

TOWARD A CULTURE OF NONVIOLENCE:

THE JAIN WAY OF LIFE

P.N. (Bawa) Jain

P.N. Jain is United Nations Representative of the International Mahavir Jain Mission and of the Temple of Understanding (The Interfaith Center of New York).

Ahimsa parmo dharma (nonviolence is the greatest religion).

Mahavira

Nonviolence is a weapon of the strong.

Mahatma Gandhi

The dawn of nonviolence shall usher in an era of peaceful coexistence, where the oneness of all religions becomes the foundation stone of the oneness of humanity.

H.H. Acharya Sushil Kumarji Maharaj

I believe that the Jain way of life is universal and the teachings are pertinent in today's context. In view of this, I shall attempt to express briefly my interpretation and understanding of the Jain religion and philosophy, as a way of life. My approach to answering the Guideline Questions will not be specific, but I believe the questions are answered to some extent by discussing the cardinal principles of the Jain way of life and by outlining the key aspects of Jainism. The views expressed in this paper are mine personally and are derived from my own experiences and learning of the teachings of the Jain way of life, as preached by my spiritual father and teacher H.H. Acharya Sushil Kumarji Maharaj, to whose memory I dedicate this paper.

Background

The present form of Jainism was inspired by the teachings of Tirthankar Mahavira, who lived about 2500 years ago and brought about a synthesis between religion and philosophy. Historians have not been able to trace the origin of Jainism, but have established that it is undoubtedly an ancient religion and that Mahavira was not its founder, but merely reiterated and rejuvenated it.

Jaina history contains references to the 63 Salaka-Purusas (the Supreme Personages), who lived during the ancient periods of the avasarpini-kala and utsarpini-kala time cycles. These Salaka-Purusas inspired the people to follow religion and ethics during the course of the advancement of human civilization. The Tirthankaras occupy the highest position among the Salaka-Purusas. During the fourth part of the present

cycle of avasarpini-kala, twenty-four Tirthankaras were born. The last of the Tirthankaras was Mahavira, who lived about 2500 years ago; Buddha Tathagata was his contemporary. The Buddhist scriptures mention Mahavira as Niganthanaputta. The tradition is without a beginning or end; who knows how many twenty-four Tirthankaras have gone by, and how many will come in the future?

The Principle of Aparigraha:
The Oneness of All Beings

Paraspar upagraha jivanam (all souls are rendering service to one another)

Today we are living in a world that is growing consciously interdependent. This reality emanates from the Jain principle of aparigraha which for centuries has taught that we are all one, all interdependent. For humanity to survive, we have to ensure the preservation and nurturing of an environment for all forms of life to coexist peacefully and harmoniously. We must remind ourselves that local actions have global consequences, and our actions have repercussions for ourselves. In fact, what distinguishes the Jain theology from its praxis is the emphasis on the immediate repercussions of one's thoughts and actions.

Humanity is going through a spiritual renaissance. As we come to the end of perhaps the bloodiest century in human history, there is greater recognition and emphasis on the principles of ahimsa (nonviolence -- perhaps the greatest gift of the Jain way of life) as the key to global survival. This century has witnessed the exemplary lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others who have lived by the principles of ahimsa and emerged victorious in wars waged not by weapons of mass destruction and violence, but by their firm conviction in the power of nonviolence. These people have also demonstrated to us the responsibility and the power of every individual. This is the Jain way of life.

The Tradition of the Nonexistence of God

Appa so parmappa (soul is God)

The basic foundation of all religions in the world is the atma and the parmatma, the soul and the Supreme Soul. The grand edifice of religion stands on the pillars of these two principles. Some religions believe in the existence of God along with the existence of the soul; some are atheistic. Those who believe in the doctrine of the existence of God regard him as the Creator, Protector, and Regulator of the Universe, the all-powerful Supreme Soul. He is called the Brahma, the Supreme Father, and so on.

The second tradition believes in the existence of the soul but not of God; as a creator of the universe, it believes in the independent progress of the soul. The soul reaches the highest position after attainment of supreme purification by the destruction of attachment, or indulgence and hatred, and the acquisition of complete detachment. It is an eternal, self-regulated existence: the human being is his or her own friend and foe. Jainism follows this philosophy, which has an independent and scientific outlook. This tradition is known, in brief, by the name of Sramana culture. The other Indian tradition, of believers in the

existence of God, is known as the Brahman culture. Buddhism is another Indian religion which follows the philosophy of non-creation of the universe by God, but believes in the cycle of birth and death.

