

## ABSTRACTS

### **Mahavira and Reverential Ecology**

- Satish Kumar

At the time of Mahavira, there was no environmental pollution, no global warming, no shortage of resources and no population explosion. Yet, Mahavira preached restraint on consumption, frugality in the use of resources and reverence for all life, because that is the right way to live. The Jain ecology does not arise from fear of pollution, but from love, respect and reverence for earth, for life, for the cosmos and for existence.

### **Ahimsa and Nonviolence: A Comparison of Religious and Cultural Values**

- John E. Cort

In this talk I will essay a comparative discussion of social and ethical values in the contemporary Jain and North American settings. "Nonviolence" is usually given as a rather unproblematic translation of "*ahimsa*." But an analysis of the ways in which *ahimsa* is understood and practiced within contemporary Jain communities, both in India and North America, and the ways in which nonviolence is understood in contemporary North America, shows that these concepts diverge as much as they overlap. Furthermore, to arrive at an adequate understanding of how either of these concepts is practiced, it is necessary to explore each of them within a framework of related concepts. I will look at what Henry Rosemont, Jr., terms "concept clusters." In the Jain context, these are *ahimsa*, *dharma*, *shanti*, and *moksha*. In the North American context, these are nonviolence, justice, peace, liberation, and freedom.

### **Ahimsa and Compassion**

- Kristi Wiley

As expressed in the symbol of Jain Faith adopted in 1975 on the 2,500th anniversary of the nirvana of Mahavira, "the function of souls is to render service to one another (*parasparopagraho jivanam*)." In his translation of this famous verse from the *Tattvartha-sutra*, Nathmal Tatia has noted, "souls influence each other through service which may be favorable or unfavorable, beneficial or harmful. They cannot live independently of one another. They have to share their pleasure and pain with others." Awareness of the correct view of reality (*samyak-darsana*), including the interrelatedness of life and the intrinsic worth of each living being, is associated with a feeling of compassion for others. This paper will investigate how compassion (*anukampa*, *daya*, *karuna*) is understood in various Svetambara and Digambara textual sources and the relationship between compassion and *ahimsa*, the core ethical value of Jainism.

### **Jain Responses to Terrorism**

- Kim Skoog

When we are confronted personally and socially by such tragic events as September 11<sup>th</sup>, a natural tendency is to seek guidance from established and respected authorities, be it government, community, or religious institutions. With its calming emphasis on nonviolence and peace, Jainism constitutes a source of guidance with great potential in these troubled times. This presentation will first examine the nature of terrorism and possible justifications for its occurrence, and then consider how Jainism might react to such acts of violence and the reasons

behind them. At the heart of this discussion is the central question of “Why do people hurt one another?” As this question dovetails into the terrorism discussion, it can be further asked, how might Mahavira and other Jain thinkers respond to the related question of, “Can one ever justify the intentional harming of another living being, and in particular another human being?”

### **The Ontological and Epistemological Significance of *Anekantavada***

- John M. Koller

*Anekantavada*, the Jain theory of the many-sidedness of reality, is an attempt to avoid the one-sided (*ekanta*) errors of identifying existence with either the permanence and sameness of being on the one hand, as Vedanta does, or with the ever-changing processes of becoming, on the other, as the Buddhists do. In this paper I explore the metaphysical and epistemological aspects of *anekantavada*, looking not only at its historical significance in the larger context of Indian philosophy, but also at its contemporary significance.

### **Mahavira, *Anekantavada* and the Contemporary World**

- Samani Charitrapragya

*Anekantavada* has been viewed in a variety of ways. This paper will focus on the following questions: How is *Anekanta* defined within the Jain tradition? When and how this concept came into existence? Can the philosophy of *Anekanta* serve to solve the problems we face today? What are its specific applications and uses, specially in the context of contemporary world? Drawing on some examples and anecdotes, I will discuss the value of *Anekanta* in Mahavira’s time and in our times.

