



Religion and Violence in South Asia

Theory and Practice

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John R. Hinnells and Richard King

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The non-violence of violence

Jain perspectives on warfare, asceticism and worship

Paul Dundas

The Kharatara Gaccha is a Śvetāmbara Jain subsect whose origins and early development from the eleventh century are to be located in western India within the area of what is now central and north Gujarat and south Rajasthan. Consciously attempting to reactivate the ancient and pure mode of disciplined mendicancy described in the Jain scriptures, the leaders of the Kharatara Gaccha and their followers defined themselves against the sedentary, so-called ‘temple-dwelling’ (*caityavāsin*) monks whom they saw as a corrupting influence on Jainism. Perhaps the earliest chronicler of this reforming group is Jinapāla (thirteenth century) who describes from a highly partisan perspective how various senior teachers of the Kharatara Gaccha triumphed in a succession of formal public debates with their opponents, often presided over by powerful potential supporters, and thus promulgated their own vision of the Jain path.

One of the longest of Jinapāla’s accounts deals with the encounter in 1182 between Jinapatisūri, the chief ascetic of the Kharatara Gaccha, and Padmaprabha, a leading temple-dwelling monk from a rival subsect, the Ukeśa Gaccha. This debate was held in the court assembly (*sabhā*) of Pṛthivīrāja Cāhamāna, the last significant Hindu ruler of western India. As described by Jinapāla, things did not go well with Padmaprabha from the start of the proceedings and he floundered badly in the face of Jinapatisūri’s command of Jain doctrine and general philosophical learning. He was then humiliated in a poetic contest that required the composition of a ‘picture poem’ (*citrakāvya*) in the form of a sword. Finally, realising that he was likely to be exiled from the kingdom as a public laughing stock, the demoralised Padmaprabha informed King Pṛthivīrāja that he was an expert in martial arts (*mallaśāstra*) and wished to wrestle with Jinapatisūri in order to settle matters. The king, ignorant of the customs of philosophers, as Jinapāla puts it, looked at Jinapatisūri to see what to do. The Kharatara Gaccha leader replied:

Your majesty, wrestling is not appropriate. Children grabbing each other by the throat excel at it, not great men; princes duelling hand to hand with weapons excel at it, not merchants; slatterns biting and shrieking at each other excel at it, not queens. So how can I accept Padmaprabha’s challenge? Scholars excel in competing against each other with their powers of formulating question and answer. At that moment, the court scholars present at the debate said, ‘Sire, we get our livelihood from you because of the quality of our scholarship, not our skill in martial arts’.¹

Jinapatisūri confirms that he will engage in any form of literary or learned dispute with Padmaprabha but not in wrestling, which he describes as ‘anti-social and contrary to his religion’ (*lokaviruddham svadarśanaviruddham*). So the scholarly contest moved to its inevitable conclusion, with Padmaprabha exiled and Jinapatisūri proclaimed victor by **Pr̥thivīrāja** who declared that no enemy would be able to attack his kingdom while that Jain teacher was living there.²

This particular event, the general historicity of which need not be doubted, took place on the eve of a decisive moment for medieval western India, since with **Pr̥thivīrāja’s** defeat by the Muslims a decade or so later, traditional Hindu polity and its attendant court culture of art and learning, while not totally disappearing, never flourished quite so resplendently again in that region of the subcontinent. Martial arts were, of course, a feature of the Indian courtly world, apparently from the beginning of the common era and before. So the Kalpa Sūtra, the earliest extended Jain scriptural biography of Mahāvīra, the historical ‘founder’ of what has come to be called Jainism, describes the great teacher’s aristocratic father engaged in martial arts activities in the gymnasium and wrestling hall.³ Padmaprabha’s challenging of Jinapatisūri to a wrestling match, boorish and inappropriate as it might appear in the context of learned debate, in fact reflects an awareness of what was a natural, time-honoured court pastime, being an attempted formal enactment of the elaborate martial arts culture which was traditionally practised to a particularly high level in Gujarat.⁴ Furthermore, *citrakāvya*, a genre of virtuoso Sanskrit court poetry involving the production of various elaborate visual shapes, a feat which apparently proved too much for Padmaprabha, seems to have had its origins in the realm of martial arts.⁵

START HERE: The wrestling match mentioned in the first sentence of this section is described above—between two Jain monks (Padmaprabha and Jinapatisūri) of rival sects

Jainism as a way of heroism

While Padmaprabha’s insistence on a wrestling match to settle his debate with Jinapatisūri was no doubt the result of frustration, it is also redolent of an Indian religious world in which holy men were expected both to be paragons of wisdom and sanctity and also, when necessary, to be capable of defending themselves against attackers. World renunciation of the sort followed by the Jains, Buddhists and other groups was an institution which entailed not so much the abandonment of social ties for a career of mendicant quietism as an entry into a heroic way of life which derived a great deal of its ethos, at least at its outset in the Ganges basin around the seventh or sixth centuries BCE, from an affinity with the early Indo-Āryan warrior brotherhoods, bands of young men who at certain times of the year engaged in raiding, concomitant violence and the purificatory practice of celibacy.⁶ The Mallas, whose name was traditionally perpetuated in the discipline at which Padmaprabha claimed to excel (cf. Sanskrit *malla*, ‘wrestler’), were in origin one such group, and both the Buddhist and Jain scriptures describe them as honouring the remains of Mahāvīra and the Buddha, both members of the warrior (*kṣatriya*) class.⁷

