

Today's Lecture

- Admin stuff
- Concluding Jain moral philosophy
- Jainism and women

Admin stuff

- Remember to submit an electronic copy to [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) (no grade is official [read final] until they are so submitted).
- I will mark your second assignments during the exam period and have them available for pick-up in the **first week of January**. I will post your overall grades for the term, including the grade for your second assignment, by **December 23rd**.

Jainism: Moral philosophy

- Where we left off:
- That other entities suffer is explained, in Jainism, by the presence of a *jiva*.
- That all beings possess a *jiva* grounds the Jain attitude that all beings, be they human or nonhuman, are **moral equals** (Koller, *Asian Philosophies*, pp.34, 39-40). We'll see why in a second.
- IF *A* and *B* are **moral equals**, THEN *A*'s interests *cannot be* prioritized over the relevantly similar interests of *B* (UNLESS *A* has a special claim based upon the relevant circumstances).
- *A* and *B* will be moral equals if they are not relevantly dissimilar (**in morally significant ways**).
- Example of moral equals: You and me.

Jainism: Moral philosophy

- Why are all beings moral equals, according to Jains?
- All beings are fundamentally *jivas*, our differences or particularities arise from our various embodiments.
- All beings are, consequently, *essentially* similar.
- Our particular embodiment in this life is irrelevant to our moral worth for at least two reasons: (i) it is **not relevant to those *characteristics that make us worthy of attention*** in another being's moral calculations, and (ii) **any given embodiment does not *substantively distinguish*** one *jiva* from another ... after all, we have, each of us, taken on embodiments relevantly similar to those around us, be they human or nonhuman, at some point in our long existence, and will so again if we do not escape *samsara*.

Jainism: Moral philosophy

- You don't have to be a Jain to recognize the strength of their position here. At least some of the moral intuitions shared by Jains, and by non-Jains like Hindus and Buddhists, regarding the moral status of animals can be defended as follows.
- Ask yourself: What might ground a general principle of *ahimsa* against fellow humans? and then ask yourself: Does this principle also apply to nonhumans?
- I.e. what is it that *all* humans (who are moral equals with you and me) share, *irrespective of* physical or certain cognitive deficiencies, that would ground such a principle? Will it also include nonhumans, or at least certain nonhumans?

Jainism: Moral philosophy

- Think of it this way: As we move in our imaginations from all of us in this room to (1) those individuals on campus attending classes or working here, (2) and then, those physically able humans in the greater London area, (3) and then, those humans who are not so physically able in the greater London area, and so on, what grounds the principle that we are all moral equals?
- It can't be, in an simple way, because of our humanity. The brain dead, for instance, are not our moral equals. Those individual humans who are in persistent vegetative states are not, at least in any clear sense, our moral equals. What's more, we can at least imagine that, if extra-terrestrials or angelic beings exist, they might well be our moral equals.

- To strengthen the thought about extra-terrestrials or angelic beings, imagine that someone in this room is not human. They can interact with the rest of us, engage in philosophical speculation and even take good lecture notes. Would they be exempt from protection under this moral principle (of equality of interests)?
- Let's go further. Would this being *have to be like us in this class room*? That is, could they come from a species that resembles what we are like as toddlers and still be our moral equals?
- If you admit that it's not merely our humanity that counts, where do you go? Can you now exclude all terrestrial nonhumans from the class of our moral equals? If not, which ones count and why?
- Now you are on a path that looks familiar.

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: preliminary comments

- Though there are a number of subsects within Jainism, there are two general sects of Jainism: the Digambaras (or sky-clad) and Shvetambaras (or white-clad) (*Course Pack*, p.69).
- As is implied in their names, this division is most noticeable in the area of clothing; Digambara monks do not wear any (*Course Pack*, pp.74-75).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: preliminary comments

- This general sectarian division is primarily based on a difference of scriptural authority and rules governing proper conduct among monastics (see *Course Pack*, pp.69-71).
- It also includes differing views about the spiritual potential of women (*Course Pack*, pp.69, 74-75).
- **Note:** They do not differ on the fundamental teachings of Jainism as discussed in your *Asian Philosophies* (and in lecture) (*Course Pack*, p.69).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: preliminary comments

- Though Jain monks at the time of Mahavira did not wear clothing, the Shvetambaras adopted clothing during a severe drought in Northern India (at least this is the story found in their sacred history) .
- This in itself is regarded by the Digambaras as a corruption of the discipline received from Mahavira.
- The Shevtambaras also adopted renderings of the teachings of Mahavira not accepted as authoritative by the Digambaras (*Course Pack*, p.69).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: Jain Nuns' Order

