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## MODELS OF AND FOR THE STUDY OF THE JAINS

JOHN E. CORT

In 1984 I was asked to contribute a very short article on Jainism for the new *Encyclopedia of Asian History* (Cort 1988). My article began as follows:

The Jainas are a cluster of lineages of professional male and female renunciants (*sadhus* and *sadhvis*), considered by the majority Brahmanical tradition of India to be heterodox, and those castes (*jatis*) which owe religious allegiance to these lineages.

When published, this sentence had been changed by an unknown editorial hand to read:

Jainism, an Indian religion dating from at least the sixth century BCE and considered heterodox by Brahmanical Hinduism.

Now, one might disagree with the use of the overly reified terms “religion” and “Hinduism”—following the Harvard tradition of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, I would have preferred “religious tradition” and my original “Brahmanical tradition”—but on the whole I have to agree with this editorial change. For, in fact, I had started the article

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as if it were to be an article on the Jains, not an article on Jainism. As I will discuss in this essay, the study of the Jains and the study of Jainism are different studies. The former involves the study of the religious practices and beliefs of the people who call themselves Jains, whereas the latter involves the study of that set of interrelated tenets, dogmas, and ideologies within Indian intellectual history which are known as Jainism (Jain *mata*, Jain *siddhānta*, Jain *śāsana*).

I begin with this brief excursus into the sort of editorial adventure familiar to most writers because it raises a fundamental issue which has not been addressed to date in the field of Jain studies, although students of the Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic traditions have done much invaluable spadework. This issue is the great difference in the answers to the two questions, “What is Jainism?” and “Who are the Jains and what are their religious beliefs?” The implicit models for understanding the Jains traditionally posited by Western scholarship have assumed that Jainism is a religion definably distinct from Hinduism, and that the Jains are the people who follow that religion; and conversely, that what the Jains do and believe that does not fit the prior definition of Jainism is not Jainism, but rather some form of “Hindu accretion.” One can argue with this assumption even at the most basic philological level—Jain does not mean “those who follow the Jain religion,” but rather “those who are followers/devotees of the Jina.” To return for a moment to the same encyclopedia article, the two different approaches to the problem can be seen in the second sentence of the two versions of the article. In the original, this sentence read:

These lineages and castes share a unique, interrelated set of cosmological and soteriological beliefs which, while they have changed some over time, have always set the Jainas apart from other strands of Indian society.

In the revised version, this sentence read:

The Jain community adheres to a unique, interrelated set of cosmological beliefs that, while having changed to a certain extent over time, have always set the Jains apart from other strands of Indian society.

In the original, I placed the Jains themselves first, and said that the beliefs are the beliefs of the Jains; in the revised version, the beliefs are placed first, and the Jains are made to “adhere” to these beliefs.

The former model gives place of primacy to the people, saying that “Jainism” is what the Jains believe, and therefore is fluid and open to multiple interpretations. The revised version gives primacy to the beliefs, and by saying that the Jains adhere to these beliefs, posits a static, unchanging model. While such a statement may be doctrinally pleasing to an orthodox Jain, descriptively it is quite problematic (if not indefensible), and certainly leads to many problems in interpreting the beliefs and practices of the Jains through time.<sup>1</sup>

The standard portrait for understanding the Jains that dominates Jain (and Indian) studies was developed in the course of the early flurry of Jain studies in the 19th century, primarily by German philologically-oriented scholars. This model reached its present form in the works of Hermann Jacobi and Georg Bühler in the two decades surrounding the turn of the 20th century, and has remained fundamentally unquestioned ever since. In this paper, I propose to indicate those factors in the universe of academic discourse in the 19th century which proved crucially formative for this portrait, to indicate ways in which this assumed, unquestioned portrait has proven detrimental to subsequent scholarship on the Jains, and finally to propose an alternative model for understanding the Jains. My complaint is not with the factual truth of the standard academic portrait, for, with the exception of some minor details, it is accurate; rather, my complaint is with the ways in which this portrait has severely restricted the scope of subsequent research.

## THE STANDARD PORTRAIT

First, let me briefly state the standard portrait for the understanding of the Jains. This portrait will be familiar to the reader; in its dry factuality (seemingly no scholar ever bothered to ask why one might want to be a Jain), this model is a major cause of the lack of interest in the Jains. The comments of Paul Dundas (1985:162) concerning the depiction of the Jains by Margaret (Mrs. Sinclair) Stevenson in her 1915 *The Heart of Jainism* are in many ways applicable to the broader, un-missionary-biased, academic form of the standard portrait:

[the picture] of the apparently relentless asceticism of Jaina monks and the grim and cheerless probity of the lay community which supports them has, I feel, served to engender and sustain a highly resilient prejudice according to which Jainism is seen as grey and unappealing, as austere as its followers who are themselves negligible in number and therefore in interest, its tenets less profound than those of Buddhism, its mythology less spectacular than that of Hinduism.<sup>3</sup>

In the similar words of Kendall Folkert (1977:232), “the Jainas are often characterized as austere or sombre . . . the person who seeks information concerning the Jainas is likely to confront such characterizations with almost monotonous regularity.”

The portrait as presented below is taken from three lengthy encyclopedia articles. I use the 1914 article by Hermann Jacobi in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (reprinted in Jacobi 1946:1-47), for it is the first full expression of the model. The article by the Italian Indologist Carlo della Casa in Bleeker and Widengren’s 1971 *Historia Religionum* represents a recent version of the model by a Western scholar, while the article by the late U. P. Shah, in the 1977 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, shows the extent to which the standard scholarly portrait has become accepted and perpetuated by Indian scholarship. I could have chosen any of a large number of works for my example; the choice was somewhat arbitrary.<sup>3</sup>

Jainism is first and foremost characterized as a *śramaṇa* religion, like Buddhism. It is viewed therefore not so much in and for itself, but rather as a reaction against Brāhmanical Hinduism, as a “protest against the orthodox Vedic (early Hindu) ritualistic cult of the period” (Shah 1977:8). The life of Vardhamāna Mahāvīra is given in detail, in part because of a Christian interest in founders of religions, in part because of the obvious parallels with the life of Gautama Buddha, and in part because of the rich documentation available for his biography (although in the standard account only the Śvetāmbara version is given; only P. S. Jaini 1979 gives the different Digambara version). A nod is given to the prior history of the tradition with a mention of the likely historicity of Parsvanatha; the Jain universal history of the other 22 Jinas of this era is relegated to a discussion of mythology or cosmology (for “it goes without saying that the Tīrthankaras, except the last two, belong to mythology rather than history” [Jacobi 1914:466]), if not ignored altogether. The subsequent history of the Jains is given briefly: Mahāvīra’s immediate disciples; the spread of Jainism out of its North Indian homeland; the split into

Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras (between which the differences “are rather trivial” [Jacobi 1914:465]); the writing down of the Śvetāmbara canon; the later developments of Jainism under the Jain-influenced medieval dynasties of Karnataka and Gujarat; the subsequent long, steady “decline” of Jainism; and the rise of the aniconic sects in late-medieval times.<sup>4</sup>

The discussion then shifts into the area of doctrine, with no real causal link between doctrine and history. The Jain doctrine is presented as unchanging, marked by “adversion to soaring metaphysical flights” and “faithful to a sort of archaic realism based on common sense” (della Casa 1971:347). Time is eternal, a beginningless and endless repetition of upward and downward cycles. Time and the universe, as beginningless, had no creator. Everything is composed of six universals (*dravya*): life or soul (*jīva*), and five kinds of nonlife or nonsoul. These are physical matter (*pudgala*), space (*ākāśa*), time (*kāla*), and the principles of motion (*dharma*) and rest (*adharmā*). Alternately, there are the seven or nine fundamental truths (*tattva*) which underlie Jain doctrine: life (*jīva*), nonlife (*ajīva*), karmic influx (*āsrava*), karmic bondage (*bandha*), stoppage of karmic influx (*saṁvara*), wearing away of binding karma (*nirjarā*), liberation (*mokṣa*), and sometimes unwholesome karma (*pāpa*) and wholesome karma (*puṇya*). (*Pāpa* and *puṇya* are otherwise subsumed under *bandha*.) The nature of karmic bondage, the eight types of karma, the stopping of karmic influx, and the wearing away of accumulated karma are discussed. A discussion of the unique Jain epistemology, with its important concepts of *syādvāda* (qualified assertion), *sapta-bhaṅgi-naya* (sevenfold predication), and *anekāntavāda* (manifold perspectives) follows, with no effort at explaining the puzzle of how this epistemology fits into the larger Jain doctrine and into Jain practice and soteriology.

Discussion of Jain karma theory leads into a discussion of ethics, which, for the Jain, “has for its end the realization of *nirvāṇa*, or *mokṣa*” (Jacobi 1914:470). “The core of Jaina ethics is the doctrine of *ahiṁsā*, or noninjury to all living creatures” (Shah 1977:8). For the mendicant, *ahiṁsā* is one of the five great binding vows (*mahāvratā*) which form the core of a life of noninvolvement and asceticism. For the layperson, *ahiṁsā* is a guiding factor in economics and other forms of social interaction. The mendicant

quest for liberation is dominated by the elimination of karma, and can be described in “the doctrine of the 14 *gunasthānas*, i.e., the 14 steps which, by a gradual increase of good qualities and decrease of *karma*, lead from total ignorance and wrong belief to absolute purity of the soul and final liberation” (Jacobi 1914:472). This regimen gives pride of place to the mendicant. “The life of a lay votary or a householder is only a preparatory stage to the religious life of an ascetic” (Shah 1977:11). “The ideal of conduct is that of the monk, which a layman, of course, cannot realize, but which he tries to approach by taking upon himself particular vows” (Jacobi 1914:473). These twelve vows (*vrata*) are described as the core of the lay religious life. The degree to which the twelve *vratas* remain ideological prescriptive statements which are rarely actualized in lay life is not mentioned.

The concluding section of the portrait entails a description of the rich universe of lay practices and rites, and art and iconography (which, because Jainism has previously been defined as an anti-Brahmanical, anti-ritualistic *śramaṇa* tradition, is seen as marginal and even antithetical to the “true core” of Jainism). Finally, there is a brief mention of the “present state” (Jacobi) or “present condition” (*della Casa*) of Jainism, a short hodge-podge of demographic details and uncontextualized names and organizations.

#### THE NINETEENTH CENTURY ORIGINS OF THE STANDARD PORTRAIT

I fear my depiction of the standard academic portrait might strike the reader as overly harsh and at times even cynical. I should here clearly acknowledge my debt to the nearly two centuries of prior Jain scholarship, for without that scholarship there would be no foundation for further study. I am not interested in criticizing the work of the earlier scholars here. Rather I want to show some of the ways in which the portrait developed by these early scholars, a portrait which grew out of their 19th century intellectual environment, has been unquestioningly accepted and perpetuated by later scholars. My objections to this portrait are not that it is untrue, but rather that it is misleading and inadequate to a full understanding of Jain religiosity.

Not only has it led to the avoidance of the Jains by most serious scholarship on India, it is also unfair and derogatory to contemporary Jains themselves. For example, the Jain denial of a creator is sometimes misunderstood in a way offensive to Jains; statements such as della Casa's (1971:353), "The existence of a supreme divinity, unique, purely spiritual, omniscient and omnipotent, creator and ruler of worldly things, is resolutely denied by the Jainas," or the common description of the Jains as atheistic, grossly misrepresent the sophisticated and subtle theism of the Jains.

Edward Said in his 1978 book *Orientalism* strongly criticized traditional Orientalist scholarship and the entire complex of cultural and racial assumptions and ideologies known as Orientalism. I find his arguments in many ways applicable to European scholarship on the Jains<sup>5</sup> (although I feel that he has in many instances overstated his case, and imputed malicious intent where often none existed<sup>6</sup>). In brief, Said asserts that Orientalist scholarship was (is) primarily concerned with the classical forms of the civilizations of the Orient, and that by searching "for survivals of the glorious heritage in the decayed and corrupt form among descendants" (Marcus and Fischer 1986:2) of those civilizations, that scholarship denied any intrinsic value to the contemporary cultures:

abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a "classical" Oriental civilization, [were] always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities.

Faced with the obvious decrepitude and political impotence of the modern Orient, the European Orientalist found it his duty to rescue some portion of a lost, past classical Oriental grandeur in order to "facilitate ameliorations" in the contemporary Orient (Said 1978:300, 79).