Viewed from the point of cultural evolution, it would be apparent that there is not much spiritual difference between the Vedic (Brahmanic) and Sramanic cultures; but the difference from the popular viewpoint, with respect to principles, conduct, and faith, is quite clear. The two cultures have influenced each other to a considerable extent, as amply evidenced by the rich ancient literature of India. Even in one family, people with different traditions used to follow their respective modes of religious worship.

A Scientific Philosophy

To know how the whole mechanism of the Universe works, to apprehend the cosmic spell and break through the outward layers of the tangible and visible forces of the cosmos, is the final goal of human life and the pursuit of Jainism. Most of the basic principles on which Jaina philosophy is constructed are now corroborated by modern science and psychological analysis. Scientific theory postulates that every substance is made of atoms, and every atom, when analyzed, reveals the energetic interplay of electrons, protons and neutrons.

Jainism maintains that the whole universe can be broadly divided into two categories, jiva (spirit) and ajiva (matter). On the basis of this finding, about 2500 years ago, Jaina seers saw the life-force not only in plants and vegetables but also in so-called inanimate matter such as earth, water, and air. They went further in their analysis and sub-categorized the two categories, examining their characteristics. They concluded that jiva and ajiva are eternal, uncreated, unending, and perpetual. There is a constant interplay between the two, resulting in the bewildering cosmic manifestations in material, psychic, and emotional spheres around us. This led them to the theories of transmigration and rebirth. Change, not the total annihilation of spirit and matter, is the basic postulate of Jaina philosophy; it is the same thing science teaches us when it says that matter is indestructible.

The theory of karma (action) came as a natural deduction from the theory of causation, just as science recognizes the fact that every effect is the result of some cause. Jainism considers the whole universe as a great cosmic mechanism with its own self-propelling force, uncreated and uncontrolled by any superimposed outside force. Its unitary character can be properly identified only by recognizing and giving proper place to each of its parts. This leads a logical mind to the theory of total nonviolence, ahimsa. For if you believe the universe to be a unitary whole, a self-propelling mechanism, wherein every part, from the smallest to the largest, has a role to play, you cannot destroy even a nut or bolt of that machine without damaging it, as well as your own self.

To know this mechanism, to understand and explain its working, is the task of a philosopher; but to live according to its rules, to play one's own role as a part of that mechanism so that the machine can work properly, is the task of a religious person. This philosophy and this religion cannot be carried out successfully without accepting the doctrine of total nonviolence in thought, speech, and action. A weak person cannot practice such nonviolence, for the simple reason that the concept of total nonviolence is not a negative one -- it is not just doing nothing. True nonviolence is not the product of a merely intellectual understanding, but a product of both head and heart. One cannot be nonviolent unless one understands the

real nature of irritating causes; but to understand that, two things are required, namely love and the capacity to appreciate the totality of the causes. These requirements are interdependent. Without love, the capacity for total comprehension is not developed; and without the capacity for total comprehension, the element of love is not developed.

This has led Jaina thinkers to emphasize the development of a broader outlook -- the open-mindedness to understand things as they are. Cultivation of mind was found to be the key to the Halls of Heaven, but the thinkers realized that mind cannot be cultivated and disciplined by force, only through reason. Logic is the only feature which distinguishes human beings from the rest of the animal world.

The Theories of Syadvada and Karma: Relativity and Action

To develop this reason and logic, Jaina thinkers provided the theory of syadvada, or relativity -- Jainism's greatest contribution to the thinking process of humankind, unfortunately little-known to Occidentals. This theory propounds that every judgment is relatively true, because its truth value depends on its relation to other objects: known and unknown circumstances, modes of expression and reception, and many other facts. After a period of 2500 years, this theory has been recognized by Einstein and others on the plane of physics.

How to comprehend reality? Can any outside agency be of help to you? No, says the Jaina tradition; your salvation is in your own hands. You are your own master, the architect of your own destiny. If your pleasure and pain are the result of your own action (karma), the way of salvation is also in your hands, because what you have done can be undone only by you.

