

JAINISM - RESPECT FOR ALL LIFE:

By Myrtle Langley

For a religion of only 3 million people, almost all of whom live in India, Jainism has wielded an influence out of all proportion to its size and its distribution. This influence has been felt most keenly in the modern world through Mahatma Gandhi. Although not himself a Jain, he grew up among Jains and embraced their most distinctive doctrine; non-violence to living beings (Ahimsa). But the influence of Jainism has also been felt in the Jain contribution to India's banking and commercial life.

As Buddhists are followers of the Buddha (the enlightened one), so Jains are the followers of the Jina (the conqueror), a title applied to Vardhamana, last of the great Jain teachers. It is applied also to those men and women who, having conquered their passions and emotions, have achieved liberation and attained perfection. And so the very name Jainism indicates the predominantly ethical character of this religion.

THE BIRTH OF JAINISM

The period from the seventh to the fifth centuries BC was a turning point in the intellectual and spiritual development of the whole world: it produced, among others, the early Greek philosophers, the great Hebrew prophets, Confucius in China and Zoroaster in Persia.

For north India, the sixth century BC was a time of particular social, political and intellectual ferment. The older and more familiar tribal structure of society was disintegrating. In its place were appearing a few great regional kingdoms and a number of smaller tribal groupings known, as republics. These kept some of the characteristics of tribal structure but had little political power, being dependent on the largest of the kingdoms.

In this transition period, when the old social order was passing away and a new one had not yet taken shape, many people felt themselves adrift, socially, and morally. Religious confusion also arose as divergent streams of religious thought and practice came into contact and conflict. It was probably from this conflict that the so-called heterodox teachers associated with Buddhism, Jainism and the Ajivikas sect emerged. They, in turn, probably owed their origin to the Shramanas, the ancient religious teachers distinguished from the Brahmins by their doctrine of salvation through asceticism. They were considered heterodox because they refused to accept the authority of the Vedas, the authoritative Hindu texts, and rejected the institutions of cast and sacrifice.

MAHAVIRA THE PATH-MAKER

Vardhamana, known to his followers as Maharira (the Great Hero), was an elder contemporary of the Buddha. Although the legends surrounding his life are less attractive than those surrounding the Buddha's, being even more formalized and unreliable, he was undoubtedly a historical person. Under the name of Nigantha

Nataputta, he is often mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures as one of the Buddha's chief opponents.

The second son of Siddhartha, a Kshatriya chieftain, Mahavira was born around 540 BC at Kundagrama, near modern Patna in Bihar, and died in 468 BC according to scholarly opinion; but the tradition says 599-527 BC.

On both sides of the family he belonged to the ruling warrior classes which were a powerful force at the time. Educated as a prince, according to one tradition Mahavira remained a bachelor for life; according to another he married a princess who bore him a daughter. Either way, at the age of twenty-eight, on the death of his parents, he renounced his family life to become a beggar and ascetic, seeking liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

At first he followed the ascetic practices of a group founded some 250 years earlier by a certain Parsva. Parsva is known as the twenty-third and Mahavira as the twenty-fourth of the Tirthankaras, the 'Ford-makers', 'Path-makers' or great teachers of Jainism, who guide their followers across the river of transmigration, For over twelve years Mahavira wandered from place to place, living a life of the greatest austerity and engaging in disputation. At first he wore only a single piece of cloth, but after thirteen months he discarded even that encumbrance and for the rest of his Life went about naked.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

In the thirteenth year, when aged about forty two, and at the end of a long fast, he achieved self realization and full enlightenment. In the language of his followers he had become a conqueror (Jina). He had attained a state of full, clear and unimpeded knowledge and intuition known as KEVALA, becoming a perfected soul. And by attaining this omniscience, Mahavira had released himself from the forces (KARMA) which had bound him to the wheel of rebirth.

Mahavira was then acclaimed a leader of an Order (a Tirthankara). For the remaining thirty years of his life, he propagated his beliefs and organized his community of followers. He called himself the successor of a series of legendary Tirthankaras who had proclaimed Jain beliefs through countless ages. And although his claims may not be wholly true, there is little doubt that the tradition from which Jainism derives goes back beyond Mahavira. Parsva and even Nemi (alleged cousin of Krishna of the Mahabharata war) to the farthest recesses of Indian prehistory. He died, of voluntary self-starvation, at Pava, a village not far from his birthplace, and a great center of Jain pilgrimage to this day. Thus he entered nirvana, his 'final rest'.