In this context, then, I would like to suggest that Jainism can profitably be regarded as exemplifying throughout its history what has been styled the ‘path of heroism’ (*vīryamārga*), a reconfiguration of warrior codes of bravery and physical control in the

ascetic search for spiritual power and mastery, qualities which have led to Jain monks being much respected since medieval times by groups such as the Rajputs who identify their own background in martial terms.⁸ The very designation ‘Jain’ (Sanskrit: *Jaina*), ‘follower of the conquerors’ (*jina*), obviously relates to the martial overcoming of enemies, whether internal or external. Mahāvīra in particular, the ‘Great Hero’, whose name has its origins in Vedic ritual, epitomises many of the qualities of the Vedic warrior god Indra and the legendary stories of his birth in particular evince obvious connections with divine power.⁹ The worship of Mahāvīra and the other Jinas in later centuries no doubt had strong connections with the commemoration of dead heroes so common in Indian religiosity. The medieval memorials which can still be seen at celebrated holy spots such as Śravaṇa Belgola in Karnataka to commemorate the valiant fasting to death (*sallekhanā*) of Jain ascetics are equivalent to the hero stones erected all over the subcontinent in honour of those who died a gallant death in battle.¹⁰

Jainism and non-violence

While it is well known that a martial arts culture flourished amongst Buddhist and Hindu renouncers, elements of which in the former case seem to have migrated into eastern parts of Asia,¹¹ there is unfortunately not so much evidence for the practice of martial arts amongst Jain monks. Jinapatisūri’s rejection in Pṛthivīrāja’s *sabhā* of his Jain opponent’s invitation to engage in physical violence is thus an interesting piece of testimony. His disparagement of wrestling as anti-social no doubt reflects Jainism’s perennial concern, as embodied in its textual tradition, for the public decorum of its renunciant adherents, which the reforming monks of the Kharatara Gaccha felt their temple-dwelling counterparts were failing to maintain. For anyone familiar with Jainism’s well-known espousal of the principle of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) and compassion to all living creatures, Jinapatisūri’s claim that physical combat infringed the tenets of his religious path would thus seem highly predictable.

Certainly no religion identifies itself more closely with non-violence to living creatures (*ahiṃsā*) than Jainism. As exemplified by Jain ascetics, the enactment of it represents the highest form of heroism. According to the ancient *Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra*, ‘such heroes are free from passion, they destroy anger and fear, they don’t kill creatures’.¹² The exact provenance of the idea of non-violence in ancient India remains a regular topic of scholarly debate. Early *ahiṃsā*, accurate discussion of which has often been obfuscated by anachronistic association with twentieth-century Gandhian notions of passive resistance,¹³ is now generally, although not universally, regarded as having its origins in the practice of Vedic ritual and trends of reflection upon the nature of sacrificial violence which evolved within it.¹⁴ Yet even within the ritual literature the term in its earlier manifestations did not have the same generalised significance which it came to assume at a later period, and a scenario can be posited in which the idea of ritual non-violence (it need not at this early period be regarded as a virtue) was subjected to some type of outside influence, possibly brahmanical or deriving from the non-brahman renunciatory milieu, which led to it being resituated in a broader ethical scenario.¹⁵ In this context Schmithausen has concluded that in the early Jain (and Buddhist) sources

ahimsā is motivated on the basis of two different arguments, namely that violence leads to unwanted results in this world and the next, and that all living creatures are essentially the same.¹⁶

Non-violence was undoubtedly a common feature of renunciatory religious practice in traditional India. Yet the pretensions of other religious paths to be non-violent have generally been deemed by Jain monastic intellectuals to be completely unsustainable on the grounds that they lack Jainism's particularly thoroughgoing analysis of reality as consisting at all levels of embodied souls or life monads (*jīva*), each of which has an intrinsic value and desire to avoid destruction. The Jain advocacy of non-violence is accordingly strongly linked to a particular mode of conceptualising reality, and religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam were accordingly stigmatised at various periods in Jainism's history as *hiṃsāśāstra*, pseudo-soteriological paths whose teachings inevitably promote violence on the grounds of their fundamentally mis-conceived grasp of the nature of living reality.¹⁷ Non-violence in Jainism is thus not simply regarded as a simple refraining from harming living creatures, but is most profoundly conceptualised as both an ethical stance tied to a rigorous interpretation of reality as embodied in the basic constituency of the world, and a form of spiritual exercise necessary to make progress on the path to deliverance.

The Jain merchant as ambivalent figure in respect to violence

To return to Jinapatisūri's response to *Ṛṭhivīrāja*, and specifically his observation that combat is inappropriate for merchants. Without wishing to over-interpret this remark, I would suggest that Jinapatisūri is here voicing an awareness of the primacy of the business and trading role which the Jain lay community had begun to assume, largely to the exclusion of any other, from around the time of the decisive supplanting of Hindu politics in Gujarat by Muslim power from the twelfth century onwards. This role was, at least until the decline of Mughal hegemony in the late eighteenth century, only tangentially capable of influencing political authority through the occasional providing of finance in times of strife. From the circumstances prevailing in the early modern period seems to have emerged the stereotyped but nonetheless self-perceived and self-reinforcing image of the Jain *baniyā*, or merchant, as an upright and fair-dealing type with high public prestige based on scrupulous adherence to the dictates of non-violence in his own private, business and ritual life, regular engaging in meritorious social works and minimal participation in India's often turbulent public affairs.¹⁸ No doubt it was this mercantile stereotype in nascent form to which Jinapati Sūri was referring. However, another stereotyped representation of the *baniyā* was to become prevalent from the early modern period in South Asia, namely as an inflicter of violence upon his fellow man, specifically through exploitation of an indigent peasantry by means of his characteristic business activities of money lending and attendant massaging of prices and the assisting of the authorities in the collection of taxes, practices which Hardiman subsumes under the general rubric of 'usury'.¹⁹ Certainly, the *baniyā*'s adherence to the ideal of non-violence within private or community religiosity seldom seems to have allowed for any broader humanitarian perspectives towards the indebted in this mercantile context.²⁰ So pervasive was the stereotype of Jain mercantile greed and callousness that Jain renunciants were at

times popularly perceived as supporting their lay *baniyā* followers in their exploitative violence by means of their supposed ability magically to control the monsoon rains and thus create food shortages.²¹