Said forcefully exposes the ways in which the antiquarian, "classical" emphases of Orientalist scholarship have resulted in a valorization of the past and a devaluation of the present.<sup>7</sup> What Said misses, however, is the extent to which this is also a powerful tendency *within* the religious traditions themselves (if not in all religions; see Eliade 1959).<sup>8</sup> Throughout human history, religious individuals have tended to devalue the present in favor of the times of the beginning and/or the end. In the case of Jainism, Jain cosmology locates contemporary humanity as being in the fifth spoke of the downward cycle of time. This is an era when liberation is

impossible, and both religion and culture are in an irreversible state of decline. The 24 Jinas, however, lived in the middle two spokes of the cycle, when true dharma and liberation were possible. That was the “golden era,” of which the present is only a dim and fading reflection. Thus, Jain dogma and Orientalist scholarship coincide in their valuation of the past over the present. The assumptions behind these two subjective judgements (for that is what they are), however, are very different. Whereas the assumption behind Jain dogma is that of a salvifically-oriented cosmology, that behind the Orientalist/Indological scholarship is based on European belief in the value of history and culturally-mediated Renaissance and Protestant critiques of tradition.

The reader may well balk at the wide-ranging nature of this last claim, and demand that I cite chapter and verse to prove my point. Certainly my task would be easier if I could show that all the important early scholars of the Jains had been trained in Protestant seminaries. They were not; the German pioneers were trained in Indology, Oriental literature, or Sanskrit at universities such as Berlin, Göttingen, Strassburg, and Thüringen.<sup>9</sup> But my contention is that the universe of discourse in 19th century Western academia was permeated and informed by historicist and Protestant beliefs to such an extent that a scholar could not help but be formatively influenced by them.

Hans Frei has documented the rise of interest in historical criticism of the Bible in German universities from the latter years of the 18th century (Frei 1974:158-159):<sup>10</sup>

A huge body of technical literature about the Bible developed in the last third of the eighteenth century, ranging from lexical, philological, textual and other aids to historical-critical studies proper, including the first of the so-called general historical and literary introductions to the literature of the Old and New Testaments.

This change in biblical scholarship was the logical conclusion of the changed attitudes towards both the Bible and study of the Bible initiated by the early leaders of the reformation such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli. **The Protestant reformers went back to the Bible as the authoritative source for Christian faith and morals, and downplayed the validity of the intermediate 1,500 years of interpretation.** (The Catholic Church, on the other hand, held that both the Bible and tradition were equally authoritative in

such matters, a position confirmed at the 1545-1563 Council of Trent.) The Protestant position is most concisely stated in the words of an English Protestant author, William Chillingworth, who in his 1638 *The Religion of the Protestants* wrote, "THE BIBLE, I say, the BIBLE only, is the religion of Protestants" (quoted in Sykes 1963:175): Because of the primacy of the Bible, Protestants from Martin Luther onward had stressed the need for a better understanding of the Bible, and hence the need for biblical scholarship.

Simultaneous (and dialectically interactive) with this Protestant interest in the Ur-text of the Christian tradition (and, by extension, in the life of the early Church as exemplary, as opposed to the intervening 1,500 years of Catholic tradition, which were viewed as corruptions of the pure, early Church) was the European interest in history, stemming from the rediscovery of the Classical Antiquity of Greece and Rome during the Renaissance. The influence of the Renaissance emphasis on classics and classical origins may in fact have been greater on the German Indologists than Protestant emphasis on the Bible and Christian origins. Interest in history naturally led to an interest in origins and beginnings, an interest which peaked in the latter part of the 19th century. The writings of G. W. F. Hegel (especially 1975) in the early decades of the 19th century were widely influential in their positing of a linear progression of history towards self-knowledge and human freedom. Another key element in this was the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and for the remainder of the century (and even still today), the question of origins was inextricably intertwined with the search for general underlying principles, which often involved evolutionary theories. The most basic question was that of the origin of humanity, but scholars in all fields pursued similar lines of inquiry. The late 19th and early 20th century produced a galaxy of weighty tomes with titles such as *The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man* (John Lubbock, 1870), *Der Ursprung des Eigentums, der Familie und des Staates* (Friedrich Engels, 1884), *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief* (Sabine Baring-Gould, 1869-70), *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion* (F. Max Müller, 1878), and *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (Edward B. Tylor, 1865). Mircea Eliade (1969:44) has

rightly said of this time, “‘Origin and development’ of something became almost a cliché.”

These factors—an emphasis on history, and hence on origins and evolutionary theories of development—based on a simultaneous Protestant theological valuation of the time of Christian origins, and a Renaissance valuation of history, dominated much of 19th century academia. Scholars of India and the Jains could not possibly have been immune from these influences, and in fact these influences are evident not only in the emphases and directions of their scholarship, but also in the model for understanding the Jains which they developed and which has been inherited unquestioningly by present-day scholarship.

#### JAIN SCHOLARSHIP IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

I do not propose to review here in detail the history of Western scholarship on the Jains, concerning which an ample literature exists.<sup>11</sup> The earliest Western accounts of the Jains were those of travellers, soldier-administrators, scholar-administrators, and missionaries, published in articles and books in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> These accounts were based primarily on personal observation, and interviews with Jain *yatis* and Brāhman̄s knowledgeable about the Jains, as well as a limited amount of textual material. As Indian texts started making their way to Europe, German scholars began to get interested in the Jains. At first this interest was philological, for Jain lexicons and dictionaries were a vital part of the study of Sanskrit (and this philological interest has continued to dominate Jain studies in Germany to this day). Scholars also edited and studied some of the few other texts which were available in Europe, and the English missionary J. Stevenson made the first translation of a non-philological Jain text (the Śvetāmbara Mūrtipūjaka *Kalpa Sūtra*) into English in 1847. In the 1860s and 1870s the German scholar Georg Bühler was involved in the British government’s search for Sanskrit manuscripts in India, and in connection with this task he purchased over 500 Jain manuscripts, almost all Śvetāmbara, for the University of Berlin. Based on these manuscripts, a busy phase of German scholarship on the Jains ensued.