The theory of karma teaches us how to attain freedom from the bondage of likes, dislikes, and desires. It teaches us not to surrender meekly to human weaknesses, described as our real enemies. It further tells us that, just as your savior is not outside you, your enemies are also not outside you. You have to seek them within. Once you identify them within you, it is not very difficult to overcome them. One who has succeeded in such annihilation is called arihanta (in Sanskrit ari means "enemy," and the root han means "to kill"). An arihanta is free from bondage and becomes siddha, one who has achieved final salvation -- the real freedom.

Many in this universe have achieved the positions of arihantas and siddhas, and many will achieve the same in the future. Since they have achieved that which ought to be achieved, they are entitled to our respect and homage. We, therefore, bow to them. There are learned sages, the path-seekers who show us the path; they are called acharyas; we bow to them. There are those who preach and interpret the gospels of truth. They are called upadhyayas; we bow down to them. There are those who are still seriously striving to achieve the above goal. They are called sadhus (saints); we bow to them also. Thus the Jains bow down to those who have attained, to those who are on the path of attainment, and to those who are path-seekers, irrespective of their religious levels. We pay homage to them not because we want favor, but because they are the source of inspiration for our own actions.

Jainism admonishes us: Appa katta vikatta ya, duhanna ya suhana ya. Appa mittamamittam ca, dupatthiya supatthio. (It is your own self which is the doer as well as enjoyer of your pleasure and pains. Your friend and foe is also your own self, engaged in good and bad activities respectively.)

The Importance of Bheda-Jnana

The Jaina approach to the constitution of the world is altogether scientific and logical. The concept of bheda-jnana involves the firm belief in the existence of soul and non-soul as the constituents of the world. A logical approach to the constitution of the universe can easily convince us of the existence and efficacy of both. There is nothing religious or sectarian in the proposition that there are two basic constituents of this phenomenal world -- jiva and ajiva, sentient and non-sentient things. If this conviction is heeded by a discerning human mind, there is little difficulty in concluding that our true self is purely a knower, the permanent conscious element which knows and motivates all our activities in life, and that the rest is only an object of our knowledge and thus foreign to us.

If this is so, should I not concentrate on that which is permanent, that which is my own self? For to devote our attention to the things which are foreign to "self" is to seek satisfaction from objects which do not belong to us. This is bound to result in despair, dejection, and tension. Jaina seers, therefore, emphasize that the realization of the distinction between self and non-self is the first essential condition for a blissful life. This, however, does not mean that as householders we should shun all activities of material life. In fact, all the Tirthankaras and leading Jaina sravakas (householders) were successfully engrossed in activities of life, but the key to their attainment of spiritual bliss was their awareness that real happiness resides in one's own self and can never be obtained through the enjoyment of worldly objects.

Once such a firm conviction is developed, worldly activities and their results do not touch us; then all our doubts, dejections, and despairs vanish and one begins to get a taste of real happiness and bliss. Without such an awareness or conviction, one easily identifies oneself with worldly objects of enjoyment which are foreign to the self and transitory in nature. The fickle character of these objects, when identified with our self, brings in its train all the tensions and turmoils of our day-to-day existence.

So the first postulate of a blissful life is the discrimination of self and non-self, and the conviction that the self's indulgences in non-self are bound to result in suffering. Such a realization would greatly reduce our usual tensions and enable us to face the realities of life with unprecedented calm and fortitude. We would then be no more pulled and pushed by outside factors, because the exigencies generated by these forces are not able to touch our "self." We, and not the outside forces, become masters of ourselves.

The Jaina masters have prescribed practical and workable methods to train our psyche in this direction. They have asked us to bear constantly in mind the twelve bhavanas (reflections), i.e., the reflection of anityatva (transitoriness), asaranatva (helplessness), etc. These reflections are logical conclusions derived from the behavioral pattern of the human mind in its interaction with material objects of the universe. The Jaina insistence on austerities, daily repentance, and meditations greatly helps in shaping our personality, leading to a life of peace, tranquillity, and contentment.

The Doctrine of Ahimsa: Nonviolence in Thought, Action, and Deed

Nonviolence is the foundation of Jain ethics. However, the observance of nonviolence is not possible without an attitude of "many points of view" or relativity, because from the Jaina point of view, a person can be nonviolent even when committing violence. The commission of violence or nonviolence is dependent upon the mental condition of the doer, not on the act. He who conducts himself with the utmost caution is nonviolent in his thought, hence he is nonviolent; and he who does not observe caution in his active daily life has violence in his mental state, so even if he actually commits no violence, he is ethically violent.