Furthermore, despite the tone of Jinapatisūri's rejection of participation in violence by merchants and the *baniyā*'s general perception of himself as being outside political affairs, adherence to a religious path which promoted the primacy of *abimsā* did not always entail quiescence on the part of the Jain merchant in the face of social unrest or controversy. While it seems to have been unusual for the Jain laity to have been associated with large-scale communal violence in pre-British times, there is clear evidence of rioting and civil disturbance in Jaipur in the eighteenth century between Jains and Hindus, and also between rival sects within the Digambara Jain community.²² The power and leverage accrued by regional Jain mercantile communities subsequent to the breakdown of Mughal authority also led to the sponsorship of anti-Muslim unrest in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.²³ In the twentieth century, members of the Jain community in Rajasthan took up arms to defend themselves against the depredations of the militantly anti-*baniyā* Anūp Maṅḍal,²⁴ while violence, admittedly of a sporadic type, has not been slow to break out amongst Jains themselves in the course of disputes over internal matters as disparate as the ritual calendar and the ownership of sacred sites.²⁵

My aim in this essay is not to examine further the ambivalent position of the Jain merchant in the modern period but rather to take some examples from Jainism's earlier history and consider how a religious path celebrated for its espousal of non-violence attempted to accommodate itself within a broader Hindu world where violence, particularly of the martial sort, was often conceived in positive terms. Specifically, I will refer to early Jain tradition's perspective on martial conflict, the internalisation of violence by Jainism in the form of ascetic practice and, in the wake of the Jain community's disconnection from serious political power in the late medieval period, the expression of concern about violence in two areas, the actions of the omniscient person and the performance of worship.

In anticipation of this, I now offer some brief consideration of how violence is envisaged in Jainism.

Jain views on the nature of violence

The great Gujarati Jain teacher Hemacandra, who lived just a little earlier than Jinapatisūri asserted that all correct religious and disciplinary practices, however correctly performed, are useless unless violence (*himsā*) is abandoned.²⁶ However, despite such an apparently definitive statement and many others like it throughout Jain literature concerning what amounts to mental attitude as well as physical action, Jainism does not have an entirely monochrome attitude towards violence.

Given the Jain analysis of the world as being filled with myriads of life forms, violence would appear to be virtually inescapable at every turning. This is certainly the view of the oldest stratum of the scriptural tradition.²⁷ However, Jain teachers came in time to equate the taking of life with the concomitant presence of carelessness and lack of guarded attention to one's surroundings.²⁸ It is thus clear that killing and violence are not the same in Jainism. Taking life (*prāṇāti-pāta*) is merely the outcome of *himsā*.

An individual in a genuine state of watchfulness and mental restraint might inadvertently destroy minute life forms in the ground or air, yet not be deemed responsible for committing *hiṃsā*.²⁹ The removal of the mental knots which bring about passion-based activity effects the gaining of *abhiṃsā*.³⁰ Violence and the abandonment of it are at the most profound level issues which have bearing upon the self, not the external world. What derives from *abhiṃsā* is in actuality the spiritual result of purification of the self.

Violence gradually came to be classified in different ways in Jainism, depending on whether it related to minute organisms or to larger creatures such as animals or humans, or whether it was intentional or unintentional.³¹ It also came to be held that violence in self defence (*virodhibhiṃsā*) was justifiable in certain circumstances. A classic scriptural example of the justifiability of violence in defence of a monk can be found in the twelfth chapter of the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, which may date from around the third century BCE. This describes how Harikeśa, an untouchable who has become a Jain monk, is physically attacked by brahmins when he approaches a sacrificial enclosure seeking for alms. A deity intervenes on his behalf and beats the brahmin into submission. Although the point of this narrative is to establish the superiority of Jain moral values over those of brahmin ritualists and Harikeśa does not carry out any violence himself, it clearly demonstrates that the principle of non-violence need not necessarily pertain when there is a threat to monks.³²

Much later, the influential text on monastic behaviour, the *Bṛhatkalpa Bhāṣya* of Saṅghadāsa (c. sixth-seventh centuries CE), which was produced at a time when Jain monasticism had become fully institutionalised, makes clear that violence on the part of monks to protect their fellow renunciants, most notably nuns, is justifiable. Even killing five-sensed creatures in the cause of defending the monastic group is not stigmatised, as in the narrative case of the monk who clubbed three lions to death while his companions slept.³³

Jainism and war

In the light of the identification of violence as an internal issue relating primarily to purity of the self, it may not then be so striking that Jain writers, until relatively recent times, have not devoted any real effort to excoriating the practice of warfare,³⁴ but have instead concentrated upon the mental stance taken by those involved in conflict. What might be styled a scriptural template for the Jain perception of war and military violence is to be found in the largest text of the scriptural canon, the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*. While in its final redacted form this text dates from the early centuries of the common era, it may in part record material relating to an earlier period, although without any eyewitness status.

Bhagavatī Sūtra 7.9 describes two battles which supposedly took place during Mahāvīra's lifetime involving King Kūṇiya. There is no way of assessing the historicity of these events, but their large-scale violence suggests the world of conflict described in the *Mahābhārata*, whose core was probably approximately contemporary with that of the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*. In the 'Battle of the Thorns like Great Stones' (*mabāsīlākaṇṭayasaṅgāma*), the intensity of which was such that the touch of thorns, leaves, twigs and the like were as severe to the protagonists as blows from great stones,

King **Kuṇḍiya** defeats a tribal confederacy, amongst whom are the Mallas, leading to the death of 8,400,000 combatants. Mahāvīra comments upon this event, informing his disciple Gautama that as immoral and non-renunciant men the dead will be reborn in the lower realms of existence as hell-beings or animals.

The ‘Battle of the Chariot with the Club’ (*rahaṃsalasamgāma*) is described in more detail. In the course of this engagement, **Kuṇḍiya** effects a similar massacre to that in the previous battle, this time by means of an automaton-like chariot without horses or driver which careers about dealing out death by means of an attached club. The numbers of the slaughtered this time amount to 9,600,000. Of these, virtually all are reborn amongst lower forms of existence, with only one being reborn in heaven and another in a morally upright family.

