

## DANAM CONFERENCE 2007

### SESSION DKM1

**Theme: Dharma, Karma, and Moksha and the Jaina Tradition**

**Anne Vallely, University of Ottawa, Convener and Presiding**

## ABSTRACTS

The panel will engage with the discussion of *sadharana*-dharma and *varnashrama*-dharma as they are understood within Jaina Tradition, since it unambiguously identifies itself as a *sadharana* tradition – its absolutist ethical principles apply to all souls (human and nonhuman) equally. Jaina-s assert that most beings are too karmically encumbered to even be aware of the existence of a moral universe, let alone follow its dictates. But all human beings should strive to do so – irrespective of gender, *varna* (caste) or *ashrama* ('stage' in life). *Varnashrama* dharma, therefore, gets little attention in Jaina discourse other than to repudiate it, and thereby to rhetorically highlight the distinctiveness of the Jaina tradition.

In practice, however, *varnashrama* plays a significant role in the way in which Jaina-s organize themselves and live their religious lives. The juxtaposition of the two – the rhetorical ideal/ lived tradition – will constitute the foundation for the panelists' presentations. All the participants for this proposed panel were engaged in an intensive study of Jainism in India over the course of the summer 2007, during which time they were exposed to both the informal lived tradition of Jaina-s, as well as its reified representation. The papers in this panel will each explore how central religious ideas are conceptualized, discussed, practiced and also reified in the self-presentation of Jaina Tradition as an separate, independent entity, in a world of faiths.

### Abstracts – University of Ottawa Students

#### **Bradley Boileau: *Preksha Dhyana and the Jain Yogic Paradox***

The renowned Jain scholar, Padmanabh Jaini, notes that although Jainas have developed such meditative exercises as *samayika* [equanimity] they have traditionally paid very little attention to the more magical paths of awakening so heavily favoured by other Indian schools. In this paper I will discuss *Preksha Dhyana* as one of the few (if not only) exceptions to this general rule. *Preksha Dhyana* seems to be the only Jain meditative practice to reveal a syncretism with other Indian schools of yogic theory and thought. What is also striking about *Preksha Dhyana*, is that its practice and rationale are differently understood and applied whether one is along the *moksha marg* or householder path. The philosophy behind PD and its techniques appear to be flexible enough to encompass both other-worldly and this-worldly goals, and to thereby differently conceptualize the soul's relationship with the central concepts of karma, dharma and *moksha*.

#### **Gabriel Jones: *Warring Natures: Marwar culture, the Ksatriya ethos and the Terapanthi Jain of Rajasthan***

The single-mindedness with which the Terapanthi strive to purify the soul has led to criticism within broader Jainism that Terapanthi Jains are "ekantavadins" (doctrinal absolutists). Acarya Bhiksu, the first Acarya of the Terapanthi strongly emphasized the distinction between the

laukika (worldly), and lokottara (transcendent). He further taught that assistance or charity was in and of itself an engagement in worldliness, and an acceptance of all associated karmic matter. This interpretation of ahimsic non-intervention is but one of the elements distinguishing the Terapanthi within Jainism. This paper examines these distinctions, how they uniquely make use of the pan-Indian concepts of dharma, karma and moksha, and how they might be culturally informed by the ksatriya ethos and Marwari enculturation.

**Scott Clark: *Jain Identity Politics: Ahimsa, Anekantavada and Aparigraha in a World of Others***

Jains generally understand *ahimsa*, *anekantavada* and *aparigraha* as essential to their discourse of renunciation – that is, to *dharma*, *karma* and *moksa*. Significantly, these concepts and other fundamental aspects of Jain soteriology are used in high-level Jain identity politics. This paper considers the strategic uses of some of Jainism’s basic concepts and what this can tell us about contemporary Jainism.

**Janet Gunn: *Moksha Marg Broadening in Progress: Making Room for the Lived Experience of Jaina Traditions***

As scholars we are required to reimagine Jainism such that popular ambiguities and improvisations are brought within the realm of "the legitimate" and included in our treatments of Jaina Dharma. Auspiciousness and worldly benefit are central goals of Jain ritual practice, as is striving toward liberation – one can tread at least some distance along the moksha marg in silk slippers. This paper asks that we permit the contradiction, and consider its implications for the ways in which we study, and teach, Jain encounters with the sacred.

**Mélanie Saucier: *The Ideal & the Real in Digambar Jainism***

Traditionally, notions of karma, dharma and moksha have been used to demonstrate the inferiority of women in debates between Jaina acharyas. Indeed, Digambara acharyas, such as Kundakunda, have argued that women are incapable of achieving spiritual liberation because of their close association with the world of matter due to their bodies. Nevertheless, though important Jaina scriptures dictate that men are superior to women in their spiritual endeavors, Jaina women have also demonstrated that they are not “passive victims” of this patriarchal system. When discussing ideological concepts such as karma, dharma, and moksha, it is necessary to acknowledge the fact that doctrine does not coincide with practical life. In my essay, I will discuss how Digambara Jaina women’s life experiences often differ from what is expected of and for them in the scriptures, and I will discuss how certain “pioneer” Digambara nuns have established their place in a religion largely dominated by men.

**Paul LeBlanc: *The Tirthankara & the Ubermensch***

Jain soteriology is explored through its notions of *dharma*, *karma* & *moksa* compared to that of Nietzschean metaphysics in creating a dialogue between Eastern & Western ethical ideologies. The Jaina

notion of Tīrthankara as a personal archetype is discussed using a comparativist approach in relation to the Nietzschean metaphysics surrounding the *Übermensch*.

**Stephen B. Quinlan: *Astrology & Cosmic Identity: Connecting the Natal Horoscope to Jain Soteriological Ideology***

Jain karma theory distinguishes itself in two primary ways: by an emphasis on the materiality of karmic substance in radical distinction to the ineffable nature of the soul to which it binds in life, and by an emphasis on self-determined, individual will in undertaking the measures necessary to work against karmic bonding in the conduct of one's life. Expressed succinctly, the whole range of Jain ideology and devout activity has as its overarching objective the conscious enterprise of the individual's attention to the soul's eventual liberation. Operating from these basic postulates, I shall explore the natal horoscope both as a means of identifying personal, karmic accumulation and, additionally, as a means of effectively managing the conduct of one's life so as to best serve the soul's soteriological objective (i.e., moksa).

**Jenna Ferrey: *Caste & the Jaina Dharma***

Jainism shares with Hinduism and Buddhism such central religious concepts as reincarnation, *karma*, and liberation (*moksha*). Caste also affects Jain beliefs and behaviors. Jains, however, have reinterpreted the traditional caste system and looked within their own tradition to establish a uniquely Jain understanding of caste. Although Jains have rejected the traditional Brahmanical notions of caste, many of the ideas which have been intrinsic to the survival of the caste system, have a significant effect on Jains and Jain ideals.