THE RISE OF JAINISM

Mahavira drew his followers mainly from the Kshatriya aristocracy and organized them into a regular community with lay and monastic members of both sexes. There is good reason to believe that before they joined him some of these followers believed that all possessions, including clothing, should be abandoned, in the pursuit of passionless detachment, while others stopped short of making nudity a requirement. It was this difference, and later disagreement about the contents of the canon of the scriptures, which

were to distinguish the two major sects of Jainism. No fundamental doctrinal differences emerged, even in later centuries.

THE TWO SECTS

For two centuries, Mahavira's followers remained a small community. Then there was a big increase in Jain numbers as the founder of the great Mauryan dynasty, the Magadhan Emperor Chandragupta (about 321-297 BC), abdicated his throne and joined the order. History here confirms tradition, at least to some extent. However, towards the end of Chandragupta's reign, a serious famine led to the exodus of a large number of Jain monks from the Ganga Valley in north India south to the Deccan. There, in the state of Mysore, they established great centers of the faith.

Then, so tradition has it, when Bhadrabahu, the leader of the emigrants and eleventh elder of the community, returned to Bihar after an absence of twelve years he found that in the confusion and hardship of famine the northern monks, under Sthulabhadra, had abandoned the ancient ways laid down by Mahavira and had taken to wearing white robes.

Thus arose the two sects of Jainism, the Digambaras (the 'sky-clad' or 'space-clad') and the Svetambaras (the 'white-clad'). The schism became fixed in the first century AD and persists to this day.

THE SCRIPTURES

Similarly, according to tradition, a sacred literature had been passed down orally through the generations, from Mahavira. But Bhadrabahu was the last person to know it perfectly. On his death at the beginning of the third century BC, the canon was reconstructed as far as possible in twelve sections (Angas) which replaced the fourteen former texts (Purvas). Although accepted by the Svetambaras, this canon was rejected by the Digambaras, who held that the old one was hopelessly lost. Eighty-four works are recognized as belonging to the Svetambara canon, finally fixed in the fifth century AD. Among them are forty-one Sutras, a number of unclassified works, twelve commentaries and one great commentary. All were written in the Ardha-Magadhi language.

RISE AND FALL

In subsequent centuries Jainism spread from east to west across India. From time to time it enjoyed the patronage of kings and princes, under whose auspices it produced some of the most magnificent temple architecture in the world. But with the rise of Hindu devotional theism (BHAKTI) particularly to Shiva and Vishnu, in the Middle Ages, it went into relative decline. It became concentrated in two regions, where it remains to this day: Gujarat and Rajasthan where the Svetambaras prevail, and the Deccan, or modern Mysore, where the Digambaras have their headquarters. But, unlike Buddhism, Jainism continued in the land of its birth. This was probably due largely to its emphasis on the lay as well as on the monastic calling. In times of persecution it had the resources of an influential and wealthy lay following to fall back on.

One final aspect of Jain history remains to be mentioned: the rise of the 'dwellers in halls' (Sthanakavasi) branch of the Svetambaras in AD 1653. Parallel with the Protestant Reformation in Europe, and probably owing to Muslim influence, reformers arose to condemn all forms of idolatry and temple worship as inconsistent with the teachings of Mahavira. Fundamental doctrines, however, remained unaffected by this further schism.

JAIN BELIEFS

Mahavira and other unorthodox teachers of his age were primarily interested in seeking liberation from the wheel of rebirth.

THE UNIVERSE

Jain philosophy differs in important respects from the systems of Buddhism and Hinduism. Jainism upholds the existence of an infinite number of animate and inanimate substances - Jivas or Souls, and Ajivas or non-souls, representing the mind / matter dichotomy - each of which possesses an infinite number of individual characteristics of its own. Moreover, all substances exist independently of our perceptions or awareness of them. Thus Jain philosophy is realist.

But because the number of souls inhabiting the universe is infinite, most of them will be compelled to transmigrate eternally in samsara, the world of birth, death and rebirth. And this world is itself subject to a process of growth and decline. It is part of a universe which, without beginning and without end, passes through an infinite number of cosmic cycles, each divided into phases of ascent and descent during which civilization rises and falls. At present we are in the fifth period of a phase of descent.