The three main figures in this scholarship were Albrecht Weber at Berlin, his student Hermann Jacobi at Münster, Kiel, and finally Bonn, and Bühler, after his return from India in 1880, at Vienna.<sup>13</sup>

Kendall Folkert (1984 and 1988) has discussed some of the ways in which the debates among these scholars proved formative for later Jain studies. From the 1850s, Albrecht Weber, Christian Lassen and a number of English scholars had argued that the Jains were in fact Buddhist schismatics. In a series of articles and text-introductions between 1879 and 1884, Hermann Jacobi conclusively demonstrated the independence of the Jains from the Buddhists. But the pattern of seeing the Jains through the perspective of Buddhist studies has lasted until the present, with Jain studies subordinated to Buddhist studies. As Folkert noted (1988:105),

In establishing the Jains' independence from Buddhism, Jacobi had in effect treated the Jains as a miniature Buddhism, i.e., as a parallel but distinctive ascetic movement whose history should be understood on the same model as Buddhist history.

Folkert has documented in detail the subsequent debate, between Georg Bühler (and Johannes Klatt and Ernst Leumann) on the one hand and Weber and the French scholar Auguste Barth on the other, concerning the antiquity of the Jains.

These early scholars did the research that led to the development of the standard academic model of the Jains. Because of their interest in the origins of the Jains, “they were drawn first to the Śvetāmbara tradition, which appeared to preserve the oldest and most complete set of texts” (Folkert 1984:262). The scholars accepted the Śvetāmbara position on the authenticity and antiquity of these texts, to the subsequent neglect of equally important Digambara texts (and, therefore, of the Digambaras themselves). In studying a religion, 19th century scholars sought for a canon, a scripture, which they could study on the model of biblical studies: this they thought they had found in the 45 *Āgamas* of the Śvetāmbara Mūrtipūjakas.

Interest in the origins of the Jains led scholars to focus on its beginnings as a *śramaṇa* movement. The *śramaṇa* tradition as described in the Śvetāmbara texts then became seen as normative and defining, and the Jain tradition became conceptualized “as a closed, essentially ascetic system, parallel to Buddhism” (Folkert 1988:105). Like Buddhism, which at least one 19th century author entitled “the

Protestantism of the East” (Clarke 1871), Jainism is seen less in its own right than as a protest movement against the suzerainty of the Vedic Brāhmaṇ priests. The core of the religion was seen to be the lineages of professional ascetics, and the practices and beliefs of these ascetics taken to be the true Jain doctrine. The laity are seen to be at best only imperfect, inadequate future mendicants, and there is no real attempt to understand properly lay religiosity (see the quotations above). The standard model focuses on the supposed unity and continuity of this doctrine, and history is relegated to the background. Differences in belief among different Jain subgroups are dismissed as “insignificant” (cf. Schubring 1962:66), as are the differences in orthopraxy which have led to sharp divisions among the Jains. Vardhamāna Mahāvīra is viewed as the Jain equivalent of “the historical Jesus,” and Ādinātha, Pārśvanātha, and the other Jinās as “historical (or mythological) prophets,” with their roles as objects of cultic practice ignored. The later aniconic sects such as the Sthānakvāsīs, Terāpanthīs, and Tāraṇapanthīs, are viewed as protestant reforms, returning to the true aniconic, ascetic religion of the original scripture.

One thing that has made this standard academic portrayal so attractive, and which has minimized awareness of its inadequacies, is the extent to which it coincides with the internally orthodox perspective on the tradition, as seen in a normative theological text such as the late-19th century reformist Śvetāmbara mendicant Ātmārāmji’s *Jaintattvadarś* (“The Ideal of Jain Faith”). As stated above, Jain cosmology views time, culture, and religion as currently degenerating. The purest, truest form of religion was found only in the two middle spokes of the cycle of time. This religion is universal and unchanging. The last 2,500 years have seen the gradual distancing of humanity from this true religion, which is known ever more imperfectly. This true religion is the *mokṣa-mārga*, the Jain path to liberation. This path can be followed only by a mendicant, and involves gradual withdrawal from social interaction, and increasingly severe asceticism to wear away karma, culminating eventually in liberation. This true religion is to be found in the sacred texts, the normative *śāstra* (a term of widely variant references in different contexts; see Cort in press), which can be studied only from one who has studied them and followed the practices reputedly

contained in them. Contemporary practices tend to be at best pale reflections of the true practices.<sup>14</sup>

One would expect that the scholarly model *of* the Jains and the internal ideological model *for* the Jains would exhibit great similarity.<sup>15</sup> The problem is that through unreflective use, the scholarly model *of* understanding the Jains has become reified and become much more a model *for* understanding the Jains; i.e., rather than the model changing as new data is entered into it, the data is seen through the filter of the model, and either fitted into the model if it corresponds with the model, or else relegated to a marginal position if it does not correspond to the model. The end result is a model that is more or less shared by both the scholars of the tradition and the participants in the tradition. Such a position may be very comforting to Jain apologists; but it is inadequate for scholarly purposes, and results in what Wayne Proudfoot (1985) has recently described as a “protective strategy.”

Wilfred Cantwell Smith has in many places argued for an approach to religious traditions in which the participant’s perspective is given primacy of place. Simply put, Smith’s position is, “no statement about a religion is valid unless it can be acknowledged by that religion’s believers” (Smith 1976:146; see also Smith 1981:97). Smith developed this stance in the context of the study of the sacred texts of other traditions: for example, no one can understand the *Qu’ran* without first understanding that a Muslim views it as a revealed and therefore sacred book, and therefore reading it as a Muslim would. As one strategy in approaching the sacred text or the religious experiences of a tradition, there is undeniable validity to this position. But as Proudfoot (1985:198) argues, “it is inappropriate if extended to include all statements about religion.” When so extended—whether consciously or not—it then becomes a “protective strategy,” i.e., protecting the scholar and the religious tradition from explanation and interpretation based on other perspectives.

Religious apologists often accuse outside scholars of reductionism which leads to distortions and misrepresentations. Proudfoot notes that this argument conflates two different types of reductionism. On the one hand there is “descriptive reduction,” which is “the failure to identify an emotion, practice, or experience under the description by which the subject identifies it” (Proudfoot 1985:196). An example of

this would be reducing the motives behind all instances of religious renunciation in India to sexual anxieties. But there is also “explanatory reduction,” which

consists in offering an explanation of an experience in terms that are not those of the subject and that might not meet with his approval. This is perfectly justifiable and is, in fact, normal procedure. . . . The explanation stands or falls according to how well it can account for all the available evidence. (Proudfoot 1985:197)

The convergence of the scholarly model *of* the Jains and the internal model *for* the Jains results in an unconscious protective strategy which has severely hindered the further development of Jain studies. In both cases there is a valuation of what is ancient, what is in Sanskrit or Prakrit rather than Gujarati or Kannada, and what is found in the earliest texts. For the scholar to accept and propound this view is to accept as descriptive what are in fact normative, ideological statements within the tradition. It is to put forward as etic what are in fact emic statements.

