth and Values are inseparable. This is where right knowledge comes in. As Acharya Samantabhadra in his Yuktyanushasanam (Verse 15) says:

"Without knowing the real nature of things, all moral distinctions between bondage and liberation, merit and demerit; pleasure and pain will be absurd."

The values of Jain religion are based on five vows viz.- non-violence, devotion to truth, non-stealing, celibacy and, non-possession. The entire life style of the Jain Shravak and the Jain Sadhu emanates from these vows and the foremost is non-violence.

Ahimsa, non-violence, has been the sheet-anchor of Jainism. Ahimsa is one of the basic virtues. No where else in the, other religious traditions has this basic virtue been so scientifically, scrupulously and thoroughly integrated with the main doctrine. Jainism is the only tradition which has consistently allowed this tenet soak into the very essentials of its teachings and practices. This singular uncompromising emphasis on Ahimsa is the special and exclusive, feature of Jainism. In Jainism, Ahimsa is not mere human sympathy; it is empathy, the urge to 'identify oneself completely with other persons, other, living beings, with the whole universe.

Bhagwan Mahavir said, "If you kill someone, it is yourself you kill. If you overpower someone, it is yourself you overpower. If you torment some one, it is yourself you torment. If you harm someone, it is yourself you harm." A wise man knows this and so he does not kill, not does he, overpower or torment anyone.

The heart of Jainism is non-violence. Positively stated, Jainism is a religion of compassion, universal love and friendliness. It aims at the welfare of all living beings, and not of man alone. It maintains that living beings are infinite; all so called empty spaces in the universe are filled with minute living beings. According to it, there are countless single-celled organisms that take the possible units, of material elements - earth, water, fire and air - as, their bodies. Fresh earth is alive but when it is baked it becomes dead. Fresh water from a well, etc. is alive but when it is boiled or influenced by mixing some other substance it becomes dead. Vegetables, trees, plants, fruits, etc. do have life but when they are dried, cut or cooked they die. To avoid injury to them as far as possible, man is advised to use them discreetly. He should resist from polluting water, air, etc, and thereby perpetrating violence to them. Worms, insects, animals, etc. help in keeping ecological balance thus they help man. And domestic animals have for ages been a constant and faithful aid to man in civilizing himself.

From the ultimate standpoint of their original pure pristine state all living beings are uniform in their nature. Jainism teaches to look upon them as upon one's own self. Inflicting injury to them is inflicting injury to one's own self.

The Jain dictum "Parasparopagraho Jivanam", that is "living beings render service to one another" offers, an endearing alternative to the modern Darwinian formula of "survival of the fittest". The life of a living being is a life of mutual cooperation and assistance. Industry, labor, service and sacrifice of innumerable living beings are therefore behind the sustenance and growth of an individual. Thus every, individual is indebted to the universal society of all beings. Even virtues and meritorious qualities can never be cultivated and fostered in isolation.

This concept of Ahimsa, non-violence has evolved from logical thinking and from experience, It has an almost empirical basis. It has emerged from the doctrine of the equality of all souls. Everyone wants to live, nobody likes to die. Violence enters first in thought, it then manifests itself in speech and then in deeds. That is why they say that war is born in the minds of men'. The quest for ahimsa is centered in Anekantavada, the philosophy which accommodates a multiplicity of points-of-view and of perspectives.

In Jain philosophy Ahimsa is 'said to be the supreme religion and violence is considered to be source of all evil and of all miseries. Ahimsa, is not limited to not harming the human beings, it extends to all living beings. This philosophy believes in the unity of life and regards all living beings as, equal. He who can be cruel to animals can be cruel to human beings too. Further, cruelty is not only an aspect of, external behavior, but it is also an inner evil tendency. He who is, cruel at heart will behave cruelly towards animals as well as human beings. He who is compassionate at, heart, will behave compassionately towards all. Moreover, the Jain religion believes in the cycle

of birth and rebirth. The, soul is in one Yoni (existence) today; it may be in another Yoni tomorrow. It may be a fly today and a human tomorrow. This being so, man has no right to harm other living creations. One should behave sympathetically towards all friends as well, as foes. In fact there should, be no enemy. Such is the, importance of Ahimsa in Jain philosophy.

