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by PADMANABH S. JAINI

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# Collected Papers on Jaina Studies

Edited by  
PADMANABH S. JAINI

With a Foreword by  
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## Foreword

P. S. Jaini's career represents a fascinating scholarly journey. In introducing his *Collected Papers on Jain Studies* to the interested academic and lay world, some words about his intellectual background might be felt to be of some value.\*

Padmanabh Shrivarma Jaini was born into a devout Digambara Jain family residing in Nellikar, a small town near the famous Jain centre at Moodbidre in Tulunadu, that magical and culturally distinctive area in the southwest of the state of Karnataka. In similar manner to many Jains at the beginning of this century who were influenced by calls within the community to change their names in order to foster a greater sense of identity, Padmanabh's father had abandoned his caste name of Shetty and taken the surname of Jaini, in this case in imitation of J. L. Jaini, a noted translator of the *Tattvārthasūtra*. Although the local languages of Nellikar were Tulu and Kannada, Jaini's highly literate parents also encouraged the study of Hindi, and the household contained a large number of regularly consulted books from North India on Jain and other subjects.

When he was ten and had completed his elementary education, Padmanabh Jaini's parents sent him far from home to the north to board at a Digambara Jain *gurukula* at Karaṇja in Vidarbha (Maharashtra) in order to continue his schooling at secondary level. This establishment, Mahāvira Brahmacharyāśrama Jain Gurukula, had been founded by Brahmachari Devchand, who was later to become the celebrated monk Ācārya Samantabhadra. While the curriculum contained "modern" subjects such as English and the Sciences, the school was run firmly on traditional Jain principles

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## CHAPTER 16

# Fear of Food: Jaina Attitude on Eating\*

One of the several ways of distinguishing the Vedic tradition from the heterodox religious systems is to characterize the former as oriented to sacrifice (*yajña*) and the latter as adhering to the path of asceticism (*tapas*). Since a *yajña* primarily consists of offering some kind of food as oblation, the Vedic tradition may be described as that which consumes food initially offered to the Deity and hence sanctified by its acceptance. The Vedic seers declare that they have imbibed *soma* and have attained immortality: *apāma somam amṛtā abhūma*.<sup>1</sup> The Upaniṣads even declare that food is Brahman (*annam brahma*)<sup>2</sup> and recite a prayer which expresses a wish "Let us all eat together" (*saha nau bhunktvā*).<sup>3</sup> The age-old Brāhmanical practice of offering *śrāddha* or food to the manes (*pitṛ*) by feeding the Brahmans has given rise to the adage that a Brahman is fond of food: *brāhmaṇo bhogamprīyaḥ*.

In contrast, the heterodox tradition of the *śramaṇas* ignores *soma* altogether, decries oblations to gods as fruitless, prohibits the eating of the so-called *prasāda*,<sup>4</sup> and ridicules the offerings to the manes as futile; it thus may be said to reject any notion of sacredness attached to food. The preferred mode of spiritual

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\*Paper read at the 41st annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (Washington, D. C.: March 18, 1989), Session 56: "Edible Complexes: Attitude Toward Food and Eating in South Asian Tradition and Culture."

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activity of the *śramana*s is *tapas*, which primarily consists of 'heating' oneself, i.e., drying or thinning by reducing the intake of food and water. *Tapas* is thus a form of self-sacrifice which is said to bring about magical powers (*iddhi*) as well as achieve the spiritual goal of *mokṣa*. The Ājīvikas, the most ancient among the *śramana*s, have claimed that their teacher Goṣāla had accumulated such heat (*tejo-bhāgā*) within himself by fasting and that he was able to scorch to death two Jaina mendicants by throwing that power in their direction.<sup>5</sup> He is also said to have died fasting without water with only a mango stone placed in his mouth for the purpose of salivating.<sup>6</sup> Such a death was considered an extremely holy one and assured the highest heaven, if not *mokṣa*, for the departing soul. The *Ācārāṅga-sūtra* of the Jainas narrates at length the severe asceticism of Mahāvīra, the last Jaina Tīrthankara. It is said that during the twelve years of his wandering life prior to his Enlightenment, Mahāvīra had lived on only three kinds of rough food—rice, pounded jujube, and pulses: "Taking only these three, he sustained himself for eight months. . . . Sometimes he ate only every sixth day or every eighth or every tenth or every twelfth. Free of desires, he remained engrossed in meditation."<sup>7</sup> According to the later commentators, during these twelve years Mahāvīra took food on a total of 349 days only; at other times he fasted completely.<sup>8</sup>