### **Beyond *Anekantavada*: A Jain Perspective On Tolerance**

- Paul Dundas

I will start with an account (shown in an overhead) of the significance of the *samavasarana*, the divinely constructed assembly hall where humans, animals and gods gather to listen to the Jina preaching. This provides a way of introducing the Jain notion of listening to the doctrine and tolerating those fellow creatures with whom one is listening to it. I will then allude to a late medieval question concerning whether those who are not fully Jains (technically, those not falling into the category of *bhavya*, capable of responding to the Jain message and gaining *samyaktva*, correct attitude) are eligible to enter the *samavasarana*. This will lead to a discussion by the last great Jain intellectual, Yasovijaya (17th century) about the status of those who are not Jains and yet follow an ethically sound path. This will involve a brief account of Yasovijaya’s notion of *madhyasthya*—neutrality, and the possibility of linking this with modern notions of religious tolerance.

### **Exemplars of *Anekanta* and *Ahimsa*: The Case of the Early Jains of Mathura in Art & Epigraphy**

- Sonya Rhie Quintanilla

The pre-schismatic sect of Jains, known as the *Ardhaphalaka*, were active in Mathura between the second century B.C. and the third century A.D. They are portrayed as donning the *rajoharana* and *mukhapatika* in order to prevent injury to tiny insects. Using art historical and epigraphical evidence, my paper will show that the practices of these early Jains in Mathura exemplified the ideals of *anekanta* and *ahimsa*. They adopted elements from other current religious traditions and adapted them to cohere with Jain ideals. For example, they began to cause *tirthankaras* to be sculpted and worshipped in the form of human icons--a practice which otherwise had only been common among the followers of cults of nature divinities and some sects of Hinduism. Their practice of non-violence and tolerance of other religions was

instrumental in creating an environment that was conducive to peaceful and productive multi-sectarian interaction. This, in turn, contributed to the rise of Mathura as arguably one of the most prominent, influential and cosmopolitan cultural centers in the history of India populated by members of diverse ethnicities and religions.

### **Religious Dissonance and Reconciliation: The Haribhadra Story**

- Christopher Key Chapple

The name Haribhadra probably refers to at least two great philosophers who took an interest in inter-religious understanding. The first lived during the 6th century, the second during the 8th century. Centuries later, fantastic biographical tales were circulated about Haribhadra, implicating this Haribhadra in acts of violence and revenge, not the usual undertakings for a scholar committed to nonviolence. In this presentation, I will discuss the nature and intent of these stories within the context of the time they were told. I will then examine some of the techniques used within Haribhadra's philosophical texts to reconcile or at least conceptually co-exist with other conflicting worldviews. This will be discussed in light of the Jain philosophies of *syadvada* and *anekantavada*.

### ***Anekanta, Ahimsa and the Question of Pluralism***

- Anne Vallely

Jainism embraces the philosophy of *anekanta* as staunchly as it espouses the "truth" of *ahimsa*. *Anekanta* and *ahimsa* are customarily discussed in terms of how each presupposes the other: how the acceptance of the partiality of knowledge is an expression of non-violence; and how a commitment to non-violence necessitates a pluralistic outlook. The two are essentially seen as different aspects of the same ethical orientation. But can we treat *ahimsa* as a normative ethical ideal and accept, as morally just, the view (and practice) of others who repudiate it? It has been argued that a truly pluralistic approach is a logical impossibility—that some criteria of truth are essential to all worldviews. Pluralism, therefore, becomes either a form of moral relativism, or a form of religious exclusivism (D'Costa, 1996). I will tender the possibility that *anekanta* is a way out of this epistemological quagmire—that a genuine pluralistic view is possible without lapsing into extreme moral relativism or exclusivity, and that *ahimsa* can serve as a powerful ethic ideal.