तुंग न मंदराओ आगासओ विसालयं नत्थि ।  
जह तह जयंमि जणसु, धम्म अहिंसा समं नत्थि ॥

(Nothing is higher than the Meru Mountain; nothing is vaster than the sky. Similarly, there is no better religion than Ahimsa).

It is one of the tenets of Jainism that all living beings desire life and not death. No one has the right to take away the life of any other being; to kill a living being; to kill a living being is the greatest, of sins. Life is dear to everyone, and *we*, must have respect for life. Not only "*Love and Let Live*" but "*Live and Help Others Live*", should be our principle. Just as the head of a family looks after the welfare of the members of the family, a human being, who enjoys the highest place in the evolution of life should look after the welfare of other lower orders of creations.

The universe is full of living creations big and small and. therefore, it is impossible to exist without killing or injuring some of the smallest of the living beings. Even in the process of breathing, or drinking or eating we almost unconsciously kill, many sentient beings. Therefore, according to Jainism the minimum of killing should be our idea.

Moreover, it is more serious where killing is done intentionally or through indifference. Therefore, great care should be taken in all our daily activities to see that the minimum of violence is committed by our deeds, speech and mind.

In the universe, there are different forms, different order of life, such as human beings, animals, insects, trees and plants, bacteria and even still smaller lives which perhaps be seen only through the most powerful microscopes. Jainism has classified all the living beings according to their sense organs.

Jainism firmly believes, that life is sacred, irrespective of caste, color, creed or nationality and therefore not only physical or mental injury to life should be but all possible kindness should be shown towards all the living things. This should be the true spirit of Ahimsa. Jainism believes that more weapons are in no way an effective answer to weapons. Lord Mahavir has emphatically declared in "Acharanga Sutra" that one weapon may be stronger or superior to another, but the path of Ahimsa or peace remains unsurpassed. Fire cannot be put out by fire. It is our duty to stop adding fuel to the fire. Jaina scriptures say that a piece of blood-stained cloth cannot be washed with blood; we need water to do it. To achieve peace, world peace, we have to stop the race of armaments and we have to have an unshakeable faith in *Samyag Darshana* in the effective validity of Ahimsa. For who can claim final and absolute victory in the race for armaments? Like Arjuna, the nations believing in violent means shall have to declare, "Nor do we know which for us is better whether we conquer them or they conquer us." Ahimsa teaches us that recourse to armed force is an infallible sign *of* the brute in man, that war neither profits the victor nor the vanquished.

The second great vow is Truth. To speak the truth one requires moral courage. Only those who have conquered greed, fear, anger, jealousy, ego, vulgarity frivolity, etc. can speak the truth when required.

Jainism always advocates the generous view, the view that there can be a grain of truth in what the other persons say, *Anekantadrishhti*, for truth is relative. As you have full faith in what is truth from your point of view, so too one should make room for the view-point of others. Thus, *Anekantavada* (Theory *of* many-sidedness) enables one to tolerate and co-ordinate a wide range of points-of-view in a spirit of co-operation even if at times, these

may be contradictory. This is the true method involving ceaseless endeavor to search out truth. To regard everything from a relative point of view and to see an element of truth in everything, this is *Anekantavada*. Not 'mine is the truth' but 'truth is mine' should be one's motto.

*Anekantavada* is the heart of Jainism. It constitutes its most significant contribution to religious thought, and especially in the field of ethics. It teaches that the kingdom of truth can be reached through plurality of ways. It also teaches not to impose one's own thoughts or views on others, and to try to reconcile the thoughts or view-points of others with one's own. This principle, therefore, if earnestly put into practice shows us how to overcome our personal view of things, 'which is often short-sighted, selfish and partial. It shows us how to remove discord and disharmony and establish concord and harmony in life, by being catholic and tolerant in our outlook and attitude towards others.

The principle of *Anekantavada* should be applied to every field of life. It shows how to respect candid opinions of all free thinkers of the world; the roots of modern democracy could be traced in this Jaina principle. It establishes unity in diversity. It promises reconciliation of divergent or conflicting statements, thoughts, ideologies, systems, religions etc. The principle of *Anekantavada* therefore can 'be a great instrument for promoting peaceful co-existence and unity in the world.