The Buddhist texts, too, make similar claims on behalf of Siddhārtha Gautama who is said to have fasted for long periods of time during the six years of his strenuous search for Enlightenment. In the *Majjhimanikāya*, he describes the severity of his fasting in the following word: "Because I ate so little, all my limbs became like the knotted joints of withered creepers; because I ate so little, my protruding backbone became like a string of balls; because I ate so little, my buttocks became like a bullock's hoof; because I ate so little, my gaunt ribs became like the crazy rafters of a tumble-down shed; because I ate so little, the pupils of my eyes appeared lying low and deep in their sockets as sparkles of water in a deep well appear lying low and deep. . . .<sup>9</sup> There is no doubt that the famous Gāndhārān skeleton image of the meditating Buddha, now in the Lahore Museum, is a vivid depiction of this passage. As we know, the Buddha abandoned this practice in preference for his Middle Path. Condemning such fasting as a painful mortification unworthy of a seeker of

*nirvāṇa*, he started taking food and is not known ever to have prescribed fasting for anyone else. But the Jainas found this so-called Middle Path of the Buddha as nothing but faintheartedness, a weakness of the spirit unworthy of a true follower of a Jina. They not only employed fasting as the best atonement for transgressions of mendicant rules,<sup>10</sup> but also recommended it as a supreme spiritual practice to their mendicants as well as lay disciples.

The Jainas are thus distinguished from the Brāhmanical tradition by their rejection of the sacredness of food, of sacrificial meat, but also of ghee and, by extension, rejection of the cow as a sacred animal. They are distinguished from the Buddhists by their emphatic adherence to the practice of fasting as a primary component of their spiritual path. Refraining from food for a period of time is not altogether unknown to the Brāhmanical scriptures. The *Manusmṛiti* prescribes fasting as a form of expiation for certain transgressions especially by members of the Brahman caste.<sup>11</sup> The Purāṇic literature is also full of stories like that of Viśvāmītra whose years of fasting were rendered futile by the caprices of gods, jealous of the sage's superior Yogic powers. But these are, for the most part, legends and are not narrated to persuade the Hindu laity to imitate the sage by similar fasting. In the case of the Jainas, however, fasting by their teacher Mahāvīra seems to have left an indelible mark on their consciousness, making it the most important feature of Jaina *tapas*. This is demonstrated by the fact that a great many Jaina laymen and women of all ages undertake fasting on a regular basis and consider it the singular mark by which their community can be distinguished from that of the Brāhmanical society. Remarkable still is the most holy Jaina practice of *sallekhanā* which permits certain advanced Jaina mendicants to adopt total fasting as a legitimate way—in fact the only permissible way—of choosing death in the face of terminal illness.<sup>12</sup>

The Jaina emphasis on fasting thus invites an examination of their attitude to food and the reasons for their belief in the efficacy of fasting as a means of attaining *mokṣa*. Probably the Jaina doctrine of the material (*paudgalika*) nature of *karma* capable of producing impure transformation (*vibhāva-pariṇāma*) of the soul (*jīva*) is at the root of this belief. It is well-known that in Jainism *karmic* bondage is seen as an accumulation of an

extremely subtle form of floating 'dust' which clings to the soul when the latter is overcome, moistened, as it were, by desire and other passions. These desires (present in all souls from beginningless time) in their most subtle form are called *saṃjñās*, a term which may be tentatively translated as 'instincts'. The Jaina texts enumerate four such *saṃjñās* universally found in all forms of life including the vegetable kingdom. Craving for food (*āhāra-saṃjñā*) is the most primary of these instincts. No being other than the liberated soul is exempt from it. This desire for food sets up competition between one living being and another which gives rise to the second instinct, namely that of fear (*bhaya-saṃjñā*). The consumption of food sets in motion the third and probably the most virulent of the instincts, the desire for sex (*maithuna-saṃjñā*), gratification of which produces further desire for food. This, in turn, produces a craving to accumulate things for future use, the instinct called *parigraha-saṃjñā*, which invariably goads the soul towards volitional harmful acts (*hiṃsā*) inspired by attachment and aversion (*rāga* and *dveṣa*). The Jaiṇas therefore see the craving for food as the very root of all bondage, the uprooting of which is essential for the elimination of the other passions.<sup>13</sup>