Bhagavatī 7.9 then recounts how Mahāvīra’s disciple Gautama invokes the general view that anyone who dies in any sort of combat is reborn in heaven. Mahāvīra challenges this and gives an account of the destiny of the advanced Jain layman **Varuṇa** of the city of Vaiśālī. **Varuṇa**, despite his intense religious life, was compelled by King **Kuṇḍiya** and the state authorities to fight in the ‘Battle of the Chariot with the Club’. Prior to entering the fray, he took a vow not to attack anybody until he himself was attacked. Challenged in the battle by an opposing warrior, **Varuṇa** described the nature of his vow whereupon his infuriated would-be adversary gave him a bad wound from an arrow. Full of rage, **Varuṇa** shot an arrow back and killed his foe. Knowing that his own death was near, he left the battlefield and in a solitary spot paid homage to Mahāvīra and recited the monastic vows. He then took off his armour, removed the arrow and, fully prepared spiritually, died the religious death alone. An old friend of **Varuṇa’s**, also mortally wounded in the battle, saw what he had done and himself took the lay vows immediately before death. Because **Varuṇa’s** noble end was miraculously acknowledged by gods, raining down flowers and playing divine music, it was generally concluded that all warriors dying in battle are reborn in heaven. However, Mahāvīra makes clear that **Varuṇa’s** resolve only to fight in self-defence and the piety of his death, as effectively a monk, led to his rebirth in heaven (he had in fact evinced wrath when fighting which seems to have precluded immediate human rebirth) and a subsequent final human rebirth which will bring deliverance. His friend was immediately reborn in a human family and will also eventually gain deliverance.³⁵

Although this narrative purports to describe specific political events from around the fifth century BCE, there can be little doubt that in actuality it makes reference to the martial world portrayed in the Hindu epic where a glorious death in battle is reckoned to lead to heaven. Significantly, the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* conveys no outright condemnation of the waging of war as such; rather it makes clear that going into battle when commanded by one’s leader is obligatory but also that to do so with the wrong, impassioned attitude, specifically one not informed by Jain values, leads to an ignominious rebirth. It is this attitude that may account for the regular presence of Jains amongst the officer corps in the modern Indian army³⁶ and informs the following statement about war by a contemporary Jain layman:

Jain religion does not say you should be a coward. Jains are heroes. Religion first teaches you about duty. So if it is part of your duty to go to the front in war, you should do that. It is different for renunciators, but laymen should do that duty. There were always Jain warriors, and they were very religious. Jain warriors used always to stop when the time came for *samayik* (a meditational exercise performed by many Jains at the same time every morning) and perform their *samayik* on horseback.³⁷

An inspection of the later medieval Jain versions of the Hindu epics and *purāṇas* also reveals an awareness that violence is at times necessary to maintain social morality.³⁸ The most striking example of this is the several Jain versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Here, as is well known, the traditional story of Rama and his wife Sītā is put in a Jain framework in which the violence which is such a necessary part of the story is not perpetrated by Rāma, a pious Jain layman, but by his brother **Lakṣmaṇa** and blame for this is misogynistically ascribed to Sītā.³⁹

However, the most marked example of the withdrawal from violence by the Jain warrior occurs in the famous story of Bāhubali. Found in its most celebrated form in the *Ādipurāṇa* by the eighth-century Digambara monastic poet Jinasena who was writing for the court of the monarch **Amoghavarṣa Rāṣṭrakūṭa**, this narrative describes how Bāhubali, in order to prevent a full-scale battle, engages in single combat with his half-brother Bharata for rulership over their father's kingdom and after bringing his opponent helplessly to his knees in front of him, refrains from killing him, leaving the battlefield for the forest in order to search for liberation.⁴⁰

This story, which seems to have provided an idealised model for the Jain warrior aristocrat in medieval south India, can be read as a Jain riposte to one of the most famous Hindu justifications of the necessity of battle, that found in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. There the **Pāṇḍava** hero Arjuna is urged by his charioteer **Kṛṣṇa** to fight the Kauravas at the battle of **Kurukṣetra**, despite their army being filled with his relatives and friends, both because it is his obligation as a warrior to do so and because the warrior with true understanding of the eternal natures of the soul realises that in actuality nobody is capable of killing or being killed. The slaughter that ensues is of course horrendous and fatal to virtually all the main protagonists, although, in accord with one of the master themes of the *Mahābhārata*, it is also the harbinger of a new era of time. Jainism, however, does not subscribe to the creative and purifying role of battle as does Hinduism, and Bāhubali's abandonment of the kingdom to his brother without the loss of a single life demonstrates, at least at an ideal level, how Jain writers felt the requirements of warfare could be balanced by non-violence.

As to **Kṛṣṇa's** famous teaching in the *Bhagavad Gītā* of the ultimate impossibility of killing or being killed due to the immortality of the soul, the early Digambara Jain Kundakunda is clearly alluding to this in his *Samayasāra* when, in the course of a description⁴¹ of how somebody engaging in martial arts exercise is or is not covered with dust (an analogy for karmic material) depending on whether he has been smeared with oil beforehand, he asserts: 'He who thinks I kill or am being killed by other beings is foolish and ignorant. The man of knowledge is at variance with this'.⁴² However, Kundakunda

then goes on to locate this teaching in the context of Jain karma theory which dictates that only the disappearance of that particular type of karma which determines length of life (*āyuskarman*) can bring about death:

The Jinās have proclaimed that the death of living creatures comes about through the destruction of length of life karma. You [yourself] do not remove life karma. How then have you brought about the death of those living creatures? The omniscient ones say that a living creature has life through the arising of life karma. You do not endow it with life karma, so how can you have given life to them?⁴³

The possible antinomian gloss justifying irresponsible violence which can be and has been given to Kṛṣṇa's teaching in the *Bhagavad Gītā* is neutralised by Kundakunda by means of the explanation that death and killing are not so much events which do not occur but rather are determined by actions in previous existences which are responsible for particular intensity of life-karma.