All this analysis is not possible unless one possesses the "many points of view." Hence a person who possesses an attitude of "many points of view" is regarded as being possessed of right faith, and the person possessed of right faith can acquire right knowledge and right conduct. Righteousness or right faith has special significance in the Jaina faith; it is the foundation stone to the path of liberation.

Mundane life is bondage. The soul is involved in this bondage from time immemorial; we have forgotten our real nature on this account, and it is this forgetfulness that is responsible for our bondage. We will realize this mistake only when we discover that our nature is endowed with infinite consciousness, that our strength is greater than what is seen in mundane life, that we are the treasure-house of infinite knowledge, faith, bliss, and power. It is only when we become alive to this faith that we try to achieve firmness of conviction about our real nature through our right conduct. Hence the pathway of Jaina ethics is the royal road that leads to the state of conquest of attachment in accordance with right knowledge.

The doctrine of ahimsa to be practiced in mind, speech, and action is yet another factor of practical utility in soothing, softening, and harmonizing the international, national, and individual relationship. Jaina thinkers touched new heights of philosophical refinement by introducing the doctrine of ahimsa even in the process of thinking. Their evolution of the theories of naya and syadvada (relativity) is an attempt to recognize even the partial truth, whenever evident, so that reality can be comprehended to the fullest possible extent. Adoption of this method of establishing truth positively leads to the development of tolerance of every viewpoint, however contrary it may be to the current and traditional view. If the theories of naya and syadvada were extended to every sphere of human activity, individual and social life on this planet would be completely revolutionized. Softness and love are qualities developed by the practice of ahimsa; all hatred and cruelty automatically stop once these qualities are developed and applied.

Ahimsa has been an important principle in the history of human civilization. As a moral injunction it was universally applicable in the religious sphere: Jesus has asked us to love our neighbor as ourselves. It has been accepted as a moral principle in Indian thought and religion. Gandhiji extended the principle of nonviolence to the social and political fields. For him nonviolence was a creed. He developed a method and a technique of nonviolence for attaining social and political justice. Ahimsa is the first principle in the dharma (religious practice) of saints or sages by which they lift themselves out of the normal human range of action.

In the history of Indian thought, ahimsa arose out of the need to resist the excesses of violence performed in the name of religion, for the sake of salvation. Animal sacrifice was prevalent in the Vedic, and to some extent Upanisadic, periods. However, a gradual awareness of the undesirability of animal sacrifice was being felt at the time of the Upanisads, in whose texts one finds passages upholding the virtues of nonviolence. In the Chandogya Upanisad, life is described as a great festival in which qualities like tapas (self-renunciation) and ahimsa are expressed.

Consequences of Karma Theory

- 1) Once you believe that universal phenomena are governed by the law of causation, you rule out the existence of any outside agency to govern our fate.
- 2) The theory is based on the premise that karmic forces, which set in motion the law of causation, are eternal; their motivating force, jiva, is also eternal; there is no need to import the idea of a creator, sustainer, and destroyer.
- 3) The theory of karma rules out the propitiation of gods to seek their favor and save yourself from calamities.
- 4) On the contrary, the theory insists on self-reliance and asks us to develop our own moral character and increase our spiritual power to save ourselves from the evil effects of our own past karma.
- 5) You have to own your ethical responsibility for the things of life, and it is possible to discharge this responsibility with equanimity and understanding.

The Doctrine of Anekantavada: Multiplicity of Truth

The importance of anekantavada, a comprehensive synthesis of syadvada (relativity) and anekanta-naya in day-to-day life, is immense, inasmuch as these doctrines supply a rational unification and synthesis of the manifold, and reject the assertion of bare absolutes.

"It has been my experience," wrote Mahatma Gandhi in 1926, "that I am always true (correct) from my point of view, and often wrong from the point of view of my critics. I know that we are both (myself and my critics) right from our respective points of view. . . ."

"I very much like this doctrine It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Muslim from his standpoint and a Christian from his From the platform of the Jainas, I prove the non-creative aspect of God, and from that of Ramanuja the creative aspect. As a matter of fact, we are all thinking of the unthinkable, describing the indescribable, seeking to know the unknown, and that is why our speech falters, is inadequate, and has been often contradictory."