The Jaina texts dealing with the training of mendicants constantly encourage the cultivation of distaste for food and stipulate a variety of ways of overcoming the desire for flavor (*rasa-parityāga*). They begin with the characteristic Jaina declaration that the desire for food is the prime cause for all forms of *hiṃsā* since food cannot be consumed without destroying another life form. Because life cannot be maintained without consuming some amount of food, the Jaina teachers have devised various means of minimizing this *hiṃsā* for their mendicants who have assumed the vow of total non-violence (*ahiṃsā-mahāvratā*).<sup>14</sup> In the Jaina classification of beings, souls endowed with all five senses (*pañcendriya-jīva*) occupy the highest position, while the vegetable life, endowed with only one sense, namely that of touch, is placed at the bottom of the list. Beings with two or more senses must not be willfully violated even by a layperson because their organisms (muscle, blood, bones, etc.) are similar to that of human beings. Thus all forms of animal flesh, including fowl and fish, are totally unacceptable for a pious Jaina who must depend on a vegetarian diet, with only dairy products as an exception to the rule (since it is believed that removal of milk does not hurt the animal). The

list of prohibited food (*abhojya*), however, even extends to certain fruits and vegetables, especially the five kinds of figs (*udumbara*), fruits with many seeds (*bahubijā*), and a variety of plants called *amanakāyas*, which are thought to be inhabited not by individual souls but by an infinite number of living organisms. These *amanakāyas* include as many as thirty-two varieties of food including turmeric, ginger, garlic, bamboo, radishes, beetroots, and carrots.<sup>15</sup> The Jaiṇas extend their scruples against destroying *ekendriyas* even to water used for drinking. No observant Jaina may drink unstrained water (*agāṭha-jala*) and a mendicant may drink only boiled water which has been rendered free of all forms of subtle life.

Further restrictions apply to the time when permitted food may be consumed. Advanced laypeople as well as mendicants as a rule observe the vow of not partaking of any food or water after sunset (*vātri-bhojana-tyāga-vratā*) and the Digambara mendicants are restricted to a single meal (including water) a day. On certain holy days, such as the eighth and the fifteenth of each lunar month, many laypeople undertake fasts (called *anaśana*, lit. 'not eating', or *upavāsa*) and at least once a year all Jaiṇas observe a communal fast and dedicate that day for begging forgiveness (*śamāpamāṇ*) of all begins, including those *ekendriyas* whose lives they destroyed in the act of eating.<sup>16</sup> As for mendicants, who must constantly engage in austerities, the Jaina texts prescribe a variety of *tapas*: giving up stimulating dishes (*rasa-parityāga*), reducing one's diet to a few morsels (*avamaudarya*), and fasting for an entire day (*anaśana*).<sup>17</sup> Jaina fasts, whether practiced by the mendicants or the laypeople, must be distinguished from the "fasts" kept by the followers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Fasting in these communities is, for the most part, restricted to the daytime only; often food is freely consumed after sunset. Even the followers of various Brāhmaṇical religious sects allow eating fruits or some form of uncooked food—and preferably at night!—on their fasting days. The Jaina fast, however, lasts from sunrise to sunrise and is total; only boiled water in limited quantities may be consumed and that too only during the daytime. An extraordinary feature of the Jaina fast—not much discussed in the books but tacitly observed—is that all sexual contact between couples is forbidden for the duration of the fast, even if only the wife or the husband has refrained from food. Although the vow

of celibacy (*brahmacarya*) does not demand the vow of fasting, the Jains seem to perceive the latter incomplete without the former. This demonstrates the unique Jaina belief that the sex instinct (*maithuna-saṃjñā*) is inseparable from the craving for food and cannot be overcome without controlling the desire for the latter.

Fasting for a day only is considered child's play among the Jaina laity. A great many Jaina laypeople, especially women, during the sacred week called the *parvasana-parva* in the rainy season (*caturmāsā*), undertake longer periods of fastings for three to eight days. The formal conclusion of a fast is called *pārāṇā* and takes place long after the sunrise, with a sip of boiled water, usually after an offering of food is made to a Jaina monk or nun visiting the household for collecting alms. The *pārāṇā*s, especially after longer periods of fasting, are occasions for joyous celebrations by the relatives and friends of the person who has completed the vow faultlessly and cheerfully. Along with fellow members of the community they gather to feed such a person—in the majority of cases the fasts are undertaken by women, often newly wedded brides taking the lead and proving their zeal to their new relatives—with spoonfuls of boiled water or fruit juice. The participating community shows in this manner its delight in the spiritual progress made by one of its own and also earns merit by the act of giving food to so worthy a person.