The apparent fatalism and determinism of the system is opposed by Jain philosophers by means of the distinctive theory of 'many-sidedness' (Anekantvada). This relates the truth of any proposition to the point of view from which it is made. The rise and fall of civilizations is rigidly determined from the universal point of view, but from the individual viewpoint a man is free to work out his own salvation. Only the liberated soul knows the full and absolute truth. A popular illustration of this is the parable of the six blind men and the elephant. Each, having grasped a part of the great beast, was asked what it was like. One said a wall, another a rope, another a snake, another a fan, and so on. Only the soul in nirvana has complete and perfect knowledge.

THE SOUL

The soul's essential character is consciousness and knowing. In its original state, the soul knows everything: nothing is hidden from it, it commands the knowledge of existence in all its various aspects, and at all times, past, present and future. In its present state in this world, ensconced in a material body, the soul's knowledge is made imperfect and incomplete by the limitations matter places on it.

The soul is graded into five levels according to which form it takes in its earthly existence.

At the lowest level are the souls possessing only one sense-touch; these include the elements themselves, earth, water, air and fire, and the vast vegetable kingdom.

At the second level are the souls possessing two senses: touch and taste - including worms and shell creatures.

At the third level are the souls possessing three senses: those of touch, taste and smell-including ants, bugs and moths.

At the fourth level are the souls possessing four senses:

touch, taste, smell and sight; these include, for example, wasps, locusts and butterflies.

At the fifth and highest level are the souls possessing all five senses - touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. These include four types of creatures: infernal beings, the higher animals, humans, and heavenly beings.

The soul's journey from one level of consciousness to another, and from one grade to another, up or down the scale, depends on the inexorable law of Karma.

KARMA AND REBIRTH

Like all Indian religions, Jainism upholds the universal law of Karma. According to this law, every action - thought, word or deed - produces an effect, which in turn serves as the cause of another action, and so on. This chain of cause and effect is known as 'Karmic Bondage' or simply, Karma. And because Jainism, as we have seen, subscribes also to the doctrine of transmigration and rebirth, it follows that the state of the soul at any given time is due to the Karma accumulated over countless ages.

However, the Jain doctrine of Karma is distinctive. Whereas Hindus view Karma purely as a law of nature, Jains believe Karma to consist of fine and subtle particles of matter which adhere to the soul, as clay to a pot. Yet, by effort, discipline and knowledge, man can control Karma. Selfish, careless and cruel actions lead to the accumulation of heavy Karma which weighs the soul down. But the Karma accruing from good deeds is dissipated almost immediately and has no serious effects. Moreover, suffering willingly under taken has the effect of dispersing the Karma already accumulated, so helping to lighten the soul.

To achieve salvation (Moksha) man must therefore free his soul from matter. Thus freed, its natural lightness will float it to the top of the universe to dwell there for ever in all-knowing bliss. The souls of heroes like Mahavira virtually achieve salvation in this life. It is only residual Karma which binds them to the earth, but when that is exhausted through fasting and penance, they rise immediately above the highest heavens of the gods to the eternal rest of nirvana.

Jainism is not fatalistic, but it is atheistic. There is no world-soul, no supreme being, no creator and sustainer of the universe, no one beyond himself (except the Tirthankaras as guides and examples) to aid man in his endeavors.

Similarly, for all the subtlety and sophistication with which its doctrine of karma and rebirth has been elaborated, Jainism is in practice profoundly pessimistic. The world is a

place of utter misery and sorrow, in no way compensated for by life's few moments of happiness.

THE WAY OF SALVATION

Because of the infinite number of souls in the universe and the length of the cycle of rebirth, it happens only rarely that a soul obtains human birth. Therefore man should use every opportunity to pursue the way of salvation by acquiring the

Three Jewels:

- Right knowledge
- Right faith
- Right conduct

Right knowledge comes through knowing the Jain creed, right faith through believing in it and right conduct through following it. The first two are worthless without the last and so Jain monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen take vows of right conduct, the most important and all-embracing of which is non-violence.

NON-VIOLENCE

To injure living beings, even unwillingly, is to engender the most harmful of karmic effects. To injure with deliberate intent has the gravest of consequences. And since the whole universe throbs with life, this means in practice that a Jain's diet and livelihood are severely restricted. Even the Jain layman must be a strict vegetarian. He may not be a farmer, for when ploughing the soil he might injure animals and plants, not to speak of the earth itself. He may not ply certain crafts, for the metal on the blacksmith's anvil and the wood on the carpenter's bench suffer excruciating pain as they are worked. Instead, he will follow the safe professions of trading and money-lending and most likely become a wealthy merchant or prosperous banker.

THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF A JAIN

Jains go through special ceremonies at birth, marriage and death as do members of most religions. But there is a difference, The rites through which the Jain passes are Hindu rather than Jain. And it is often Hindu priests or officials who perform them.

THE LIFE OF A LAYMAN

Full salvation is not possible for the layman unless, as the end approaches, he takes the vow of old age, containing the promise to die by voluntary self-starvation. And, according to the Digambaras, it is never possible for a woman unless she is first of all reborn as a man.

Jainism recognizes four sources of karma:

- Attachment to things of this life, such as food, clothing, lodging, women and jewels;
- Giving rein to anger, pride, deceit and greed;
- Uniting the body, mind and speech to worldly things;
- False belief.

Karma can be controlled by renouncing all activity, Jainism also recognizes eight kinds of karma, three tenses of karma and fourteen steps to liberation from karma, Between steps one and four a person acquires knowledge and faith, but only on the fifth step does he realize the importance of conduct.

become able to take the twelve vows which mark the layman's religious life.

First in the series of twelve vows are the five 'limited vows' :

- Non-violence to souls with more than one sense.
- Truthfulness.
- Non-stealing.
- Chastity.
- Non-attachment or the limitation of possessions and worldly goods.

Next in the series are the three 'assistant vows' which help a person to keep the first five:

- Restriction of travel (so curtailing sin by restricting the area in which it can be committed).
- Restriction on the use of certain things, so discouraging lying, covetousness, stealing and so on.
- Discouragement of carelessness in speaking ill of others, taking life, keeping weapons and having an evil influence.

The remaining four vows in the series are intended to encourage the laity in the performance of their religious duties:

- To spend at least forty-eight minutes every day in unbroken meditation (samayika), thinking evil of no one, being at peace with the world and contemplating the heights which may be reached by the soul, and if possible to repeat this exercise three times, morning, afternoon and evening.
- To set aside at least one particular day to be more serious about the vows of travel restriction and meditation.
- To live as a monk for a temporary period of twenty-four hours, touching no food, drink, ornaments, scents or weapons and remaining celibate while using only three cloths by day and two by night-thus forging a link between the lay and monastic communities (called posadha).
- To support the ascetic community by giving its members any of the fourteen articles which they may accept without blame, such as food, water, clothing, pots, blankets, towels, beds, tables and other furniture.

Jains believe that to keep the twelve vows brings great physical and moral advantage. The body becomes fit and healthy and the soul is freed from love and enmity.

The layman wanting to reach a higher stage in the upward path towards liberation must undertake to keep a further eleven promises:

- To worship the true deva (i.e, a Tirthankara), reverence a true guru (teacher), and believe in the true doctrine (dharma, i.e. Jainism), while avoiding the seven bad deeds of gambling, eating meat, wine-bibbing, adultery, hunting, thieving and debauchery.
- To keep the twelve vows, facing death by voluntary self-starvation in complete peace.
- To engage in meditation at least three times a day.
- To live the life of a monk temporarily at least six times a month.
- To avoid uncooked vegetables.
- To refrain from eating between sunset and sunrise and from drinking water before daylight, in case an insect is accidentally eaten.
- To keep away from his own wife and never to scent his body so as to seduce her.
- Never to begin anything that might entangle him in worldly pursuits which might lead to destruction of life.
- To be a novice for his remaining days.
- To eat only leftovers.
- To wear the dress of an ascetic, live apart in a religious building or in the forest, and live according to the rules laid down in the scriptures for ascetics.

By the time he has taken the last of these eleven promises, the layman is virtually an ascetic.

As the layman endeavors to reach this exalted state, he will strive to develop the twenty-one qualities which distinguish the Jain `gentleman'. He will always be `serious in demeanor; clean as regards both his clothes and his person; good-tempered; striving after popularity; merciful; afraid of sinning; straightforward; wise; modest; kind; moderate; gentle; careful in speech; sociable; cautious; studious; reverent both to aid age and old customs; humble; grateful; benevolent; and, finally, attentive to business'.