Another great vow is the vow of non-stealing. Man should abandon all kinds of stealing. We should not take anything that is not given to us. Nor should we help anyone take what is not given to him.

The fourth great vow is that of celibacy. Bhagwan Mahavir added this great vow to the four of Parshvanath's and established its distinct importance. He said that all physical and mental miseries of the world are caused by the thirst for sensual pleasures. For all sensual pleasures are ultimately harmful.

The fifth great vow is of non-possession. Possession is the source of evil. Possession is not only the acquisition or accumulation of things but also temptation for and attachment to things. No wonder C. Rajgopalachari wrote, "Restraint is the mark of Indian Culture." This sense of possession is the source of all the five evils viz. violence, untruthfulness, stealing, sensual pleasure and attachment. Today we see that the chief cause of the boundless miseries of the present world is man's uncontrolled tendency to possess. Man believes that: possession brings happiness. But in fact possession is the cause of miseries and bondage. Possession enslaves man to external things. As the bee sucks honey from the flower without destroying it, so the welfare seeking man should do the least possible harm to another in his worldly life. Thus, expounding the five great vows Bhagwan Mahavir says, "As the wind blows across flaming fire, so ideal people observing these vows will pass through the Samsara (transmigratory existence) and attain eternal joy." Lord Mahavir has said that wants and desires have no end and only the sky is the limit for them.

Attachment to worldly objects results in the everlasting cycle of birth and death. Therefore, one who aspires spiritual liberation should withdraw from all attachment to pleasures which arises because of the indiscriminate uses of the five senses. Jainism believes in the potential divinity of man. Given freedom for development, every individual can attain supreme spiritual progress. Hence, any interference with an individual's development would lead to spiritual degeneration. Violence is nothing but such an interference with individual freedom, hence, it must be shunned in thought, word and deed.

Bhagwan Mahavir discarded the false importance of gender and caste and established the importance of good conduct.

कम्मुणा बंभणो होइ, कम्मुणा होइ खत्तिओ ।  
वइसो कम्मुणा होइ, सुद्धो होइ कम्मुणा ॥

(One is a Brahmin, a Kshatriya, a Vaishya or a Shoodra according to one's Karma). Thus, he led shoodras out of the darkness of slavery and lifted them up from beastliness to godliness. He said that a man or woman irrespective of his or her caste could practice religion. In fact, he said that a Monk should not have any self consciousness regarding his appearance, knowledge, penance or celibacy. This was Bhagwan Mahavir's profoundly revolutionary social vision. He changed the whole situation. This true insight given from the depth of his soul made a permanent impact on the society. Bhagwan Mahavir expressed his thoughts fearlessly and firmly and liberated people from the bondage of a certain class of people, from the practices of violence and mental slavery. He led the society out of the bondage of the caste system. It is really regrettable that even in some civilized countries, prejudice due to color, race, or nationality still persists and keeps the people divided amongst themselves. Experience teaches us that color or racial arrogance cannot continue to exist for long. Humanity has to be reminded again and again that the entire human race is but one family, irrespective of differences of color, race or nationality. "All humanity is one ", is one of the fundamental teachings that Jainism offers,

There are three distinct contributions of Jainism to Indian Culture viz. Equality (Sama), Self-control (*Shama*) and Dignity of labor (*Shrama*).

The three jewels of Jainism, namely Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct depend upon the principle of equality. In the Bhagwad Gita the same principle is enshrined as the inner poise or the evenness of mind (Samatvam) or equal mindedness (Sama Chittatvam or Samata) and the man who attains this is called the one who sees with an equal eye (Sarvatra-sama-darshana). This principle of equality must be attained both in thought and in action. In thought it is the principle of Anekanta, in action it is the principle of Ahimsa.

The one significant thing that we have inherited from Bhagwan Mahavir is the art of living. I would add that he teaches the art of dying as well. The Jain way of living does not mean mere having and holding the breath; it means living a balanced life by keeping away from anger, hatred, wailing and complaining.