- There is little doubt that Mahavira had a sizable following containing both nuns and laywomen (*Course Pack*, pp.69-70).
- The opportunity women were given to pursue the Jain spiritual path as renunciants at the time of Mahavira contrasted sharply with the limited spiritual opportunities enjoyed by their Hindu contemporaries (*Course Pack*, pp.69-70, 76).
- The hardship many women continue to face in India continues to motivate some to enter the monastic community (*Course Pack*, p.71).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: Jain Nuns' Order

- This opportunity is not wholly positive, however. The rules governing nuns, like those governing female monastics in Buddhism, effectively subordinate female monastics to their male counterparts.
- Again as in Buddhism, nuns never stand as equals, or superiors, to their male colleagues. This greatly limits the possibility for advancement in the governance of the *sangha* (or holy community) (*Course Pack*, p.70, 71).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: Jain Nuns' Order

- As Balbir notes, there is no significant *general textual authority* that bars female monastics from study or from teaching in ways relevantly similar to male monastics (*Course Pack*, p.70).
- This is not to say, however, that this has translated into an equal opportunity to affect the textual expression of Jain doctrine in Jain history (*Course Pack*, pp.70-71).
- What's more there is a significant division in contemporary Jainism over the restrictions on what nuns can, and cannot, study, with some subsects being more egalitarian than others (*Course Pack*, p.71).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: Jain Nuns' Order

- It is important to note that the inferior status accorded nuns within the *sangha* does not reflect their numbers within the holy community. Except among the Digambaras, nuns outnumber their male colleagues sometimes as much as 3 to 1 (*Course Pack*, pp.70-71).
- What's more, "the laity is the economic foundation of the religious mendicant order, which it supports by its gifts, receiving in exchange the teaching of the law. Laywomen contribute to the sustaining of the community no less than the lay men do" (*Course Pack*, p.71).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: Jain laywomen

- This being said, Jain women are under many of the social restrictions of their Hindu contemporaries.
- “To put the matter in a nutshell, their dharma is summed up by the word *shila*, which designates a perfect wife, such as Sita or Draupadi ... or others who remain faithful to their husbands ... and are glorified as *satis*” (*Course Pack*, p.72).
- As Balbir notes, the texts themselves governing the conduct of the laity are written with a masculine bias ... the male is taken to be the generic Jain lay person (*Course Pack*, p.72).
- As in traditional or Patriarchal Hinduism, Jain laywomen are generally restricted to the domestic or private sphere, while the men work outside the home.
- There is also a gender distinction in the opportunities and form of worship (*Course Pack*, p.72).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: Jain laywomen

- Balbir notes that in religious life there is an ambivalence about the worship rituals women can legitimately participate in. Some Jain subsects do not allow women to touch the sacred images of the *jinās*, while others allow it, but only when a woman is not menstruating. Still others will only allow women into the main hall (where they can see, but not touch the images), and only when they are not menstruating (*Course Pack*, p.73).
- On the other hand, women are encouraged to engage in various fasting rituals, and bear a great deal of responsibility in preparing food for mendicants (*Course Pack*, pp.72-73).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: the Jain image of women

- Women are often portrayed in the texts as temptresses and hindrances to the monastic life (specifically the vow of chastity), and the pursuit of *moksha* (again the male monastic is taken to be the generic Jain monastic) (*Course Pack*, p.74).
- In the oldest texts on monastic discipline, male monastics are instructed not to talk with women (*Course Pack*, p.74).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: the Jain image of women

- Digambaras argue that women cannot achieve enlightenment until they are reborn as males.
- This is partially grounded in the view that women are spiritually and morally inferior to men (they can neither reach the great heights or great depths of human moral potential or depravity).
- Their birth as women is also due to past sin. They are thus karmically constrained (their character is weaker) in ways that men are not (*Course Pack*, pp.74-75).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: the Jain image of women

- It is also grounded in the view that enlightenment can only be achieved through strict discipline, and this involves nudity as a symbol of the rejection of possessions, or of attachment.
- Since women cannot live nude in the public eye, they cannot follow the strict discipline necessary for enlightenment (*Course Pack*, p.75).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: the Jain image of women

- Shvetambaras reject both positions advocated by the Digambaras (*Course Pack*, p.75).
- Though they do believe that women cannot reach the depths of depravity exhibited by some men, women can reach, and have reached, *moksha* (*Course Pack*, pp.75-76). Their fundamental nature is, after all, identical with men (*Course Pack*, p.75).

Balbir's Woman in Jainism: the Jain image of women

- It is enough, I think, to note that this distinction between these two main sects of Jainism carries over into their views of laywomen.
- Shvetambaras defend their view that laywomen are equal members of the *sangha* with laymen based on the similar spiritual and moral potentials (be they positive or negative) (*Course Pack*, pp.75-78).