The distinction between emic and etic statements was adopted in the 1960s by anthropologists from the linguistic work of the 1950s of Kenneth L. Pike. Pike adapted the terms from the linguistic terms “phonetic” and “phonemic.” In brief, Pike (1967:37) defined the two as follows:

The etic viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system, and as an initial approach to an alien system. The emic viewpoint results from studying behavior as from inside the system.

Thus, emic statements are culturally specific, whereas etic statements are comparative. As adopted by anthropologists, emic and etic can be defined as follows (Harris 1968:571 and 575):

Emic statements refer to logico-empirical systems whose phenomenal distinctions or “things” are built up out of contrasts and discriminations significant, meaningful, real, accurate, or in some other fashion regarded as appropriate by the actors themselves. An emic statement can be falsified if it can be shown that it contradicts the cognitive calculus by which relevant actors judge that entities are similar or different, real, meaningful, significant, or in some other sense “appropriate” or “acceptable.”

Etic statements depend upon phenomenal distinctions judged appropriate by the community of scientific observers. Etic statements cannot be falsified if they do not conform to the actor’s notion of what is significant, real, meaningful, or appropriate. Etic statements are verified when independent observers using similar operations agree that a given event has occurred.

Two examples from my research should make the distinction clear. One Śvetāmbar Mūrtipūjak Jain *sādhu* established a research institute to prove the scientific veracity of the various cosmological and geographical descriptions found in many early and authoritative Jain texts. Since these texts describe the sun (actually, two suns) as revolving around the earth, and the earth itself as flat, this institute worked to prove the truth behind these assertions, and concomitantly the falsity of Western geography and astronomy. When this mendicant said, “the earth is flat,” he was making an emic statement. Should I then say, “the earth is flat,” I also would be making an emic statement. On the etic level, the correct statement is, “that Jain mendicant says that the earth is flat.” Similarly, another mendicant, when interviewed concerning laypeople’s intentions in performing *mūrtipūjā*, stated unequivocally, “No one ever worships the Jina for worldly ends.” Since my research had uncovered extensive evidence to negate his claim, if I were to write, “No Jain ever worships the Jina for worldly ends,” I would be making an emic statement in the guise of an etic statement. The correct way to formulate the situation etically is, “One mendicant stated that no Jain ever worships the Jina for worldly ends.”<sup>16</sup>

When scholars accept and repeat Jain normative, ideological statements concerning the relative authenticity of the contemporary tradition vis-à-vis the textual ideals, they are guilty of making inappropriately emic statements. For the scholar attempting to understand the Jain religious tradition, that tradition as a whole, from its beginnings until the present, has significance; within this approach, the scholar must pay attention to both the Jain tradition of the time of Vardhamana Mahavira and the Jain tradition of the present. To place undue value upon the time of origins and hence undervalue the subsequent history of change is to talk emically, to use a protective strategy, and ultimately to practice a form of Orientalism. It is certainly not to study the religious phenomena before one. To view a tradition as static, as exhibiting an ideal form encapsulated in a particular body of texts, is again to speak emically. Michael Fischer (1980:8) has defined culture in a way that is equally valid when applied to religion: “Culture is dynamic, with symbolic structures that grow and decay through repetition and the addition of meanings to symbols, or through the reduction of polysemic symbols into mere

signs.” Religion as etically studied by the scholar is also dynamic and changing, even if as emically viewed by the participant it is (or should be) static and unchanging.

The need to distinguish emic from etic statements is particularly evident in the complex problem of different levels of ideology and meaning within a tradition. The *mokṣa-mārga* normative ideology of Jainism is a totalizing, hierarchical ideology, under which all other ideologies are subordinate and encompassed.<sup>17</sup> By presenting the *mokṣa-mārga* as the appropriate model of the Jains, scholars have compounded the problem of reaching an adequate understanding of the many levels of religious value and meaning within the Jain tradition.

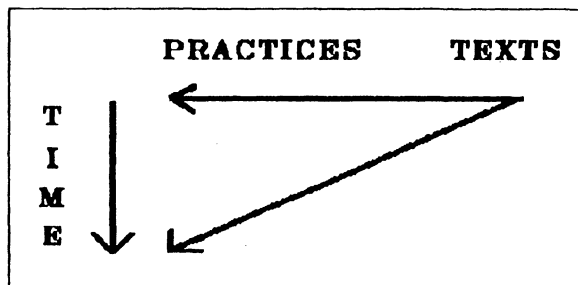
#### LEVELS WITHIN THE JAIN TRADITION

The problem of how to represent adequately the relationships among the different levels of practice and meaning within the Jain tradition is one that has been faced by scholars of all South Asian religious traditions. Scholars of Hinduism have discussed great traditions and little traditions, *mārga* and *deśī*, Sanskritization, and hierarchy;<sup>18</sup> scholars of Buddhism have discussed Pali and localized village Buddhisms, practice and precept;<sup>19</sup> and scholars of Islam have discussed ideal religion as found in the textual tradition and folk ideologies of discourse, official Islam and parallel Islam.<sup>20</sup> As mentioned above, these distinctions are not merely those of the outside observer; most people within the traditions also perceive these distinctions, and often have quite definite opinions about them. But statements about and analysis of these different levels as made emically by a participant and etically by a scholar of necessity should be different.<sup>21</sup>

The standard academic model of the Jains views only the *mokṣa-mārga*—consisting of renunciation and asceticism, as practised by the mendicants, and as described in the earliest texts—as being true Jainism. Any other level of practice and belief or realm of symbolic value is viewed as being extraneous to the tradition, a later accretion that is not part of the core model; for example, “the existence of a laity soon made it expedient to take into account the exigencies and

customs of the environment from which the proselytes came” (della Casa 1971:362). A similar statement is made by P. S. Jaini (1982:1), when he defines “popular Jainism” as “practices within the Jaina society that can be considered to be inconsistent with its main teaching, but that are now assimilated to such a degree that they are no longer perceived as alien by the Jainas.” Once such a judgement has been made as to the relative worth of practices, those which do not fit into the standard model can be marginalized or ignored by the scholar. Judgements that such practices are “Hindu accretions” upon an “original core” can be disputed on factual grounds—many of these practices and beliefs are found at the earliest levels of evidence available to us—but they also stem from the particularly static nature of the standard model.