The basic nivritti stand-point characterizing Jainism is laid out as the foundation on which the entire structure of Jaina philosophy, with all its salient features, is raised systematically and homogeneously. Tapas or the sustained mortification and control over the body as related to the Jiva is elaborated and insisted on in the Jaina Canons.

Even the harsher and more rigorous features of tapas are stressed. Upavasa and Sallekhana, and Brahmacharya have been the distinctive features of Jainism. Principally, Jaina ethics specifies five minor Vows (*anuvratas*), three social vows (*gunavratas*), and four Spiritual vows (*shikshavratas*) to be carried out by the householder.

In addition to the five minor vows, the householder observes three social vows that govern his external conduct in the world. Then there are four spiritual vows that reflect the purity of his heart. They govern his internal life and are expressed in a life that is marked by charity (*dana*).

Jain thinkers have prescribed sub-minor-vows as precautionary measures. First, there is reference to the Shalyas or disturbing factors such as ignorance, deceit and self interest from which a person should free him. The shalyas represent the negative requirements for the perfect practice of the vratas. In addition, there are the four bhavanas (*virtues*) that represent the positive means of supporting the vratas. These qualities, which a votary of non-violence must possess, are *maitri* (love, friendship), *pramoda* (joy and respect), *karunya* (compassion), and *madhyastha* (tolerance toward living beings). Next, there are. The twelve minor vows known as *anuprekshas* (reflections). Broadly stated, the twelve topics of meditation are designed to *serve as* aids to spiritual progress to produce detachment and lead the devotee from the realm of desire to the path of renunciation.

In this way Jaina ethics prescribe thirty-five rules of conduct for the householder. By observing-these rules, he comes to possess all of the twenty-one qualities that a fully developed individual must possess.

Having observed all the rules of conduct and having passed through the eleven religious stages (pratimas), the householder is now qualified to become an ascetic. The life of a monk is marked by a spirit of detachment. Through the practice of yoga and meditation, he finally attains the highest knowledge and becomes an enlightened soul. This is the ultimate end of human life according to Jaina ethics.

Besides these, Jaina ascetics lead a life of purity, celibacy, simplicity, selfless service and perfect austerity. They have nothing to claim of their own and all the living beings are their friends par excellence. One vow of spiritual discipline (*shikshavrata*) that the householder takes is that of hospitality to the monks (*Atithi-Samvibhaga-Vrata*). This involves the supply of food, books, medicine, etc. Acharya Samantabhadra calls the vow of hospitality physical service (*Vaiyavratya*). It makes the householder the parent of the monk. Monks who are sick, aged, and helpless are thus taken care of in their time of need. *The ideal* of such physical service was practiced particularly in the area of medical help (*Aushadhi Dana*) and created a communal sense of security (*Abhaya Dana*).

Social service is a prominent outcome of Jaina ethics. It prescribes six daily duties for every householder, viz. adoration of the deity (Jina), veneration of the Gurus, study of literature and scriptures, practice of self discipline, observance of fasts and the curbing of appetites and giving of charity.

Moreover, Jainism is a leading religion in providing hospitals for animals and birds. Its epitome of true spirituality is found when a monk, wrapped in contemplation, takes time to mend the broken wing of a little sparrow. Women have been accorded equal status in the Jain religion. In fact, there were more women in the order of Lord Mahavir than men. The scriptures record many tributes to exceptional women. The care of women, especially in critical situations, is given a higher priority than that of men. Mothers of the Tirthankaras are given special honor through communal worship. Legends abound in which women of high spiritual merit such as Brahmi, Sundari, Mallikumari, and Rajimati have come to the aid of men. Women have been recognized for their exceptional contributions in the field of education, culture and religion.

Jainism propounds that every man must first put a limit to the acquisition of property, and then entirely devotes his time for public good. People engaged in independent professions such as lawyers, doctors, merchants, engineers, etc. must retire when they reach the limits fixed for them and thus make room for others to earn. Digvrata and Desha-vrata, limiting one's activities within certain prescribed sectors and within certain boundaries in a country also (Contribute in a way to lessen economic conflicts. It is expected of every well-to-do person to give ABHAYA DAN (The gift of fearlessness) to all those who are worried with the -problem of food, shelter and clothing.