As for the mendicants, the Jaina books describe a variety of fasts lasting sometimes several days, weeks, and even months. These are said to result in the immediate rebirth in the highest of heavens (where only Jaina mendicants may be born) to be followed by rebirth even as illustrious human beings (*śalākāpuruṣa*), such as a Cakravartin, a Nārāyaṇa, or even as a Jina, before attaining the supreme goal of *mokṣa*. The ninth-century Punnaṭa Jinasena in his *Harivamśapurāṇa* devotes a whole chapter of 154 verses to the description of a variety of fasts known by such grand names as the Sarvaśobhadra (19 fasts), Vasantabhadra (35 fasts), Mahāsarvaśobhadra (196 fasts), Trilokaśāravīdhi, Vajranadhyaṛīdhi, Ekāvalī, Mukāvalī, Ratnāvalī, and the Simhanīṣkrīdita, to mention only a few major ones.<sup>18</sup> The last of these fasts consists of 496 fasts with only 61 meals in between and is completed in as many as 557 days. It is said that Kṛṣṇa, a cousin of the 22nd Jina Nemi according to the Jaina epics, was in a previous birth a Jaina

mendicant by the name of Nirmāma Muni (lit. 'the Sage Anymous') and had then performed the above-mentioned Simhanīṣkrīdita fast. He had as a result been born during the time of the Jina Nemi as the last Nārāyaṇa, the Great Hero of our age.<sup>19</sup>

Fasting for the Jaina is thus a holy act to be undertaken by the pious solely for overcoming the *saṃjñās* in order to weaken the bonds of *karma*. But a holy act for a mendicant can justly become a source of merit for the laity seeking worldly fortune. The Jains consider the offering of food (*dāna-dāna*) to a fasting monk or a nun on the *pārāṇā* day an act of extraordinary merit, a privilege envied even by gods. The Jaina Purāṇas are replete with stories of a great many pious laypeople, remembered in the tradition with deep affection, who were fortunate enough to be the donors (*dātā*) of alms to such worthy mendicants, especially when the latter were on the verge of attaining enlightenment. It is said that Ṛṣabha, the first Jina of our time, wandered without food for a whole year and concluded his fast with a handful of sugarcane juice offered by King Śreyāṃsa, a momentous event which was greeted by gods with a shower of wealth. The Jains still celebrate this day, the third day of the waxing moon of Vaiśākha (April-May), as the Immortal Third (*Akṣaya-tṛtīyā*),<sup>20</sup> and aspire to offer a similar gift to mendicants who conclude their fasts on that day. Mahāvīra, the last Jina, is also said to have wandered for six months without food and water and finally broke his fast with some lentils offered to him by a slave girl called Candana who subsequently became the head nun of his community of 36,000 nuns.<sup>21</sup> In the Buddhist tradition this honour goes to Lady Sujātā who had offered a dish of milk pudding to Siddhārtha Gautama on the very day of his enlightenment. It is said that this dish provided nourishment for the enlightened Gautama for 49 days.<sup>22</sup>

Fasting is an act of *tapas* and is figuratively spoken of as a blazing fire in front of which mountains of snow of *karma* vanish, bringing the aspirant ever more close to the goal of *mokṣa*. The merit resulting from offering the proper food to such holy persons is therefore rightly unequalled by any other charitable activity of a householder. On the other hand, the perils of denying food to a fasting mendicant on his *pārāṇā* day are proportionately great and the lay community must remain vigilant lest the fire of his *tapas* engulf the society itself. The Jaina narrative of

Kaṃsa (the notorious king of Mathurā who was killed by Kṛṣṇa) serves as an excellent illustration of the dire consequences that follow upon a mendicant's long fast, the *pārāṇā* of which has been thwarted by carelessness on the part of the laymen. In his former life, the soul of the person who will be known in his next life as the villain Kaṃsa, was a mendicant called Vasiṣṭha. He practiced the Brāhmaṇical asceticism of *agnisādhana*, i.e. sitting in meditation surrounded by burning logs of wood, which the Jains considered false *tapas* on account of the *himsā* caused by the blazing fire. He was subsequently converted to Jainism and became a devout Jaina monk of the Digambara order. He lived on the mount Govardhana, and the reputation of his great *tapas* reached the court of King Ugrasena of Mathurā, himself an ardent lay follower of the Jina. The muni Vasiṣṭha once undertook a monthlong fast. The king, desirous of earning merit by offering him food on the day of his *pārāṇā*, issued a royal decree in which he claimed that privilege for himself and threatened to punish any one who should come forth to feed the monk when his fast was over. At the end of the thirty days, the muni Vasiṣṭha came out of seclusion and entered Mathurā, walking in silence in front of the houses, expecting a layperson to properly invite him in for a meal, as befits a Digambara monk. Unfortunately, the king had forgotten his resolve to feed the monk, and the people were afraid of breaking the king's command. As a result Vasiṣṭha returned to his abode without concluding the fast and as is customary in such cases, he underwent another month of fasting. He returned again to Mathurā, but the king was distracted by a raging fire in the palace and Vasiṣṭha had to leave the city without food for the second time. He returned for the third time after the lapse of another month's fast, but as fate would have it, the king again failed to honour his promise occupied as he was with an elephant which had gone on a rampage, and Vasiṣṭha returned without finishing his *pārāṇā*. An old woman saw the silent monk returning without alms and informed him of the unjust order of the King Ugrasena. The *āhāra-saṃjñā* is a deadly instinct, and as the wise frog Gaṅgadatta of the *Pañcatantra* observed: "What sin would not a hungry man commit, for indeed weak men become devoid of pity!" (*bubhukṣiṣṭaḥ kṛpā na karoti pāpam, kṣīṇā narā miṣkaruṇā bhavanti.*)<sup>23</sup> Infuriated by this callous treatment, Vasiṣṭha in a moment of hunger forgot his mendicant