THE LIFE OF AN ASCETIC

The life of an ascetic begins with initiation. First he gives away his clothing and jewels to relatives, and dons the dress of an ascetic (sadhu), three upper garments and two lower ones which vary in color according to sect. Next, he has his hair removed. From now on he is a homeless wanderer and must remain possessionless except for his robes, a few pieces of cloth with which to strain insects from his daily drink of water, a cloth mask with which to cover his mouth for fear of hurting the air, a few wooden jugs or gourds, and a brush or whisk with which to sweep insects from the path before him.

The five great vows taken by the Jain ascetic are stricter versions of the first five taken by the layman:

- Non-violence—not to kill any living thing, whether five, four, three, and two, sensed or immovable (one-sensed), even through carelessness.
- Truthfulness—to speak only of what is pleasant, wholesome and true.
- Non-stealing—not to take what is not given.

- Chastity—to have no dealings with gods, human beings or animals of the opposite sex.
- To renounce love for any thing or person, which means ending all likes and dislikes with regard to sounds, colors or smells as well as people; in other words, to be indifferent to anything mediated through the senses.

As there exists an ideal for the Jain layman, so too there exists the picture of a perfect monk. It has been said that the true ascetic should possess twenty-seven qualities, for he must keep the five vows, never eat at night, protect all living things, control his five senses, renounce greed, practice forgiveness, possess high ideals, and inspect everything he uses to make sure that no insect life is injured. He must also be self-denying and carefully keep the three rules for controlling mind, speech and body, he must endure hardships in the twenty-two ways, and bear suffering till death.

WAYS OF WORSHIP

Jainism's rejection of God does not entail rejection of prayer and worship, more precisely termed contemplation. But of all beings, including the gods and the saints, only liberated souls or Tirthankaras made perfect are worshipped. Even they are not appealed to for help or mercy; they serve more as an inspiration to those still struggling for freedom and perfection.

That is the theory, The practice is very different. Many of the Jain laity pray to Hindu gods for help, many Jain temples house images of Hindu deities, and many Jain festivals incorporate Hindu customs.

TEMPLES AND DOMESTIC SHRINES

One of the glories of Jainism is its heritage of magnificent temple architecture. Two of its outstanding developments are the temple-cities, some of which have hundreds of shrines from many different periods, and the fretted ceilings and ornamented pillars with their delicately carved figures and flowers in marble, perhaps the finest of their kind in the world. The numerous modern temples in the towns and cities are smaller and undistinguished.

Jain homes incorporate domestic shrines. According to scriptural instruction, they are supposed to be made of wood, and some with elaborately carved doors and door-frames have survived.

PRAYER

Jain temples are filled with images of the Tirthankaras;

‘Contemplating the form of the passionless Lord in a Jaina temple, the mind becomes filled automatically with a sentiment of renunciation... The mind is purified by the contemplation and worship of the Tirthankaras.’

Every day devout Jains rise before dawn and, with rosary of 108 beads in hand, invoke the Five Great Beings, bowing, with folded hands to east, north, west and south.

As a Jain worshiper approaches the temple, he leaves his shoes and socks outside. At the porch he puts a saffron mark on his brow and repeats the Nissahi (which enables him to put aside all sin and care). Inside, he comes to the shrine and bids for the right to wash the principal Tirthankara image. Removing the jewels and old flowers, he washes it with water, milk and five nectars. When it has dried, he then rubs it over and marks it with liquid saffron in fourteen places, from head to toe. Meanwhile, verses are sung in its praise, incense and lamps waved at the threshold and an offering of rice placed on a table before the door. Finally, the worshiper performs spiritual worship, prostrating himself three times before the image, recalling the virtues of the Tirthankara, singing his praises, walking backwards to the door as he repeats the Avassahi (which allows him to engage in worldly pursuits again), and with hands together bowing out.

FESTIVALS

The most important festival of Jainism is held at Pajjusana, the solemn season which closes the Jain year. For eight days or longer, during the wet monsoon period, usually in August, devout Jains fast and attend special services. All householders are urged to live a monk's life for at least twenty-four hours, living in a monastery, meditating and fasting. On the closing day of the festival, every Jain abstains from food and water. At the close of the temple gathering, he performs an act of penitence in which he asks forgiveness of his neighbors for any inadvertent offense and determines to carry no grudge or quarrel over into the next year.