Ahimsa together with Aparigraha constitutes the ethical wholeness of self control or self-restraint in social relationship; self-control is also the basis of higher spiritual life. It is happiness (*Shreya*) rather than pleasure (*Preya*) which is the goal of life. Thus self-purification (*Atma-shuddhi*) and not the acquisition of earthly or heavenly pleasures is the aim of life. The obstacles in the forms of delusion, ignorance and craving must be rooted out by practicing the different vows or Vratas, throughout life, hence, the importance of a realized soul rather than of some mysterious agency is emphasized.

Jaina ethics are -directed towards the liberation of the individual. Its orientation is therefore religious. Its end is the spiritualization of all areas of life in order to prepare individuals for the achievement of his ultimate goal. Its primary precept applicable to king and commoner alike is : Do your duty and do it in as humane a spirit as you can.

Jainism permits no distinction between religion (Dharma) and morality because both are concerned with the well-being of the individual in the world. The practice of *Dharma* enables them to achieve this end. In the words of the well-known Acharya Samantabhadra, "Religion is something which takes the living beings out of the

worldly misery and establishes them in the highest bliss." This interconnection between religion and morality imparts to Jainism its distinctive feature,

*Aparigraha* has an economic aspect according to which one should set a limit to one's own needs, it is also enjoined that whatever surplus one may accumulate beyond these needs should be disposed of through charities. *Aparigraha* is the only means whereby the growing gulf between the rich and the poor can be peacefully bridged and a fair distribution of wealth achieved. Therefore, business dealings must be conducted in the non-acquisitive spirit of *Aparigraha*. Jainism's ancient advocacy of vegetarianism is receiving global attention today due to severe food shortages in certain parts of the world and to the researches of the scientific community. Vegetarianism is the only viable answer to world hunger. It is now a fairly well established fact that whatever is necessary or desirable for human nutrition in meats or flesh foods equally well found in and at times actually derived from vegetable products. Thus Jaina ethics train good, dutiful and morally conscious citizens who can help in maintaining world peace. Jainism asks us to subdue our passions and always act with mindfulness and caution. The neglect of these ethical rules results in individual and national crimes. By stressing the importance of pure, simple and honest life for the house-holders Jainism paves the way for the world peace,

The ethical code of Jainism is the most beautiful blend of *Achara* and *Vichara* (conduct and reflection). Almost all the usual group of virtues regarding conduct or *Achara* (like *satya*, *ahimsa*, *brahmacharya*, *asteya*, *aparigraha*) which are propounded in various religions finally owe their immense importance mainly to Jaina tradition. Jainism fosters the inculcation of all these virtues in its votaries through a very wise and practical hierarchical scale of *anu-vratas*, *maha-vratas*, etc. On the side of reflection or *Vichara*, it is Jainism which has stressed right from its very beginning *tattvachintana*. It is due to this insistence on *tattvachintana* in Jainism that we find that it is the Jainas who have been almost the sole, originators in literary compositions in most of Indian languages. Jainism has contributed ably and subtly to very many chapters in the history of Indian philosophy.

The contribution of Jainism to Indian thought and life has been very significant. Actually vegetarianism as a habit prevailing throughout the Indian continent, at least in states like Gujarat and Rajasthan, is an evidence of the Jain influence. Indian literature, sculpture, architecture and painting as also every other aspect of life have been significantly influenced by Jainism. To do justice to all these will require a separate book. Here it is sufficient to say that almost every student of Indian culture or visitor to the Indian subcontinent has been considerably impressed by the sculpture and the arts of Jain temples, Jain paintings and the "inexhaustible stock of Jain literature".

The Jainas played a very important part, first in the development of the ancient Prakrit languages, as also of the Dravidian languages of the South Tamil and Kannad. Somewhat later they adopted Sanskrit to elucidate the contents of the original Prakrit canon and gradually produced a vast Sanskrit literature comprising valuable works on almost all subjects: Philosophy, logic, grammar, lexicography, poetics, politics, mathematics, astronomy and astrology. Indian literature in all its branches is thus indebted to the achievements of Jaina authors.