One area in which the static nature of the standard model is problematic is in the nature of the relationship between texts and practices. Textual scholars often times conflate the normative and descriptive levels in a text, and also tend to view them as prior to and formative of practices (cf. P. S. Jaini 1979:287 ff). The pluralistic nature of both textual precepts and actual practices is also under-emphasized. The standard model of the interaction of texts and practices can be shown in the following diagram:



**Figure 1**

I choose to view texts as an amalgam of descriptions of existent practices, and prescriptive statements as to the desired performance of and intentions behind those practices. Rather than texts unidirectionally influencing practices, I view texts and practices as interactive through time, and each exhibiting multiple perspectives and

ideologies (cf. Tambiah 1970:367-370 and 1984:7-8 on the heterogenous nature of early Hindu and Buddhist texts). Such a model can be diagrammed thus:

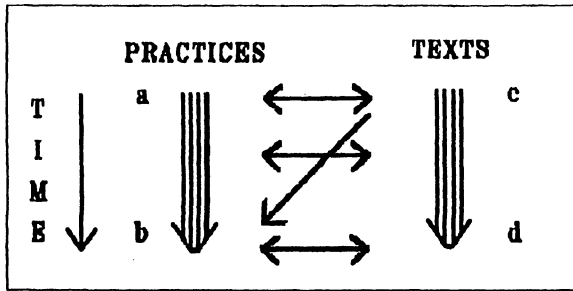


Figure 2

More simply, the lines of influence run as follows:

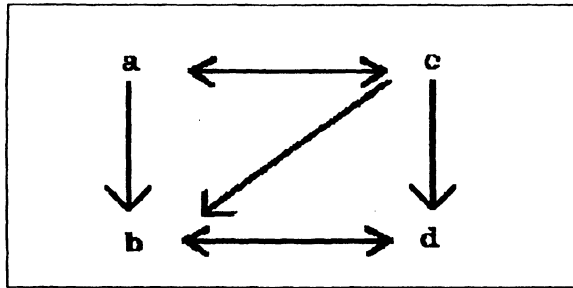
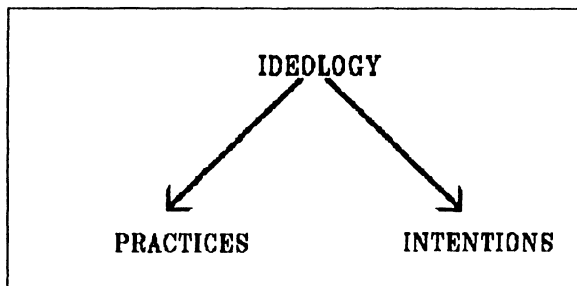


Figure 3

A scholar can study only points [b], [c], and [d]; point [a] is available only through inference, as mediated by points [b] and [c] (unless s/he is fortunate enough to have a reliable historical account of [a]). [A] cannot directly influence [d]; any influence from [a] upon [d] is also mediated, as either [a]-[b]-[d] or [a]-[c]-[d]. In figure 2, the lines going downward, with the flow of time, are shown as multiple, to recognize that there is never a single tradition or ideal of either practice or text, but are always multiple traditions and ideals. And none of the four points really exist, except as we can say that a text was composed between certain dates, or a practice was

recorded by a scholar on a certain date. They are both moving targets; but for the modelling process to work at all, we have to accept the appearance of fixed points. Nor are the lines [a]-[b] and [c]-[d] really lines; instead, what we have are scattered points along those lines, with the relationships between these points also sometimes quite conjectural. As Stanley Tambiah (1976:374) has pointed out, such a model allows us to focus on the continuities and transformations that link historical and contemporary data, and to develop a model *of* the Jains that allows for ideological and geographical diversity, and change through time.

The standard academic model further posits a unidirectional relationship between the orthodox *mokṣa-mārga* ideology on the one hand, as stated in the texts and exemplified by the mendicants, and practices and intentions on the other. To use another chart, the relationship among these three as presented by the standard model can be shown as follows:



**Figure 4**

There are two fundamental problems with this model. One is, as mentioned above, that the ideology itself is not homogenous. The ideological level is itself a complex, multivocalic, dynamic realm. Some aspects of the ideology are consciously expressed as proper ideological arguments (e.g., karma theory, 14 *guṇasthānas*, five *mahāvratas* and 12 lay *vratas*), but within the realm of ideology are other realms of value, or what John Carman (1985) has termed “axes of sacred value.”<sup>22</sup> These other realms are oftentimes not explicitly stated in ideological form, but rather can be elucidated by the scholar through careful analysis of symbolic statements and actions. For this

reason I term these “symbolic ideologies.”

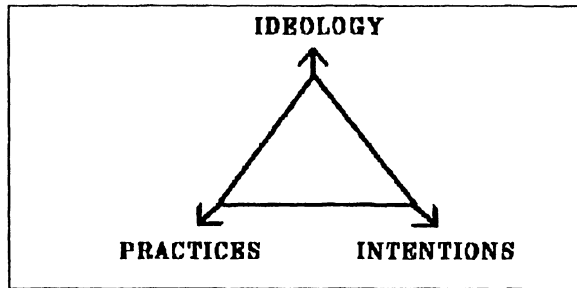
In a conversation several years ago with T. N. Madan, I spoke of varying ideologies within India, such as those of purity, power, auspiciousness, and honor, as expressed by Brāhman̄s, Jains, Untouchables and others. He countered that to have an ideology one had to have conscious ideologues, and therefore some of my examples were inappropriate.<sup>23</sup> While one may argue with this statement,<sup>24</sup> I have accepted the basic thrust of it as valid, and so choose to use the term ideology for cultural systems which contain a significant element of conscious formulation, and symbolic ideology to designate cultural systems that are both consciously and symbolically formulated.<sup>25</sup>

A usage of ideology which closely approximates mine has figured prominently in two recent anthropological studies of Indian religion. Ákos Östör (1980) subtitled his study of Bengali religion, “Locality, Ideology, Structure, and Time in the Festivals of a Bengali Town,” while R. S. Khare (1984) subtitled his study of Untouchables in Lucknow, “Ideology, Identity, and Pragmatism among the Lucknow Chamars.” Östör talks of a Bengali ideology of goddess worship, which he terms “a model for action” (1980:35), of sectarian ideologies, and of “indigenous models and ideologies” (1980:194). He defines ideology as follows (1980:193):

I use the word ideology in two senses; first, it pertains to the particular sets of ideas, concepts, categories—the representations of persons in groups within a hierarchical universe. Secondly, it refers to the total set of concepts and representations in a society, pertaining to the whole of the hierarchical universe.