vows and resolved to avenge this insult and deprivation. He died in anguish and was immediately conceived in the womb of Padmāvatī, the chief queen of the same King Ugrasena. Soon after, the queen started having pregnancy cravings (*dohalā*) of an extraordinary kind. She conceived a desire, prompted no doubt by the fetus, to cut the heart of her husband and to drink his blood in her folded hands. The king, using certain stratagems, fulfilled her desires and a son was born whom both parents thought it wise to abandon to avert any danger to the kingdom. They placed him in a copper container (*kāṁṣya-maṇiṇḍā*) with a royal seal indicating his true origin and floated it in the river Yamunā. Thus was the origin of the villain Kaṃsa who would eventually imprison his father the King Ugrasena and would himself be killed by Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva and Devakī.<sup>24</sup>

This is not the occasion for examining the question whether the pregnant woman in the story was projecting on the fetus her own desire to kill her husband, or to debate the possibility of the presence of an oedipal desire in a fetus. We are here concerned rather with the "edible" complex and should therefore look for the message the story might convey to the members of the Jaina community concerning the instinct for food. Even a fetus is not free from the ravages of the *āhāra-saṃjñā*, especially the fetus of a soul that has died of starvation. Notwithstanding the grave provocation which filled the dying muni Vasiṣṭha with rage, one would still expect a Jaina mendicant to crave a morsel of vegetarian food rather than lust for a drink of blood. The author of the story is no doubt employing a conventionalized way to describe an acute form of hostility of the frustrated hungry man—and a holy man—toward those who let him die of hunger. Even so, it is possible to argue that the story also points to the great difficulty of maintaining the practice of vegetarianism in the face of deliberate deprivation of permitted food or in the event of a natural calamity like a famine. We will never know why certain animals (e.g. cows, deer, elephants, etc.) are born vegetarians while others are not, but it can be safely said that human beings are vegetarians not by birth but by choice only. Indeed vegetarianism in the Indian context must be considered to be a religious habit acquired over many years of the strictest possible cultural conditioning. It is therefore liable to be lost if favorable conditions—such as donors readily offering appropriate food—were not forth-



coming, as in the case of *muni* Vasiṣṭha in our story, or social pressures were to be relaxed as is now the case for many second generation Jainas who have settled in the West. In either case, craving for food, ever present due to the *āhāra-saṃjñā*, especially for the forbidden variety—the taste (*rasa*) for which has only been suppressed but has never been totally destroyed—is likely to surface at any time. According to the Jaina texts, the memories of these tastes are so tenacious that they are preserved through countless rebirths and may suddenly overcome a soul even under the best of circumstances. This is illustrated by several Jaina stories one of which may be noted here.

We referred earlier to the great fast called the *Simhanīṣṭrīḍita* which was practiced by Kṛṣṇa in one of his previous lives when he had become a Jaina monk. The same narrative tells us that a few lives prior to that period, the soul of Kṛṣṇa was born as a human being and he had entered the service of a king as a cook and had gained great reputation for preparing the most delicious meat dishes. This distinction earned for him not only the lordship of ten villages as a gift from the king, but also the title *Amyātarāyāna* ("Abode of the Ambrosia Flavor"). This king died and his son who succeeded to the throne came under the influence of a Jaina monk and gave up eating meat altogether. He fired the cook and took away the ten villages previously granted to him by the dead king. The cook realized that a Jaina mendicant had deprived him of his living and deliberately fed that monk a poisonous bitter gourd, as a result of which the monk died. Because of this evil deed, upon the cook's death his soul was born in hell. When eventually he was reborn as a human being and had progressed enough to become a Jaina monk, he performed the *Simhanīṣṭrīḍita* fast and, as a result, was (in his last birth) born Kṛṣṇa the Great Hero, a cousin-brother of the twenty-second Jina called Nemi. One would expect Kṛṣṇa to have by now given up all desire for meat, but such was not the case. It is said that on the eve of Nemi's wedding, Kṛṣṇa deliberately caused a great many animals to be penned in for the purpose of feeding their meat to the guests and, as a result, Nemi, utterly overcome by his compassion to the animals, renounced the world to become a Jaina mendicant.<sup>25</sup> Now it is well-known that Jainas have always considered themselves to be vegetarians, especially at the time of Kṛṣṇa and Jina Nemi, when the degenerate days of the *pañcama-kāla*