The Sanskrit literature of the Jainas contains a number of major philosophical and literary classics which belong to the ancient heritage of India. Umasvati, Siddhasena Divakara, Samantabhadra, Vidyananda, Haribhadra and Hemachandra made contributions which are enduring landmarks in the development of Indian thought and culture.

As regards the Jaina influence in the South, the laborious researches of Burness, Buhler, Burges Hoernle, Jacobi and Lewis Rice have almost conclusively proved that the Jainas profoundly influenced the political, religious and literary institutions of India. The Kural, an ethical poem of considerable importance in ancient Tamil literature, was composed about the 1st Century A.D., by Saint Tiruvalluvar, who was definitely a sympathizer of Jainism. It is also now almost certain that the Tolkappiyam, an authoritative work on Tamil grammar which is perhaps the earliest among the Tamil texts was composed by a Jaina. Among the other important Tamil works of Jaina

authorship may be mentioned the Naladiyar and the like, composed during the early centuries of the Christian Era.

The "Augustan Age" of Tamil literature was the period of the predominance of the Jainas in intellect and learning. Jainism became the religion of some of the Pandyan Kings. Nevertheless they retained in full their intellectual vitality which had in earlier times produced such classical works as the "Kural", Valaiyapati, Silappadikaram, and Jivaka Shinamani. Three of the five Tamil Mahakavyas, were composed by Jain writers. Moreover, the Jainas continued to enrich the Tamil vocabulary by introducing a large numbers of Sanskrit derivatives and bringing them into conformity with Tamil Phonetics.

The Jainas rendered valuable and extensive services to Kannada literature also. Some of the greatest among the Jaina poets flourished during the 10th, Century A. D., the Golden Age of Kannada literature. Thus Ponna, a Jaina Saint upon whom the Rashtrakuta King Kannara conferred the title Kavichakravarti composed *Shantipurana* and *Bhuvanaika Ramabhyudaya* during the period. Next we come to the great poet Pampa who was regarded as the father of Kannada literature. Another great Jaina writer of Kannada prose and poetry in that century was *Chamundaraya*, who besides being an able administrator and warrior, was a patron of Ranna, among others. It was he who had the colossal image of Gomateshvara carved at Shravana Belgola. Jaina influence on Telugu deserves careful investigation.

Almost every decade during medieval times in Gujarat saw a progressive enrichment of Gujarati literature with remarkable creations, major contributions here being the books written by the Jaina saints. Moreover, the unique service of the Jain Bhandaras in preserving the manuscripts, especially those on palm-leaves, is very memorable. Besides book writing, the Jainas have carried out the laudable task of preserving and spreading knowledge.

The Jainas were also great patrons of art. Indian art, both Northern and Southern, owes to them a number of remarkable monuments. And in architecture their achievements, are still greater.

As singular edifices illustrating the beauty of Jaina art, both in design and elaboration of workmanship, one may cite the temples of Mount Abu.

In South India, too, idol worship, and temple building on a grand scale may be attributed finally to Jaina influence. The colossal monolithic Jaina statues of the South, such as that of Gomateshvara at Shravan Belgola, are among the wonders of the world. The grandeur of Jain sculpture is an outstanding aspect of Jain heritage. The inspiring, dignity of Shatrunjay temples, the stately vastness of Shravan Belgola, the fine subtleties of Ranakpur tirtha and the artistic carvings of Delvada temples are some of the unique examples of the Indian Cultural heritage. The Jaina literature is written in several Indian languages so as to reach many people is a rich compendium of diverse interests. The writings of these acaryas have manifold attractions not only for those in Jaina studies but also for lovers of literature, history, culture, philosophy, and comparative religion. It is to this vast source that we now turn for an understanding of Jaina beliefs of the universe, religion and mortality.

It was however, at the hands of Shalivahana the great artist who flourished in the reign of the connoisseur of art, the Mogul Emperor Jehangir that Jaina art of, painting attained its glory. In the private collection of Shri Narendra Singh Singhi of Calcutta, there is a manuscript *Shalibhadracharita* illuminated by this artist with more than 20 paintings, some of which are superbly executed. Jainism has thus significantly enriched Indian culture in the of ethics, philosophy, literature, science and aesthetics.