STOP HERE; though you might read the below subheadings in case you want to read elsewhere.

The monarch and the monk

In the same manner as Buddhism, Jainism from a relatively early period promoted the ideal of the *cakravartin*, the universal emperor who, after setting forth from his capital at Ayodhyā, conquers the subcontinent of Bhārata and, following a discus (*cakra*) which had floated out of the royal armoury, brings under his sway the various quarters of India without the use of violence. Scharfe has argued for the roots of *cakravartin* being in the nomadic world of the early Vedic chariot warrior and suggests that the wandering of world renouncing ascetics such as Jain monks and nuns are an echo of this ancient time.⁴⁴ Certainly this royal imagery was used as late as the seventeenth century when Meghavijaya in his *Digvijayamahākāvya* (Chapter 5) describes the monk Vijayaprabhasūri embarking on his wanderings as the universal emperor of ascetics setting forth in order to conquer delusion as he were a king marching to battle with his army.

Unlike the *cakravartin*, who was to represent little more than an ideal, the *vijigīṣu* ('desiring to conquer') king, a monarch conceived in ritual terms who was obliged to expand the boundaries of his kingdom by violent means, was very much a political reality in ancient and medieval India, and the Jain community had no difficulty identifying itself with such a figure.⁴⁵ Indicative of this is the fact that Jain texts from the first millennium CE are perfectly at ease with the important art of military prognostication, the prediction of success or disaster for aggressive and expansive kings embarking on an expedition (*yātrā*) against a neighbouring monarch. A good example of this is the *Bhadrabāhusaṃhitā* (in origin perhaps eighth or ninth centuries CE but drawing on earlier texts) which describes at length in its thirteenth chapter how Jain monks, operating in conjunction with brahman priests, should carry out the preliminary rituals prior to the expedition and interpret the relevant omens and astrological portents of possible victory or defeat for the invading army.

Among the last of many medieval Indian rulers who as enthusiastic soldiers and patrons of Jainism would have made use of such prognostic rituals were several prominent members of the Caulukya dynasty who ruled Gujarat during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Occupying a central position in their public and private devotionalism was the Jina Ajita, the literal meaning of whose name, 'The Unconquered One', seems to have been particularly significant for this warrior family committed to the widening of the frontiers of its kingdom, and a remarkable temple dedicated to him was erected at the border fortress of **Tāraṅgā** in northern Gujarat.

The violence of asceticism

The *Sthānāṅga Sūtra*, a Jain canonical text dating probably from the early common era which groups various doctrinal, cosmographical and social categories under numerical headings, correlates four types of army with four types of monk. According to this typology, the first type of army is victorious and is not defeated, the second is defeated and is not victorious, the third is for various reasons both victorious and defeated and the fourth is neither victorious nor defeated because, according to the eleventh-century commentator Abhayadevasūri, it lacks an aggressive king to lead it (*avijigīṣutvāt*). The four types of monk are said to be similar to these armies in respect to their ability to deal with the *pariṣaba*, the tribulations and physical discomforts of the ascetic path. Of these, it is heroic individuals like Mahāvīra who overcome the *pariṣaba* without being perturbed by them. The other types of monk do not or sometimes do and sometimes do not succeed in conquering the *pariṣaba*, while the fourth type, presumably because of laxity in conforming to the disciplinary requirements of the path, does not experience them at all.⁴⁶

The *pariṣaba* are an integral part of the ascetic life as lived out fully by the Jain monk or nun. Yet they are adventitious and not in any way willed in the manner of ascetic practices; as such, they do not function as central features of internal (that is, mental) or external asceticism (*tapas*), which in Jainism consists of regularly performed religious exercises and self-mortification in the form of fasting deliberately undertaken to ward off and destroy karma, in the same way as one consciously picks up a weapon to fight an enemy. The life of every Jain monk and nun is meant to embody through a system of controls and delimitations the very essence of heroic non-violence. It was the particular intensity of this dimension of Jain religious practice that struck early Buddhism, a tradition which attempted, not always successfully, to de-emphasise the role of asceticism, and led to the supposed judgement of the Buddha that Jain monks must be in the grip of some sort of evil karmic destiny to subject their bodies to such pains.⁴⁷

This view of asceticism as a form of violence inflicted on a body conceptualised in inimical terms is a resilient one. So Olson has recently argued at length for the early Indian renouncer as being a violent type of individual, on the grounds that he inflicts violence not upon other people but upon his own body as a form of self-sacrifice in what, it is claimed, is a reconfiguration of the ancient Vedic ritual offering.⁴⁸ He considers the

most marked manifestation of this to be the controlled fasting to death of *sallekhanā* which, as far as Jain scriptural ideology is concerned, is the only appropriate end for a monk.⁴⁹

The details of Olson's pursuit of the Indian renouncer into the wider realms of masochism, eroticism and narcissism need not concern us here. However, it may be held that he significantly underemphasises the creative and universal dimension of asceticism in favour of its supposed violent aspects. In the light of the frequency of its occurrence in a wide variety of religious contexts, there is compelling evidence that asceticism in the sense of the experience of willed bodily and mental pain for spiritual purposes is a near-universal human propensity. Bronkhorst has suggested that 'the shared disposition to consider one's "self" different from one's body and mind'⁵⁰ and so by nature free from actions and mutability might well be the trigger which propels intense attempts by those with a heightened awareness of this, whether located in Indian soteriologies such as Jainism, Christianity or so-called primal religions, to effect a distance from the physical though control or suppression of bodily functioning. In a full-scale investigation of the role, motivation and physiology of ritually inspired pain, Glucklich offers a complementary interpretation:

Modulated pain weakens the individual's feeling of being a discrete agent; it makes the 'body-self' transparent and facilitates the emergence of a new identity. Metaphorically, pain creates an embodied absence and makes for a new and greater presence.⁵¹

The view that austerity plays a creative role in the production of such a new identity, or in the reconstruction of a pre-existing but hitherto occluded one, can be seen in Jain scriptures such as the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* where the expressions *bhāvīyappā*, with 'self brought into being' or *bhāvei appāṇam*, 'he brings the self into being', are continually used to convey a change of spiritual status effected by advanced ascetics. The term *sallekhanā* used of controlled fasting to death also seems originally to have had connotations of cleansing and purifying indicative of the re-emergence of the inner self. However, it should be acknowledged that discussions by Jain intellectuals do make clear that Jainism's uncompromising advocacy of asceticism as the necessary agent of radical transformation was consistently subjected in early India to the Olson-like criticism that it might involve violence.