The second most important festival is Divali, the great Hindu festival in honor of Lakshmi, goddess of wealth, which Jains have adapted in honor of Mahavira's liberation.

Jains also observe fasts at full moon, and great excitement is found in going on pilgrimages to Jain holy places.

Jainism is a religion of austerities. Its goal, 'passionless detachment', is reached only through the most severe and disciplined of life-styles, culminating ideally in death by voluntary self-starvation. And the aim is to achieve it solely by self-effort, without the help of God or gods,

Yet self-imposed austerities often benefit others. And Jains have long been active in promoting public welfare. They are known especially for their endowment of schools, also of hospitals—for both people and animals.

The great statues of south India best convey the Jain ideal. This is a description of the sixty-foot-high stone replica of the hero Gomatesvara at Sravarna Belgola:

`[He rises] huge, stony and naked. So rigid is his stance, so austere his stillness, that creepers are growing up his legs. On his lips is an expression of total impassivity. His

nudity of course symbolizes possessionlessness. It is a sign of indifference to the good things of his world. It is not even a matter of laying up treasures in heaven.

The Jain saint should be indifferent even to those. Any sort of treasure binds us to this world, and even the heavenly world should be transcended. Karma which weighs us down, like weights which depress balloons, must be got rid of, destroyed. This is a supremely hard task. The saint is the culmination of a struggle which has continued over many, many lives. He gazes, unseeing, over the dry south Indian landscape, a spiritual Gulliver among dark-skinned Lilliputians.

Every twelve years, the Jain faithful have a great festival in which innumerable pots of milk and curds and sandal paste are poured over the head of the stone hero,

The faith celebrates those who have through heroism and insight gained liberation and thus shown the path to others.'

NINIAN SMART

The pessimism of Jainism is nowhere better illustrated than in the famous parable of the man in the well, said to have been told by a Jain monk to a prince in order to persuade him of the evils of the world.

There was once a man who, oppressed by his poverty left home and set out for another city. But after a few days he lost his way and found himself wandering in a dense forest. There, he saw a mad elephant angrily rushing toward him with upraised trunk. Immediately he ran to flee there appeared before him a terrible demoness with a sharp sword in her hand, in fear and trembling, he looked about him in all directions for a way of escape until he saw a great tree and ran towards it. But he could not climb its smooth hole, and afraid of death, hung himself into an old well nearby. As he fell he managed to catch hold of a clump of reeds growing from the wall, and clung to them desperately.

For below him he could see a mass of writhing snakes, enraged at the sound of his falling, and at the very bottom, identifiable from the hiss of its breath, a mighty black python with its mouth wide open to receive him. And even as he realized that his life could last only as long as the reeds held fast, he looked up and saw two mice, one black and one white, gnawing at the roots. Meanwhile, the elephant, enraged at not catching its victim, charged the tree and dislodged a honeycomb. It fell upon the man clinging so precariously. But even as the bees angrily stung his body, by chance a drop of honey fell on his brow, rolled down his face and reached his lips, to bring a moment's sweetness. And he longed for yet more drops and so forgot the perils of his existence.

Now hear its interpretation.

The man is the soul.

His wandering in the forest is existence.

The wild elephant is death.

The demoness is old age.

The tree is salvation, where there is no fear of death, but which no sensual man can attain.

The well is human life.

The snakes are passions.

The python is hell.

The clump of reeds is man's allotted span.

The black and white mice the dark and light halves of the month.

The bees are diseases and troubles.

The drops of honey are but trivial pleasures.

How can a wise man want them, in the midst of such peril and hardship?

The general plan of a Jain temple is of a portal and colonnades, a closed hall or open courtyard and an inner shrine for the images. The principle image of the Tirthankarato whom the temple is dedicated, is flanked by two attendants and by smaller images of the twenty-four Tirthankaras. In Digambara temples, the image sits naked with eyes downcast. In Svetambara temples it sits clothed with a loincloth, has protruding eyeballs and is often adorned with jewels and flowers,

Every Jain temple also has a 'saint-wheel' (siddha-cakra). Its basic form is that of a stylized flat lotus with four petals attached to a circle in the center. Placed in the petals and in the circle are representations of the Five Great Beings in meditative posture (seated with crossed legs). Often the principles of right knowledge, right faith and right conduct are incorporated too. The diagram is invoked for the destruction of sin and for the common good to prevail.

Taken from Cary NC library.