Lord Mahavir emphasized that man should not only care for the welfare and advancement of his soul but also help the soul of all sentient beings towards the same goal by giving them protection and by helping them to march forward on the path of salvation. He who loses his soul loses everything.



Self-help and self-reliance constitute the basic motto of Jain religion. According to the Jain religion, 'Atma' is the creator of weal and woe: the notion of exploiting others by way of labor does not occur in this system. One of the twelve vows of a Jain Shrivak, specifically, mentions that he would never expropriate others means of livelihood. One has to appreciate the inner meaning and spirit of such preaching,

In a book entitled "*Dharmabindu Prakaran*" Haribhiadrasuri has enjoined upon the Jain Shrivak to make his living in a judicious, way. The sadhu way of life is the climax of the self-reliant life style of the Jaina.

The Jaina have a rich political heritage. There were Jaina Kings like Chola King in the South and Kumarpal in Gujarat. And their royal counselors or the minister always happened to be a Jain Shrivak. This was the tradition in Gujarat and Rajasthan generation after generation. Along with administration, these ministers always kept in mind the welfare of the state and enjoyed the total confidence' of the rulers. The Jain Shrivakas also always remained trustworthy and honest and never betrayed anybody. The names .of Vastpal - Tejpal, Vimal shah and Udayan Mantri have become immortal for their royal devotion and religious steadfastness.

The life style of the Jain Shrivak is also remarkable. When the Kings were given to amorous pastime, drinking and gambling, it is noteworthy that the Jain community could remain aloof from all these vices. It was because of their strong will power, moral devotion and honesty that Jain Shrivaks were appointed as Ministers by the Kings. Honesty is characteristic, trait of the Jain Shrivak heritage. Temperamentally the Jainas are averse to vices. The ancient Acharyas themselves conducted a drive so as to keep the Jain gentlemen n away , from seven vices that is alcoholism, non-vegetarianism, gambling,, hunting, theft and keeping harlots. Ultimately this has come to stay as the symbolic life style of Jainas through the centuries.

The Jain Sangh has been a democratic system for the last 2500 years, where every individual member of the community is heard and, attended to. This democratic functioning amongst I the Jainas is almost, unique.

The social heritage of the Jainas is equally remarkable. The inscription of Chattodgadh bears evidence to the fact that Emperor Kumarpal gave donation for Shiva temples. The temples at Sopara constructed by Vastupal refer to a mosque built by Vastupal. Jagdushah gave land to I the Muslims. Vijay Vallabhasuriji Maharai was helpful in the construction of a gurudwara. Buddhisagarji Maharaj provided inspiration for constructing hostel for Harijans.

For world peace Ahimsa be comes an absolute necessity. It must be practiced through out the world in every city, village, and town. Man must be made conscious of the supreme value of his soul and the utter uselessness of destructive weapons and armaments.

Nowadays people seems to think that religion has little importance in modem life, and that it cannot I play I any significant part in shaping the character of the people. To this, we could say in the words of Joseph Gear, I "Those who have lived among the Jainas, find them very kind people and better men because of their religion."

We should unite at this crucial juncture of world history and carry on ceaseless efforts to save humanity from extinction. It is essential that we try our best to revitalize our religious and moral principles and unite to en sure peace and harmony. Jainism preaches amity towards all beings, compassion for the miserable and detachment towards possessions.

In order to discourage violence, Bhagwan Mahavir proclaimed that the entire human race is one. एवका मणूस्सजाई । At a time when Communalism, hatred, violence and terrorism halve become rampant in contemporary times, this preaching of Bhagwan Mahavir should be our true ideal. Indeed, we have many ideals before us but it is time to practice them.

If a world religion of this order is made to emerge, I have no hesitation in saying that most of the tenets of Jainism will always find a proud of pride in it. The Greeks used to say, "Call no man happy until he be dead." Whereas Jainism on the other hand claims: "Call every man happy who lives his life following truthfully the principles of Jainism."

The: message of Jainism has even a greater relevance today. By following this path, it will be possible for us to make a meaningful use of the wonderful inventions of science and technology and make them truly blissful and create global society free from hunger and hate - at peace with itself and with its environment. Thus there will be a heaven on this earth. What more does a human being Want?