Similarly, Georges Dumézil (1954:7) has defined ideology as “une conception et une appréciation des grandes forces qui animent le monde et la société, et de leurs rapports.” These usages of ideology are essentially the same as the way I use symbolic ideology.

The model of the Jains which I propose can be shown as follows:<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 5**

Ideology, practices, and intentions are seen as all mutually interactive. Ideology is studied through analysis of texts and statements. Practices are studied through observation and discussion with the practitioners. Beliefs and intentions as internal to the participant are closed to us as scholars; to some extent, they are perceivable through documents such as poems, novels, essays, and interviews; symbolically they are also seen through observable activity (see Geertz 1973:3-31, 87-125). As scholars of religion we study all the components of the diagram, since to study a religious tradition one needs to take the whole of it into account.

With this model, I am trying to go beyond a sharp division of levels of meaning within a tradition (and the often corresponding division of scholarly expertise between Indological textualists and anthropological fieldworkers), to create a unified model for studying the Jain tradition and its place within the larger Indian cultural universe. Such a model would bring the study of the Jains and Jainism out of its current narrowly-defined ghetto of "Jainism and Prakrit."<sup>27</sup> Rather than view Jainism as a poor sister of Buddhism, to be studied as an antiquarian oddity as the least-interesting of the *śramaṇa* traditions, Jain scholars need to bring the study of the Jains into the mainstream of Indian studies. Such a result will not only enrich Jain studies, it will enrich Indian studies as a whole.

This model makes certain assumptions about the role and influence of texts as bearers and reflectors of ideology within a tradition, and about the creation of a text as being an ideology-making process. It views conscious ideology/s as always being in a

dialectical relation with unconscious symbolically-expressed ideology/s. It views religion as a dynamic, changing process, rather than as a static, unchanging ideal. It focuses more on the perceptions of the participants—where ideas are in situations in which their ontological status is dependent, with no status aside from how they are thought by the participants—rather than upon the conceptions embodied in decontextualized ideas. This model has as its object of study not Jainism as an abstract system of ideas, part of the intellectual history of the high points of human thought, but instead the religion, practices, ideologies, and beliefs of the Jains as people, both today and throughout their long history.

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## NOTES

This essay owes much to the late Kendall W. Folkert, both his writings and ideas discussed in many conversations in Cambridge and Ahmedabad. Ken and I had tentatively planned to present a panel on models for the study of the Jains at the University of Wisconsin Conference on South Asia in 1984, but decided to withhold the panel to a later date. Ken was planning specifically to address the models inherited from the 19th century scholars of Jainism; had he written that paper, the present paper would probably be unnecessary. I also thank John Carman, Diana Eck, and William Graham for their careful reading of and comments upon earlier drafts of this essay.

1. This problem of the academic creation of reified, static “religions” is not unique to the study of the Jains, of course, but rather is almost endemic to the academic study of religion. See Smith 1964.
2. Two particularly reprehensible examples of this negative attitude are found in the judgemental statements of two renowned Indologists, Louis Renou’s (1953:111) assertion that Jainism “is a religion of austere aspect, that might be described as Buddhism’s darker shadow,” and the strikingly similar statement by A. L. Basham (1959:261), “The history of Jainism, though it has much of interest to the specialist, is less spectacular than that of Buddhism.”
3. In addition to these three articles, I also looked at the following, none of which in any significant way deviated from the inherited model: Basham 1958 and 1959; Bühler 1887/1903; Caillat 1970/74 and 1987; Chopra 1982; Folkert 1984; Glasenapp 1925; Guérinot 1926; J. P. Jain 1975; J. Jaini 1916; P. S. Jaini 1979; Mehta 1969; Nahar and Ghosh 1917; Renou 1953; Renou and Lacombe 1953; Sangave 1980; Schubring 1927, 1935/62, and 1964/66; Stevenson 1910 and 1915; Tukol 1980; Upadhye 1974 and 1975; and Warren 1912. As I discuss below, some of these present not so much the etic scholarly model but rather the emic internal ideological model. My own encyclopedia article is guilty of perpetuating the same model (and I have borrowed some of the wording from it in my presentation); my only plea is that one is not allowed to challenge

accepted models in only 750 words. The only one of the above list that exhibits any awareness of the inadequate and suspect nature of the received model is Kendall W. Folkert's article, which I now recommend as the best entry into the Jain tradition for a newcomer.

A separate but similar task would be to investigate the advantages and problems in the slightly different model presented by 20th century Indian scholars writing in vernacular languages, such as M. D. Desāi 1933, H. Jain 1962, Premī 1956, and Tripuṭī 1952. These scholars, basing their work on the traditional methods of the paṇḍit, were vital participants in the Jains' rediscovery of many facets of their own history and literary history, and had a much richer sense of the connections between the contemporary Jain communities, of which they were vital parts, and the past. The model presented by these scholars represents an interesting amalgam of the Jain mokṣa-mārg and Western historicism. For the lack of adequate interaction between Western and Jain scholars of the Jains, see P. S. Jaini 1976.

4. The extreme case of this form of history is found in A. K. Chatterjee's recent two-volume *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, some 700 pages of undigested, and indigestible facts, presented with no reflection on their significance or meaning.

5. As will be clear shortly, Western scholarship on the Jains has until recently been almost exclusively European, and the few, isolated cases of American scholarship can be safely viewed as extensions of European scholarship.

6. See also Marcus and Fischer (1986:2):

He in fact practices the same sort of rhetorical totalitarianism against his chosen enemies as he condemns. He acknowledges no motives of the West other than domination, no internal debates among Westerners about alternative modes of representation, no historical change from the days of open imperialism (from where he exclusively draws his close analyses of rhetoric) to the present. Most tellingly he acknowledges no political or cultural divisions among the subject people he is allegedly defending.

Said's arguments, based upon European scholarship on Islam, are only partly applicable to European Indology, which in its early days had a positive impact upon both Indian and European intellectual traditions. See Halbfass 1988, Kopf 1969 and 1980, and Schwab 1984.