The most eminent and incisive Jain defender of the integrity of asceticism was Haribhadra who most likely lived in the eighth century. In the eleventh chapter of his *Aṣṭakaparakaraṇa*, paraphrased here, he refers to the critical Buddhist judgement, that austerity involves suffering (*duḥkhātmakam*) on the grounds that it is connected with the arising of karma, as incorrect. If this were the case, Haribhadra argues, then every ascetic would experience suffering and also ought to be an inhabitant of hell since that place is of course characterised above all by suffering. However, those who practise physical and mental discipline do not experience suffering because their activity predominantly involves happiness that derives from quiescence of negative factors. There certainly does exist a type of bad or unpleasant austerity, but that must be given up because it generally harms the self through bringing about undesirable states of mind (*aśastadhyānanānāt prāya ātmāpakāram*). The fact that the Jinas have continually

advocated control of the mind and senses guarantees that this activity cannot involve any real suffering. Naturally there will arise some degree of physical pain from activities such as fasting, but that is just the equivalent of an illness. Anyway, such physical pain does not cause suffering when the goal of the religious path is achieved. Haribhadra concludes his defence of asceticism by confirming that it consists of various positive attributes, namely a particular type of knowledge, agitation at worldly existence and calm. In actuality asceticism is based the simultaneous destruction and quiescence of karma, rather than its arising, and consists of happiness free from pain.⁵²

Asceticism in Jainism, then, is not seriously to be equated with violence. As Laidlaw has pointed out on the basis of observing lay ascetic practice today, fasting is celebrated by Jains because of the positive effects generated, not because it engenders any form of self-destruction. He criticises the view of fasting as being an attack upon a hostile body as a departure from the normal understanding of Jain practice, with the body being erroneously conceived as 'an ontologically distinct other, rather than a part of the self to be properly organized'.⁵³

Another Jain intellectual of the eighth century, *Akalāṅka*, describes how the religious death of *sallekhanā*, in which the passions are gradually 'cleaned out' (*sallikḥita*), is not a form of suicide involving violence to the body because of the fact that it involves joy (*prīti*) and also lacks the fault of carelessness (*pramāda*) which according to Jain prescription, as we saw above, is the necessary concomitant of any act of violence which removes life. A simple act of suicide would be motivated by the passions (strong attachment, hatred and delusion) which would inevitably exemplify themselves in the use of poison or weapons.⁵⁴ The Jain religious death of *sallekhanā*, on the other hand, is highly ritualised, involving consciously organised procedures such as the retaking of ascetic vows. As such, it is the heroic culmination of a disciplined physical and mental life rather than its 'violent' denial and will lead to a positive rebirth that will make the attainment of ultimate freedom from rebirth more imminent.

The violence of the enlightened and of worship

As the second millennium of the common era drew on, some groups within the Jain community became increasingly preoccupied with the possibility of violence manifesting itself in relation to that ideal human type regarded as the most elevated embodiment of the rejection of violence. This is the *kevalin*, the enlightened being who has gained omniscience, and, in particular, those *kevalins* who by particularly meritorious karma have become the Jinas or *tīrthankaras*, the great teachers of the religion.⁵⁵

The two main sects of Jainism, the Śvetāmbaras and the Digambaras, had argued since near the beginning of the common era about whether the *kevalin* was after his attainment of omniscience physically perfect or still subject to bodily needs such as hunger, thirst and fatigue. The Digambara espousal of the former position could not be seriously challenged inasmuch as it was in the last resort theoretical, since both sects concurred that nobody had become a *kevalin* since Mahāvīra's time. A dispute, which arose amongst the Śvetāmbaras in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, also involved this ideal type, but in terms of whether he was capable, even involuntarily, of inflicting violence. As we have briefly seen, in the course of the expansion of Jain monastic law a

much clearer correlation between action and intention became permitted than found in the early scriptures so that it proved acceptable to excuse inevitable breaches of the vow of non-violence that ensued as wandering ascetics carried out their daily duties. Thus the inadvertent destruction of microscopic life forms in the air through hand motions when necessary religious duties were being carried out or in water as a river was forded could be pardoned on the grounds of its unintentional nature. However, would it be possible for a supposedly perfect *kevalin* to commit such breaches of non-violence, or had he reached the culminating moral point where even involuntary violence, such as killing life forms in the air through merely moving his body or blinking, would be impossible?

The view, associated with the teacher Dharmasāgara (second half of the sixteenth century), that the enlightened person cannot engage in any possible violent behaviour, however minor or involuntary, may be regarded as extreme and based on an often slanted reading of scriptural sources. The response to this position, also largely scripturally derived, makes clear that any external act of violence, which inevitably must be perpetrated by the *kevalin* through simple movement of the body, can only be judged in terms of the purity of the agent's inner state of mind. Just as a vigilant and careful monk does not bind new karma as a result of 'violent' actions carried out in the course of the religious path, so neither does the *kevalin*.⁵⁶

A much more significant controversy concerning the nature of violence in relation to the ideal human being, this time in iconic form, was to preoccupy the Jain community throughout the second millennium CE, namely whether the performance of physical worship of the Jinas involved a breach of the principle of *abimsā*. Devotional worship (*pūjā*) of the Jinas, the saving teachers, which usually takes place in domestic shrines or temples housing images, has been an important dimension of Jainism since near its very beginnings. Renunciants, male and female, have always been restricted to inner mental worship (*bhāvapūjā*) primarily on the grounds that their lack of possessions means that they have nothing which could be offered up in front of the image of the Jina. Physical worship (*dravyapūjā*) involving offerings of liquids, fruits, flowers and sweets, and direct contact with images can only be carried out by lay people, although with full encouragement by renunciants.