(the Jaina version of the *Kālī-yuga* in which we now live) had not yet arrived. Nor are the Jainas ever known to feed non-vegetarian food even to their non-Jaina guests. The belief that Kṛṣṇa, the Great Jaina Hero, and himself a cousin of the Jina, could have succumbed to such a totally unwholesome and unacceptable practice can only be explained in one way. The relish of the forbidden food and the memories of meat eating were so ingrained on his soul that they surfaced unexpectedly—triggered no doubt by the impending wedding feast—and drove him to commit that reprehensible act on account of which he was, at the end of his glorious life as a *Nārāyaṇa*, reborn in the third hell. The Jaina epics tell us that Kṛṣṇa's soul is still languishing in that purgatory, but they also promise us that he will emerge from that hell to be reborn again as a human being—and one who remains a vegetarian to be sure!—becoming even a Jina himself and thus will finally attain the goal of *mokṣa*.<sup>26</sup>

A person who does not climb higher is in no danger of falling lower. But there is no telling how far and low an apostate, having slipped from the high ground, may fall. The story of Kṛṣṇa does not fully spell out what probably the Jaina authors fear actually may happen to a Jaina who has ceased to be a vegetarian. The alleged craving for blood by the *muni* Vasiṣṭha in his new incarnation as the fetus *Kaṃsa* must inescapably lead to the horrible conclusion that, for an apostate, cannibalism is just a step away from eating animal flesh. One such story, the subject-matter of a long Kannada *kāvya* called *Jinadattarāyacarita*, widely known in the Digambara Jaina community of Karnataka, might illustrate this point. The story tells us about the migration of Jainas in ancient times under the leadership of Prince Jinadatta from Northern Mahurā—the same city once ruled by Kaṃsa and Kṛṣṇa—to the newly founded Humcā (near the modern city of Shimoga), the medieval seat of the Sāntara dynasty of Southern Karnataka.<sup>27</sup> In brief, the story is that Mathurā was ruled by a devout Jaina King Sākāra and his Queen Sīyaladevī. They have a son called Jinadatta obtained through the grace of Padmāvatī, the protector goddess (*śānta-devatā*) of the Jina Pāśvanātha. Like the King Sāntanu of the *Mahābhārata*, King Sākāra once lost his way in a forest and found himself in love with the daughter of a king of hunters (*vyādha*). He secretly promised her father that he would give his kingdom to her son, and established her sepa-



ately from his chief queen in the outskirts of the capital where she soon gave birth to a son called Māridatta. For a long while the king remained a vegetarian but with the birth of the new son, he began frequenting her house and in no time became fond of eating meat dishes cooked in her kitchen. One day, we are told, the cook could not find any animal to slaughter and, fearing the king's wrath, procured from the cemetery the flesh of a dead man and prepared a novel dish. The king was extremely pleased with the new dish and was not deterred even when he came to know the source of the meat. Indeed, he even secretly contrived with the cook to obtain freshly killed human meat every day for his table and arranged to send a small child, who would become the victim of the day, to the cook with the ruse of delivering a lemon. Soon small children began disappearing without a trace from the city of Mathurā. The king's addiction to human meat had reached a point of no return, enabling the hunter queen to use it to her benefit to get rid of Jinadatta, the rival to her son, by sending him to the cook to deliver the lemon. But fate intervened and Māridatta intercepted him, snatching the lemon away from him, insisting that he would himself deliver it to the cook and was thus killed instead. Jinadatta was miraculously saved, and he, taking his mother and his loyal army, fled Mathurā, migrated to the South, and established a new Jaina kingdom at Huṃcā, dedicating that city to his saviour goddess Padmāvatī. A terrible fall awaited the King Sākara who had allowed himself to slip from vegetarian habits and had wantonly indulged in eating meat, leading to cannibalism. He died a horrible death and was reborn in the seventh hell.