7. John Carman (personal communication) has pointed out that in the case of India, it was primarily the English missionaries and civil servants who had lived in India who were explicitly critical of contemporary India. Indologists, especially those based on the Continent, and who for the most part had not travelled to India, because they wrote of ancient and classical India, tended to present a positive picture of India. Their devaluation of contemporary India was accordingly on the whole implicit, not explicit.

8. The attitude towards time and history is somewhat different in Islam, on which Said focuses, from that of traditions originating in India. But even if time is not viewed as by its very nature ontologically degenerating, time and history in Islam are still the process of change away from the purer, original forms of Islam, and hence "reform" is inevitably couched in terms of returning to the Islam of the Prophet and the Qu'ran.

9. For brief biographies of some of the most important German scholars on the Jains, see Bühler 1896; Kirfel 1955; Kölver 1974; Pischel 1903; Wilhelm 1984; and Winternitz 1898.

10. In addition to Frei, for my discussion here I have relied upon Bainton 1963, Crehan 1963, Hahn 1954, Kraus 1982, Kümmel 1972, and Sykes 1963.

11. See Alsdorf 1965, Cort 1986, Folkert 1976 and 1977, P. S. Jaini 1976, and Schubring 1962.

12. The most important of these were Dr. F. Buchanan Hamilton, H. T. Colebrooke, Major James Delemaïne, Abbé J. A. Dubois, A. K. Forbes, Lt.-Col. William Francklin, Rev. Reginald

Heber, Major C. Mackenzie, Lt.-Col. William Miles, Lt.-Col. James Tod, Rev. James Ward, and H. H. Wilson.

13. It should be noted that all these scholars wrote on a wide variety of Indological topics besides Jainism.

14. Thus one time when I was interviewing a layman concerning his daily *pūjā*, he grew uneasy at my questions, and insisted that the *pūjā* as he performed it was sure to be incorrect. He therefore insisted that to understand the true meaning of his actions, to "go deeply" into the subject, I should cease discussing the matter with him, and instead read the texts with a knowledgeable (*vidvān*) mendicant.

15. I here use the differing senses of "model of" and "model for" as developed by Clifford Geertz (1973:93). In a "model of,"

what is stressed is the manipulation of social structures so as to bring them, more or less closely, into parallel with the pre-established non-symbolic system, as when we grasp how dams work by developing a theory of hydraulics or constructing a flow chart.

In a "model for,"

what is stressed is the manipulation of the nonsymbolic systems in terms of the relationships expressed in the symbolic, as when we construct a dam according to the specifications implied in an hydraulic theory or the conclusions drawn from a flow chart. Here, the theory is a model under whose guidance physical relationships are organized: it is a model *for* reality.

16. The use of emic and etic has recently come under increasing criticism within anthropology, on the grounds that etic terms are oftentimes no more than emic terms from the observer's culture. Clifford Geertz (1983:57-58), for example, has proposed replacing emic and etic with "experience-near" and "experience-distant" or "experience-far" (See also Marcus and Fischer 1986:180-181 n. 6). Nonetheless, I feel that emic and etic can be retained as useful categories if their original linguistic usage is remembered, and the distinction is applied only to statements in an effort to avoid unnecessary or premature consideration of conflicting truth claims.

17. My language here is obviously indebted to Dumont (1980, esp. 239-245), whose methodology I consider central to an adequate understanding of Indian culture and religion, and therefore of the Jains.

18. See, for example, Dumont 1980; Dumont and Pocock 1959; Redfield 1956; Redfield and Singer 1954; Singer 1972; Srinivas 1952, 1962, and 1966; Staal 1963.

19. See, for example, Gombrich 1971; Ling 1971; Obeyesekere 1963; Southwold 1982 and 1983; Spiro 1970; and Tambiah 1970 and 1984.

20. See, for example, Ahmad 1976, 1978, and 1981; Das 1984; Lindholm 1986; Robinson 1983 and 1986; and Roy 1983.

21. In addition to the above-mentioned sources, see Peter Brown (1981:16-22) for a forceful critique of the problems created within the study of early Christianity by a static, "two-tiered" model, which posits one tier of the "potentially enlightened few" which is under continual negative influences from the "timeless and faceless popular religion of the vulgar." By changing the names and places, Brown's statement is equally applicable to the study of the Jains and other Indian religious traditions.

22. I prefer the term "realms of value" rather than "axes of value" because the latter lends itself to structuralist binary oppositions which are not necessarily appropriate. The relationships between realms of value are more often encompassing rather than binary.

23. A similar position is adopted by Dumont (1980:343-344) who talks of ideology as being conscious, and therefore of direct access for the scholar.
24. The *Random House Dictionary* (Random 1967:707) gives as the primary definition of ideology "the body of doctrine, myth, symbol, etc., of a social movement, institution, class, or large group." I was fascinated to discover that this is given as only a secondary and deprecatory definition by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford 1971:1368), and that this usage of the word was coined by Napoleon Bonaparte to designate the various forms of revolutionary speculation which he as a pragmatic realist proposed to do away with. The entry quotes the following 1827 use of the word in a biography of Napoleon: "Ideology, by which nickname the French ruler used to distinguish every species of theory, which, resting in no respect upon the basis of self-interest, could, he thought, prevail with none save hot-brained boys and crazed enthusiasts."
25. This usage of symbolic ideology is actually very close to the following statement of what Madan (1987:70-71) says that he is doing:

Our task as anthropologists would seem to lie in overcoming ambiguity and decoding figurative language and bringing out clearly what we receive through interrogation and observation confusedly. We seek to abstract certain concepts in a cross-cultural framework that hardly concern the people whose culture we study and, therefore, remain unarticulated and unexpressed in it. Auspiciousness is highly meaningful to people in their everyday life but an abstract concept of the passage of time is less so. Our own hesitations to explicate such concepts, however, leads us to draw conclusions too soon and at too low a level of generality to produce better understanding.

26. The seeds of this diagram emerged from a conversation with the late Thomas Zwicker in 1984. The discussion in this chapter would have been much better had we been able to continue such conversations.
27. The All-India Orientalist Conference, for example, still relegates the study of the Jains to the "Prakrit and Jainism Section," thus ignoring that there is more Jain literature in Sanskrit, Apabhramsa, and the vernaculars than in Prakrit, and relegating the study of the Jains to an area of antiquarian interest, in which 2,500 years of history is devalued and over 3,000,000 contemporary Jains trivialized.

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