By around the fifteenth century it seems to have been claimed, perhaps by monks aware that the central core of old scriptures contains no reference to what in the earliest period had not immediately become a standard devotional idiom of Jainism, that *dravyapūjā* by its nature involved major acts of violence as defined by the Jinas themselves.⁵⁷ First, the construction of temples to house images of the Jinas, requiring the cutting down of wood for structural purposes and digging in the ground for foundations, acts forbidden to renunciants, would involve violence towards minute life forms. Second, the act of worship itself would also involve violence, in that fresh (that is, living) flowers and fruits would have to be cut for offerings and so be destroyed.

These criticisms came to be articulated most vociferously by the fifteenth-century Śvetāmbara teacher **Loṅkā** and two subsequent ascetic lineages still in existence today, the Sthānakvāsīs and the Terāpanthīs, have consistently maintained an anti-image-worship stance.⁵⁸ By strict scripturalist interpretation, this rejection of *dravyapūjā* on the grounds of the destruction involved at all stages might seem reasonable in the light of the basic and rigorous Jain insistence that spiritual progress can only be made by minimising violence towards life forms as much as possible. However, a more nuanced approach to

the definition of violence can also be identified which would hold that a minor act of harming can be acceptable if it leads to a morally or devotionally positive outcome. The analogy used by Śvetāmbara Jain image-worshipping teachers is that of digging a well. Just as the exhaustion of those digging the well and the dirt which covers them are outweighed by the benefit to the large number of people who gain access to water, so the minimal amount of violence committed by worshippers cutting flowers to offer in front of images of the Jina is less significant than the devotion involved and its power to awake morally positive attitudes which have no connection with the passions that motivate the destruction of life forms.⁵⁹

In other words, the ubiquitous Indian religious model of two truths, a higher soteriological level and a lower transactional level, is deployed to neutralise literalist interpretations of what might be involved in and entailed by violence. In this respect, a type of corollary can be pointed to, in that, for example, a man mistaking a rope for a snake and attacking it is guilty of violence from the internal, *bhāva* point of view, but not the external *dravya* point of view. A mental act of violence, while not involving killing, emphatically derives from a motion of the self driven by the passions.⁶⁰

Conclusion

There has unquestionably been a ubiquitous connection in traditional South Asia between warrior and ascetic meditator, the conqueror of external enemies and the one who overcomes inner psychological foes.⁶¹ Jainism's position as a religion of non-violence, which at the same time appealed to a warrior aristocracy throughout India up to the early centuries of the second millennium CE, need not then appear paradoxical, being most realistically explained by the central position within it of the quality, required by both ascetic and fighter, of intensely restrained control, and also by the promotion of a type of religio-political authority which in idealised form could encompass both the worldly and the soteriological. If Jainism did not condone political violence in all circumstances, often teaching that non-violence could be positively projected into situations involving conflict, it nonetheless was not at serious variance with the practice of warfare as a necessary component of a kingdom's capacity to expand or defend itself. Furthermore, inevitable manifestations of violence in the natural functioning of the human body and in the course of ritual could be neutralised by an appeal both to expediency and a higher level of meaning. For Jainism is a path not just for the heroic ascetic but also for the layperson grappling with the realities of living in the social world.

Notes

1 In translating I have condensed the original Sanskrit, which is couched in punning form.

2 Jinapāla, *Yugapradhānācāryagurvāvalī*, pp. 31–32.

Padmaprabha's penalty was less rigorous than that meted out to other defeated opponents in Jain tradition. Compare the physical chastisement of a Buddhist opponent at the end of a debate by the Digambara Jain monk **Aka-Akalaṅka** described by Prabhācandra (eleventh century) in his

Kathākoṣa, story no. 2. Rather more ambiguous is the famous story of the great Śvetāmbara Jain scholar-monk Haribhadra who conquered the Buddhists in debate and then, to revenge his nephews who had previously been killed by them, compelled his adversaries to jump into a vat of boiling oil. Glorious as was this triumph over early medieval Jainism's arch-enemies, it was prompted by the negative mental traits of grief and anger, and some hagiographers of Haribhadra describe how the great teacher's huge scholarly production was an act of repentance for his earlier violence (Granoff 1989). Other Jains regarded this violence as acceptable and representing an act of service (*vaiyāvṛtṭya*) to the community that could subsequently bring about elimination of karma. Cf. the sixteenth-century Dharmasāgara's *Pravacanaparikṣā* 1.44 and 8.170, p. 227.