The history of all conflicts and confrontations in the world is the history of intolerance born of ignorance and egocentrism. If only we could become conscious of our own limitations. Anekanta or syadvada tries to make us conscious of our limitations by pointing to our narrow vision and limited knowledge of the manifold aspects of things, and asks us not to be hasty in forming absolute judgments before examining various other aspects -- both positive and negative. Obviously, much of the bloodshed and tribulations of mankind could be saved if we showed the wisdom of understanding contrary viewpoints.

In reality, even the highest knowledge acquired by an embodied soul in this vast world is limited, imperfect, and one-sided. It is not possible for persons to comprehend simultaneously the infinite qualities of an object, let alone express them, which is far more difficult. The inadequacy of language creates conflicts and disputes; the human ego further accentuates the matter. The doctrine of anekanta paves the way for harmony and removal of conflicts. There is an element of truth in every statement, and it is possible to dissolve the conflict in a straightforward manner by understanding that element of truth.

If we are not obstinate or persistent in our point of view, we can easily solve almost every problem. So long as the sight is obscured by the veil of persistence, it is not possible to get a proper perspective of an object. The doctrine of anekanta proclaims the independent existence of an object. In the world of thought, anekanta is the tangible form of ahimsa. Whoever is nonviolent possesses the anekanta view of life; whoever possesses the anekanta view of life shall be nonviolent in thought and action. The harmony between knowledge, faith, and conduct can lead human beings towards liberation from misery. Action without knowledge or knowledge without action are both futile; only when the practice of truth that is known, and the knowledge of truth that is practiced, are combined, can there be a fruitful result.

The moment one begins to consider the angle from which a contrary viewpoint is put forward, one begins to develop tolerance, which is the basic requirement of the practice of ahimsa. Syadvada makes all absolutes in the field of thought quite irrelevant and naive, imparts maturity to the thought process, and supplies flexibility and originality to the human mind. If humankind will properly understand and adopt this doctrine of syadvada, it will realize that the real revolution was not the French or the Russian one, but the one which taught humanity to develop the power of understanding from all possible aspects.

The Doctrine of Aparigraha: Restrictions in Possession

Aparigraha is more relevant today than it was in the times of Mahavira, 2500 years ago. Those who try to accumulate possessions are entangled in a web of materialism. We become slaves of our possessions and like our slavery because we are accustomed to it. We forget that all objects in the world are constantly changing in form and qualities, and are also changing hands. This is the reality of life; the idea of possession is in fact illusory. But we like to remain in illusion and when our possessions change hands, we become sad. The process of living in illusion causes grief and tormentations. If one hankers after worldly things, it is a sure sign of uncontrolled desires, resulting in uncontrolled activities on the material plane.

And desires have no end: the German philosopher Schopenhauer pointed out that for every wish that is satisfied there remain ten that are denied; desire is infinite, fulfillment is limited, and so long as we give in

to desires we can never have true and lasting happiness and peace. Lord Buddha, therefore, rightly emphasized the necessity to curtail our desires. The principle of aparigraha teaches us to restrict our possessions to the minimum. This can be done only if we discipline our wants. Even earning more than necessary offends the principle of aparigraha. Good Jainas take a vow to fix their possessions of material things, including wealth.

The economy of Indian society was, till recently, dominated by this principle of aparigraha. However, the more we have come under the influence of Western materialism, the more our attitude toward life has become superficial. India's history is replete with examples of multimillionaires leading the life of a poor person and donating all their wealth for a public cause. There was no marked difference between the lifestyle and standards of persons belonging to different financial strata of society. A rich man did not desire more luxury simply because he could afford to spend. Now standards, outlook, and lifestyle have changed: earn more and spend more, increase your standard of living, "simple thinking and higher living" (in contrast to what the English poet Wordsworth said) are the mottoes of modern life. The result is licentiousness, absence of moral discipline, unnecessary and fruitless spending, lack of equilibrium in the prices of consumer goods, diversion of essential raw materials for the production of luxury goods, exploitation of labor and consumers, unequal distribution of wealth, and the resultant unrest and class war.

It is highly unfortunate that even the socialist ideology, led by thinkers like Marx, who revolted against social injustices resulting from economic imbalances, failed to get to the root of the problem and could not go beyond materialistic conceptions of history and economics. These thinkers forgot to take into account that a human being is the unit of society, hence no social structure can be improved effectively without improving its units.

Indian seers, on the other hand, have always kept this aspect in mind. They have always emphasized the advancement of the individual character of each person. What they taught by aparigraha was not a mere religion; it was sociology in its truest sense. To create class conflict and then to fight it was, to them, an absurd process: better to prevent the generation of conflict.