### **The Tremendous Practicality of *Anekantavada***

- Gabriel Figueroa

This discussion will focus on *Anekantavada's* exact etymological definition of *Non-one-endedness*, or equivalently, *Nonsingular Conclusivity*. Real-world examples will illustrate *Anekantavada's* usefulness far beyond philosophical or religious exercises. Its applications of *Nayavada* and *Syadvada* will be observed to consider how a fuller and more personally activating understanding of any particular thing, idea or proposition can be gained. *Anekantavada's* value in problem solving and negotiating will also be explored. It will be shown that *Anekantavada* is not a truth-denying 'relativism' nor a timid 'non-absolutism.' Rather, it is a bold understanding of truth as that which is best discerned through more than only one process of investigation, more than a single angle of observation, which yields more than one independent conclusion. It is the job of the individual *Anekantavadin* to intelligently integrate those disparate conclusions – through one's mind, speech and physical actions – towards personal and collective fulfillment.

### **Unifying Jain Concepts with Day-To-Day Thinking and Behavior**

- Pallavi Gala and Biren Mehta

About five years ago, an acute need for a special forum for Jain teenagers was identified at Jain Center of Southern California. Thus was born the Teen Discussion Class in which students

explore the application and practice of Jain values in their daily lives. The interactive format allows students to think a situation through, express themselves and learn from each other. This class clearly serves two purposes: it helps crystallize Jain values as students are ready to leave for college, and it strengthens the community spirit by bringing the new generation closer. In our presentation, within the larger context of Jain education, we will talk about how the need for such a forum and the special needs of the teenagers were identified. We will also talk about the classroom discussions regarding various Jain values, including *Ahimsa*, *Anekantavada* and *Sapt Vyasana Tyaag*, and how they relate to the daily lives of the teenagers.

### **Jain Education in the 21st Century**

- Sudhir Shah

Recent world events emphasize more than ever the applicability and significance of Jain principles of *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Anekanta* (non-absolutism) and *Aparigraha* (non-attachment) in achieving world peace. However, Jainism is not known very widely. And even among Jains, limited knowledge has led to faulty interpretations and misconceptions that have led to blind following of mere rituals. This creates a special challenge for educators involved in teaching the next generation of Jains. Today we need to focus on the original concepts, the philosophy and its applicability in day-to-day life rather than rules and rituals that may be meaningless. A modern approach in Jain education may open new insight and direction. It may even go against the tradition.

We must teach the next generation of Jains that Jainism is not to be practiced at the physical level only but at the mental level as well. Once understood in the modern context, it will automatically raise the curiosity of people who have active interest in and dedication towards reviving lost values which would benefit not only them, but also humanity at large. Some may even go deeper and dig out the philosophical truth from the heaps of religious jargon.

### **Barefoot On The Cyber Route: Imaging Jainism in Higher Education**

- Sudhamahi Regunathan

History talks of *Dakshinapatha* and *Utarapatha*, the two routes that travelers, specifically Jain tradesmen, took to traverse the countryside. This was the time, in the early years of the Christian era that Jainism was at its peak. A time, when Jainism communicated with the people fluently and left such an impact that its influence can be felt even today in the customs, literature and traditions prevailing in different parts of the country. Is it possible to recreate history with the cyberpath? This paper reflects upon these ideas with Jain Vishva Bharti Institute (Deemed University) as a case study.

### **Jainism in the College Curriculum**

- Tara Sethia

Even though Jainism is one of the oldest religious traditions and one which continues to be highly relevant in the context of contemporary problems, in our college curricula it is sorely underrepresented and frequently misrepresented. Courses fully devoted to Jainism are almost non-existent in undergraduate programs, and there are not too many college courses in which topics related to Jainism receive serious attention. The only exposure to Jainism college students might get is through Jainism as a topic of study in courses such as the History of Religions, History of India, and World History. Based on the review of relevant college texts, I will identify some of the more serious problems associated with the coverage of Jainism as a topic in these courses, with the hope of initiating a discussion in this forum--of scholars and practitioners of Jainism--to help better understand and effectively address these problems.