- 3 Jacobi 1895:242. The *Kalpa Sūtra* most likely dates from the early centuries of the common era and may well have been composed in western India.
- 4 Roṣu 1981:436–37.
- 5 See Lienhard 1997.
- 6 Bollée 1981, Das 2000:110–12 and Scharfē 1987:306.
- 7 See Bollée 1981. Hinüber 2001:200 is sceptical about whether *malla* is, as claimed by Bollée, a Middle Indo-Aryan derivative from Sanskrit *marya*, the term used for a member of a warrior sodality. There seems to have been in ancient India at the time of Mahāvīra and the Buddha a close connection both between the institution of renunciation and the practice of medical healing (Bronkhorst 1999) and between healing techniques with their knowledge of anatomy and martial arts (Roṣu 1981).
- 8 Cf. Harlan 2003:66 and Michaels 2004:272–73.
- 9 See Bollée forthcoming.
- 10 Cf. Dundas 2002a:224–25 and Thapar 2000:680–95. Mailāra, a form of the **Mahārāṣṭrian** god **Khaṇḍobā** worshipped in Karnataka, seems to have been in origin a Jain who died bravely on the battlefield and was then deified (Sontheimer 1997:99). In Rajasthan Jains venerate divine hero figures whose martial energy and concomitant disciplined control provide a basis for enacting the loftier ideal of non-violence (Harlan 2003:66).
- 11 See Bouillier 1994, McFarlane 1994 and Roṣu 1981:446–48. The title of this essay is modelled on the title of Bouillier's paper and that of Granoff 1989.
- 12 Jacobi 1895:251.
- 13 Cf. Babb 2004:21 and Biardeau 1994:125. Gandhi and his followers succeeded in promoting the non-violent values of western Indian trading castes to the extent that they have come to be accepted in recent times as components of a pan-Indian ideology.
- 14 See Obiguibénine 1994.
- 15 See Houben 2001.
- 16 See Schmithausen 2000.
- 17 Dundas 1999 and Granoff 1992.
- 18 I treat the Jain *baniyā* as most representative of the stereotype, although **Vaiṣ-ṇava** Hindus also belonged to this caste. It should be noted that Jains in western India have defined themselves, as witnessed by their caste origin myths, in terms of rejection of brahmanical sacrificial ritual which is perceived to be inherently violent. At the same time, their non-violence rendered them dependent on others for protection and thus, given the regional prestige of martial values, often made them objects of disdain because of their supposed passivity and avarice. See Babb 2004:141–84 and 219.

- 19 Hardiman 1996:7–10
- 20 Vidal 1997:158–66.
- 21 Cf. Babb 2004:64 note 29.
- 22 Cort 2002:61.
- 23 Bayly 1998:229–30.
- 24 Singhi 1991:157–58 and Unnithan-Kumar 1997:238–47.
- 25 Carrithers 1988 and Cort 1999:36–37. For a perpetuation of many components of this *baniyā* stereotype, compare Brass 1997:58–96 who analyses the processes which led to communal violence concerning a supposedly stolen image of Mahāvīra in rural Uttar Pradesh in the 1980s. Brass does not rule out the possibility that the violence which broke out may have been fomented by the Jains themselves hiring dacoits to retrieve the image and in some way manipulating events from a safe distance.
- 26 Hemacandra 2001:36.
- 27 The root *hiṃs-*, from which the term *hiṃsā* derives, seems in origin to have had a desiderative sense of ‘wish to strike, kill’ (Malamoud 1994:5 and Oguibéline 1994:81).
However Caillat 1993:220–23 has shown that this sense cannot be found when *hiṃs-* and derivatives from it are used in the early Jain texts.
- 28 Compare *Akalāṅka* (eighth century CE), *Tattvārtharājavārttika*, p. 540, who asserts that when there are no careless mental, vocal or physical activities (*pramattayoga*) and merely taking of life, then there is no violence. Cf. Kundakunda, *Pravacanasāra* 3. 17: a monk who kills something on the way while taking care about his physical movements (*īryāsamiti*) is not guilty of violence.
- 29 Cf. Siddhasena Divākara (c. sixth century CE), *Dvātriṃśikā* 3. 16, who states that separating somebody from life does not necessarily entail the fault of killing. The strong ascetic view is that while violence towards lower forms of life is less significant than that towards higher forms of life, the person of discernment attempts to avoid both types.
See Mahāprajña 1988:38–39.
- 30 Mahāprajña 1988:30.
- 31 Mahāprajña 1988:78–79 and Zydenbos 1998:197.
- 32 Jacobi 1884:50–56.
- 33 Deo 1956:388 and 425.
- 34 Cf., for example, Ryan 2000:239.
- 35 See also Jaini 2004.
- 36 Cf. Babb 2004:57.
- 37 Laidlaw 1995:155.
- 38 Cf. Jha 1978:38.
- 39 See Dundas 2002a:238–40.
- 40 See Dundas 1991.
- 41 Kundakunda, *Samayasāra* vv. 252–61.
- 42 Kundakunda, *Samayasāra* v. 262.
- 43 Kundakunda, *Samayasāra* vv. 263–64.
- 44 Scharfe 1987.
- 45 Cf. Zydenbos 1998:188–91.
- 46 *Śbhānāṅga Sūtra* 292, pp. 369–70.
- 47 *Middle Length Sayings*, *Cūḷadukkhakkaṅḍha Sutta*.
- 48 Cf. Nayak 2000:25.
- 49 Olson 1997.
- 50 Bronkhorst 2001:414.
- 51 Glucklich 2001:207.

- 52 Compare Haribhadra, *Anekāntajayapatākā* ch. 6, pp. 218–22, for a prose elaboration of this stressing a morally positive fame of mind (*kuśalaparīṇāma*) as informing the performance of austerity in Jainism.
- 53 Laidlaw 1995:238.
- 54 **Akalaṅka**, *Tattvārtharājavārttika*, pp. 550–51. The Jain here somewhat disingenuously suggests an inconsistency on the part of the Buddhist who while denying the existence of the self, also attacks the possibility of ‘killing the self’ (*ātmavadha*), the literal sense of the Sanskrit expression for ‘suicide’.
- 55 In other words, all Jinās are *kevalins* who are in possession of an advanced form of karmic development which makes them Jinās, but by no means all *kevalins* are Jinās.
- 56 See Balbir 1999 and Dundas forthcoming: Chapter 5.
- 57 The **Paurṇamīyaka** order, originating with the Śvetāmbara monk Candraprabhasūri in 1102, objected to the role of senior monks in installing images, on the grounds of the possible violence involved, although it did not take exception to image worship itself.
- 58 A similar minority strand can be found amongst the Digambara Jains.
- 59 See Dundas 2002b:107–10.
- 60 See Mahāprajña 1988:66 and 120.
- 61 Cf. Ryan 2000:256 n. 105.

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