The lack of inherent restraint from within, the lack of awareness of life's realities, the lack of the knowledge that real enjoyment of life is not in material pursuits -- these are responsible for our present unrest and sense of insecurity. The problem can never be solved by mere economic reforms. All economic theories have to be worked out amongst human beings with psychological, emotional, and sentimental needs. Economists and political theorists are great ignoramuses in such treatment.

Among modern political leaders, Mahatma Gandhi may be credited with practicing what he preached. He himself had no parigraha (possessions). He taught the Indians, and the whole world, that limitation of desires and restraint of possessions, "simple living and high thinking," are the only realistic way to live a happy, contented, and peaceful life, without conflicts and constraints.

The Conquest of Attachment; Self-Realization

The aim of the Jaina religion is the attainment of complete conquest of attachment, and realization. This victory over attachment becomes possible by a harmonious accomplishment of the Three Jewels: right faith (samyag darshana), right knowledge (samyag gyana), and right conduct (samyag charitra). By following the path of the happy combination of faith, knowledge, and conduct, one can attain salvation or perfection. The basic teaching of Jainism is that right knowledge should be acquired by looking at mundane things with an eye of right faith, and that the same should be translated into conduct. However, the pivotal point is the attainment of conquest over attachment. Even the greatest riches of the world are futile in the face of conquest of attachment; but this path cannot be reached without the aid of an attitude of "many points of view."

The ethical ideal of a Jaina is not pleasure of the senses, nor gratification of the body. The pleasures of the senses are insatiable: the more we get them, the more we want and the more pained we are. There is a glue, as it were, in pleasure: those who are not given to pleasure are not soiled by it and will be liberated; those who love pleasure must wander about in samsara (the world). Like two clods of clay, one wet and one dry, flung at the wall, those who love pleasure stick to the influx of karma, but the passionless are free. Not the pleasures of the moment, nor even the greatest happiness of the greatest number, are attractions to the truly pious, for their ultimate end is to attain perfection and lead others to the path of righteousness. Yet the Jaina does not say that pleasures of the senses are to be avoided completely, especially for the lay disciple. Mortification of the body is equally one-sided: rigorous asceticism for a monk is a means to an end, not an end in itself. A lay follower may continue an occupation, earn money, live a family life, and enjoy the normal pleasures of life in a good spirit according to the needs and status of an individual in society.

Jainism aims at self-realization, and the self to be realized is the transcendental and pure self. The empirical self is to be cared for and its energy is to be channeled in the direction of the attainment of the highest ideal of moksa, freedom from the wheel of samsara, the world. The soul gets entangled in the wheel of samsara and is embodied through the operation of karma. It is embodied in various forms due to materially caused conditions (upadhs), and is involved in the cycle of birth and death. But the Jainas believe in the soul's inherent capacity for self-realization. Deliverance from the wheel of samsara is possible by way of voluntary efforts on the part of individuals.

When all obstacles are removed, the soul becomes pure and perfect and attains liberation or moksa. However, the soul's journey to freedom is long and arduous, because the removal of karma involves a long moral and spiritual discipline through fourteen stages of self-realization called gunasthana. The soul has gradually to remove the five conditions of bondage -- mithydiva (perversity), aviran (lack of control), pramada (spiritual inertia), kasaya (passion), and triyoga (threefold activity of body, speech, and mind). In the highest stage of spiritual realization, the soul reaches the stages of perfection and omniscience. This is the consummation of the struggle.

It is not possible to give a description of the liberated soul. The state of perfection is described as freedom from action and desire, a stage of utter and absolute quiescence. It is a state of unaffected peace, since the energy of past karma is extinguished. It is the perfect liberation. After its pilgrimage of innumerable existences in various inferior stratifications, nothing can happen to the soul any more, for it has put aside the traits of ignorance, those heavy veils of individuality that are the precipitating causes of biographical events. In the higher stage of perfection, the individuality, the masks, the formal personal features are

distilled away. This state is the siddha state. The freed soul has a beginning but no end, while the soul in samsara has no beginning, but an end of that state in the attainment of freedom.