The stories of Vasistha, Kṛṣṇa and Sākara examined above, progressively illustrate the manner in which the Jains view the tremendous power which the instinct for eating (*āhāra-samyiñā*) exerts upon an aspirant soul, and the need for ever guarding oneself against the temptation for food. Since the *samyiñas*, whether for food, fear, sex or acquisition, are a form of desire, they will persist until all forms of deluding or *mohaniyā karmas* are destroyed, whereupon the soul having attained omniscience (*kevala-jñāna*) comes to be designated a kevalin. One would expect the Jains to believe that such a kevalin—a person like Mahāvīra, for example, who became a kevalin at the age of forty and lived for another thirty-two years—would altogether cease eating food.

The Jains would also be required to devise an alternative means of sustaining the life of such a kevalin, freed as he is forever from the shackles of the *āhāra-samyiñā*. This brings us to a most important controversy between the Jaina sects of the Śvetāmbaras and the Digambaras, who have maintained radically different views on the problem of hunger and the sustenance of life of an omniscient person, whether he be a Tirthankara kevalin like Mahāvīra, and hence gifted with special bodily features, or thousands of ordinary mendicant disciples who also attained to *kevali* during his time.<sup>28</sup>

Both sects agree that the instincts of fear (*bhaya*), sex (*maithuna*) and acquisition (*parigraha*), have their origin solely in mind and therefore these can be overcome by meditation on their opposites (*pratiṣekṣa-bhāvanā*) and are terminated without a trace at the time of attaining *kevali*. The instinct for food, however, falls in a different category, since the need for nourishment of the body operates independent of a desire to eat and cannot be wished away merely by the contemplation of the opposite. In other words, the absence of the *āhāra-samyiñā* in a kevalin does not result in the absence of the need for nourishment. The question is how to account for the sustenance of a kevalin's body when he is totally devoid of the desire for food? The Śvetāmbaras saw no conflict here and argued that a kevalin continues to eat 'morsels' of food (*kevala-āhāra*) deposited (*prakṣipta*) in the body as before, even in the absence of the *āhāra-samyiñā*. A kevalin must take such food, they argued, in order to sustain himself, i.e. to satisfy the biological conditions of hunger (*ksudhā*) and thirst (*trṣṇā*), the two painful feelings (*aśānta-vedanīyā*) which, being a primary condition of all embodiment, must rise voluntarily, even in one who has brought an end to all desires.<sup>29</sup> But the Śvetāmbaras probably did not foresee the perils in permitting a kevalin the morsels of food (*kevala-āhāra*), for once it was admitted that even a kevalin may eat, albeit without the urgings of the *āhāra-samyiñā*, there was no way of preventing the possibility of his consuming the forbidden food. The Śvetāmbara canonical story of Mahāvīra's eating of *kubhūta-māṃsa*—decades after his attaining omniscience—apparently for curing himself of the dehydration caused by the magic heat thrown by the Ājīvika Gośāla is a case in point. Notwithstanding the opinion of the old Śvetāmbara commentators and of the consensus of the Jaina public in our times that what

was eaten was not any kind of meat but a medicinal herb—probably *bijapūra-katāha* or belpal—the fact still remains that Mahāvīra could have been accused of such an act only because the Śvetāmbara tradition did provide for the possibility of a kevalin eating any food at all.<sup>30</sup> This precisely seems to be the point of controversy seized upon by the Digambaras who vehemently rejected the idea of a kevalin ever eating any food subsequent to the attainment of omniscience. They maintained that with the end of the desire for food (*āhāra-saṃjñā*) also came the end of all hunger and thirst for a kevalin, as well as the need for answering the calls of nature, and also of sleep. They declared that with the attainment of omniscience the body of a kevalin automatically undergoes a bio-chemical change, as it were, his blood being transformed to milk as in the case of heavenly beings (*deva*), freeing him totally from hunger and thirst and thus from the dependence on the 'kavala-āhāra' for ever. This transformed body needs no additional nourishment for its sustenance other than that which is automatically provided by the *nokama-vargaṇā*, a kind of *karmic* matter responsible for maintaining the structure and mass of given body. This subtle *karmic* matter is involuntarily drawn to the soul in a continuous flow by the mechanisms of the *nāma* and the *āyu-karmas*, forces which, at the time of the present rebirth, had projected the human body of the kevalin and had also determined its longevity.<sup>31</sup> The Digambaras proclaimed that the transformed pure body of the kevalin, now called the *parama-audārika-śarīra*, will be maintained not by any fresh food deposited (*prakṣipta*) in the mouth or absorbed through the pores of the skin (*loṃa-āhāra*), but solely by the nourishment derived from the *nokama-vargaṇā*. Accordingly, they maintained that the body of the kevalin will be sustained by this voluntary *karmic* process until the end of his present life. Then, like a chunk of camphor, this pure body at the moment of death, will suddenly evaporate and the kevalin's perfected soul will reach the abode of the liberated ones (*siddha*) at the summit of the universe. *Saṃsāra* and food would thus appear to be cotermious for a Jain; there never was a time when he has not eaten in this beginningless cycle of birth and death. The path of *mokṣa*, therefore, consists in overcoming the desire for food in all its forms, for true liberation is freedom from hunger for ever.