A New Orientation of Values

We are in the midst of a life where hatred, injustice, and tolerance reign supreme. A new orientation of values would be necessary for us to destroy the inverted values and then "rebuild to our heart's desire." What we need today is love and sympathy, not prejudice and pomp. We need understanding and a sense of fellowship between the peoples of the world. And anekanta would give us a Weltanschauung and a scientific interpretation of things. We would then learn to "love our neighbors as ourselves."

The Jaina doctrines are helpful to anyone in living a vibrant and purposeful life, conducive to the development of social, ethical, national, and international harmony. As they are based on scientific analysis of universal components and human psychology, their appeal is universal and confined only to logic and reasoning, containing nothing sectarian. It is a process of thinking and a way of life which are as relevant today as they were 2500 years ago in the times of Mahavira.

International Cooperation

In conclusion, I believe the Guideline Questions have been answered, to an extent, in my presentation of the Jain way of life.

In the international context, in 1991 International Mahavir Jain Mission was the first Jain organization to be accorded affiliated status at the United Nations. In North America alone there are over 70 Jain centers. In fact, the first Jain Tirth (pilgrimage center), where for the first time the different sects of Jainism are represented on one platform, was established in Blairstown, New Jersey, in 1991 by H.H. Acharya Sushil Kumarji Maharaj, who revolutionized Jain history in 1975 when he became the first Jain monk to travel overseas (Jain ascetics do not use any form of transportation and travel only on foot). Ever since his historic journey, many monks and nuns have adapted to the needs of society and are traveling to new lands to preach the Jain way of life. Today Jain temples are being established all over.

The Jains are taking an active part in addressing problems and challenges not only within their communities, but in the global arena. My approach has been to create an awareness of the Jain way of life in the United Nations community, and to participate actively, alongside the other major religions of the world, on key issues the UN addresses. In my opinion, the UN's ability to create a widespread awareness of key global issues is among its greatest successes. This has been demonstrated by the series of global conferences, on some of the most pressing issues of our times, convened by the UN in this decade; the Jains have actively participated.

For the UN to remain relevant and meaningful, it must restructure and reform itself so that it is more capable of addressing the reality of modernity. There are numerous areas of reform upon which the UN is currently embarked, but in the context of our discussion I would like to focus on the following.

The UN's greatest challenge is the growing differences among the religions of the world. The Trusteeship Council has served its purpose; create a Spiritual Council in place of the Trusteeship Council, on the lines of the Security Council, to address conflicts among the world's religions and work closely with the Security Council in seeking to make our world more peaceful.

Create an Economic and Social Security Council, as there are growing differences and enormous tensions on economic and social issues. In this era of globalization the UN must be equipped to deal with new realities and meet the challenges of the future.

Create Nonviolent Conflict Resolution centers all over the world, within the present structures of the UN system, to:

- a) engage in nonviolent and peaceful resolution of conflict;
- b) impart nonviolence education;
- c) impart training in conflict resolution, especially at the community level.

The UN must set up mechanisms to foster collaborations and partnerships with nongovernmental and civic society organizations to empower them to deal with humanity's challenges, especially in local initiatives within national borders, because present structures do not allow the UN to be reactive or proactive in an internal matter. NGOs are the UN's biggest resource and are dealing with the most pressing problems of our times; there needs to be a threefold partnership: the UN, member nations, and civil society.

The above are some suggestions within the UN system. The religions of the world in today's context must also be more practical and engage in active initiatives to address humanity's problems at local, national, and international levels. Some specific initiatives follow.

The religions of the world must develop curricula to work with educational institutions in:

- a) interreligious understanding, to create a knowledge base of the various religions, their practices and customs. This will help engender tolerance, thereby laying the foundation for creating harmony in our societies;
- b) nonviolence education, starting at the primary level;
- c) conflict resolution education and training, especially to the clergy, to enable them to better deal with conflict situations at all levels

Work towards a Universal Declaration of Animals' Rights by the year 2000. If we are to survive, then we must ensure the survival of all forms of life.

Actively participate in the creation of interfaith centers to foster interreligious dialogue, for a better understanding of the diversity within our communities. This is a very important dimension because of the reality of ever-growing interreligious dwellings. We are confronted with new dynamics in our global village; this demands that we devise systems to better understand each other's cultures and religions. With the emergence of interfaith and intercultural centers, space would be created to interact, address problems, resolve conflicts, and foster a human community.

There exist fundamental values in every society, in every culture, in every heritage. Let us consciously choose the values we want to live by, for there needs to be a core set of values around which we can unite.

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