## NOTES

1. *Rgveda* VIII.48.
2. Taittirīya-Upaniṣat III.1-6.
3. *Ibid.*, II.1.
4. See P. S. Jaini, "The Pure and the Auspicious in the Jaina Tradition," *Journal of Asian Perspectives* (Leiden) I, 1 (1985).
5. *Bhagavad-gītā* XV.55; A. L. Basham, *The History and Doctrines of the Āyurveda*, London, 1951.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Hermann Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, pt. 1, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 20, p. 86 (*Āśāṅga-sūtra* I.8.4).
8. See P. S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*, Berkeley, 1979, p. 27 n. 61.
9. *Majjhimanikāya* I.80.
10. See Colette Caillat, *Atonements in the Ancient Jaina Ritual of the Jaina Monks*, L. D. Institute of Indology, no. 49, Ahmedabad, 1975.
11. *Manusmṛiti* VI.20.
12. See P. S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*, pp. 227-233.
13. Jñendra Varni, *Jainendra Siddhānta Kōśa* IV, Bhārāvya Jñānapīṭha, Varanasi, 1973, p. 121.
14. On the *mahārāṣṭras*, see H. Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, pt. 1, pp. 202-210.
15. For a list of the forbidden food, see R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, Oxford, 1963, pp. 110-116.
16. See P. S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*, pp. 209-217.
17. See *Tattvārtha-sūtra* of Umāsvāti, IX.19.
18. *Hariṃśāpuraṇa* of Jinaseṇa, ed. by Pannalal Jain, Bhārāvya Jñānapīṭha, 1962, sarga 34.
19. *Ibid.*, sarga 33, verse 166.
20. See P. S. Jaini, "Jaina Festivals," *Festivals in World Religions*, ed. Alan Brown, London, 1986.
21. For the story of Candanā, see M. L. Mehta and Rishabh Chandra, *Prakṛti Proter Namas*, pt. 1, L. D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, 1970, p. 246.
22. For the story of Supāṇā, see *The Jataka*, pt. 1, ed. V. Fausboll, Pali Text Society, London 1962, pp. 68-70.
23. *Pañcatantra* IV.16.
24. *Hariṃśāpuraṇa*, *ibid.*, sarga 33, verses 47-92. See also *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* of Varāṇsa (no. 106; Ugrasena-Vasiṣṭha-kāṭhāṇakam), ed. A. N. Upadhye, Singhī Jain Series no. 17, Bombay, 1943, pp. 267-276.
25. See *Hariṃśāpuraṇa*, *ibid.*, sarga 35.
26. For further references on this point see P. S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*, p. 305.
27. See the introduction to the *Paṇḍarāśāṣṭakāya aṭhaṇḍa Jñānatattvārṇava* (in Kannada, c. 1800), published by the Vivekābhyaśaya Kāryālaya, Mangalore, 1956.
28. For a full discussion on the controversy, see Paul Dundas, "Food and Freedom: The Jaina sectarian debate on the nature of the Kevalin," *Religion* XV (1985), pp. 161-198.
29. Umāsvāti's *Tattvārthasūtra* IX.9 is said to provide the scriptural authority for both sects on this controversy. For the Digambara view, see *Sarvārthasiddhi*

- IX.9, ed. Phoolchandra Siddhānāsārī, Bhāratiya Jñānapīṭha, 1971.
30. For a discussion on the nature of the food eaten by Mahāvīra, see P. S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*, pp. 23-24.
31. For the Yapaniya and the Svetāmbara positions on kevali-kavalāhāra, see *Sūtravāṇa Kevalībhūti-prakarṇa*, ed. Muni Jambuvijaya, Jaina Aṁānanda Sabhā, Bhavanagar, 1974, pp. 39-52 and 85-100. For the Digambara refutation, see *Nyāyārambhaṇḍa* of Prabhācandra, ed. Mahendrakumar Nyāyācārya, Maṇikacandra Jaina Granthamālā, Bombay, 1941, pp. 852-865.