

The Origins and Conceptions of *Ahimsa* in Jainism and Buddhism

by Dinesh S. Parakh

The laying down of the commandment not to kill and not to damage is one of the greatest events in the spiritual history of mankind....[\[1\]](#)

To a scholar who has sufficiently studied both Jainism and Buddhism, the most striking feature would probably be their similarity. Although there are some important differences, many of the teachings, cosmology, terminology, geographical locations, and even life events of Mahavira and the Buddha are quite similar. The doctrine of *ahimsa*, or non-violence, also occupies a central place in both religions. To explore the meaning of *ahimsa* in the two religions, it is necessary to probe into the origins of *ahimsa*, as well as to outline the general differences in the exposition of its philosophy. Further clarification of the role of *ahimsa* in Buddhism and Jainism becomes evident upon the examination of *ahimsa* in the lives of the Buddha and Mahavira, the most prominent exponents of the two religions respectively. Finally, we may discuss what might seem to be a natural outgrowth of *ahimsa*: the practice of vegetarianism and how it is conceived of in both religions. While only the most rudimentary study of *ahimsa* can be made in the scope of this paper, the general conclusion that seems to emerge is that *ahimsa* originated with Jainism, and it is in Jainism that *ahimsa* was most clearly, forcefully, rigorously, and consistently articulated. It was through Buddhism and its more flexible interpretation, however, that *ahimsa* gained popular influence and support and spread to East Asia.

In order to examine the origins of *ahimsa*, it is necessary to investigate the origins of these two religions in which it is so important. We can state with some certainty that *ahimsa* did not originate with Hinduism, for as Albert Schweitzer pointedly asked, "how is it credible that the idea of abandoning killing should have arisen among the Brahmins, who practised killing as a profession in the sacrifices?"[\[2\]](#) And while it is also possible that *ahimsa* originated with an unknown ancient school of thought, we then enter the realm of pure and unsubstantiated speculation. Confining ourselves to the historical record, there are only two candidates for the origin of *ahimsa*: Buddhism and Jainism.

Buddhism, according to the most common sources, was expounded by Gautama, also known as Sakyamuni,

who was born in either 566 B.C.E. or 448 B.C.E.[3] The Hinayana school claims that there are previous Buddhas, including the Buddha Dipamkara who was encountered by Sakyamuni in a previous existence, 'countless *kalpas* ago'. Various Mahayana schools of Buddhism believe in the Buddha as a transcendent, eternal being[4]. In either case, *ahimsa* may have been explicated from time immemorial. No historical evidence exists, however, to prove or disprove the Mahayana claims or the previous Hinayana Buddhas, and so we must accept the historical introduction of *ahimsa* via Buddhism as approximately the time of Sakyamuni's first sermons, circa 531 or 413 B.C.E.

Jainism also defines itself as eternal, but we do have a fair amount of historical evidence for its Teachers. The 24th and last *tirthankara* (literally, 'builders of the ford [across the river of suffering]') of Jainism of the current era, Vardhamana Mahavira, was born in either 540 B.C.E. (the date given by modern scholars), or 599 B.C.E. (the traditional date).[5] It has been established by various scholars that the 23rd *tirthankara*, Parsvanatha, lived around 850 B.C.E. Mahavira's parents are described in the *Acaranga Sutra* as being followers of the teachings of Parsvanatha, whose existence is hinted at in some Buddhist texts.[6] Padmanabh Jaini also claims that there exists historical evidence of the 22nd *tirthankara*, Neminatha,[7] although he does not offer any possible life dates. Furthermore, the first, second, and 21st *tirthankaras*, Rishabadeva, Ajitnatha, and Aristanemi, respectively, are all mentioned in the ancient *Yajur Veda*. [8] Lastly, there are at least two hymns in the *Rg Veda* which could possibly refer to a Lord Rishabdeva and Jainism.[9] If these literary figures are indeed historical Jain *tirthankaras*, then we must assume that *ahimsa* was preached by them, for it is not an overstatement to say that there could be no Jainism without *ahimsa*. We can only offer conjecture as to what their historical dates might be. But even if the evidence of the other Tirthankaras is inconclusive, Parsvanatha certainly did exist in Varanasi circa 850 B.C.E. Add the fact that the oldest Jain canonical text, the *Acaranga Sutra* (circa 4th century B.C.E.[10]) preaches *ahimsa* in a general way (i.e., without attributing the words to one *tirthankara* in particular, thus demonstrating that *ahimsa* had become an integral part of the religion), and we can tentatively conclude that *ahimsa* was expounded by Parsvanatha at least as early as the 9th century B.C.E.[11]

By understanding these historical origins of the *ahimsa* doctrine, we can contextualize the question of the conception and development of *ahimsa* in Buddhism and Jainism. In no uncertain terms, the Jain *Acaranga Sutra* offers one clear explanation of what *ahimsa* is:

The Arhats and Bhagavats of the past, present, and future, all say thus, speak thus, declare thus, explain thus: all breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away. This is the pure, unchangeable, eternal law, which the clever ones, who understand the world, have declared....[\[12\]](#)

Ahimsa is the first principle and the basis of Jainism. As Jaini describes it, "For them, it [*ahimsa*] is not simply the first among virtues but *the* virtue; all other restraints are simply elaborations of this central one."[\[13\]](#) In Jainism, the whole universe is divided into *jiva* (living) and *ajiva* (non-living) forms. Living or sentient beings are defined quite broadly; for example, rocks, mountains, drops of water, lakes, and trees all have life force, while the non-living world includes motion, rest, space, time, as well as atomic matter[\[14\]](#). Sentient beings are ranked according to a hierarchy, with six-sensed animals[\[15\]](#) and human beings at the top. Each living thing, regardless of its place in the hierarchy, is on an individual quest for salvation. Any living being harming another accumulates negative *karma* which attaches itself to the soul and impedes the path to liberation. Even if the harm is unintentional, a small amount of easily absolved karma may attach itself to the soul.

In order to avoid accumulating any karma whatsoever, the Jaina monks and laymen engage in what some might consider to be extreme behaviour. Some monks of the *svetambara* sect (literally, 'white-clad') wear a white strip of cloth known as a *muhpatti* around their mouths to prevent any harm to insects by ingesting them or blowing hot air upon them; monks of the other sect, the *digambaras* (literally, 'sky-clad') wear nothing, part of the reason being so as to have the least possible effect on their surroundings. The dietary restrictions of the Jains, which will be discussed in some detail later on, are legendary, and are upheld in order to commit the least possible harm to the living environment. Even the fact that most Jains in India today are merchants attests to the fact that commerce was considered to be the occupation that would kill or injure the least number of living beings. Non-violence is the ideal in thought, word, and deed.

Buddhism also places *ahimsa* in a primary position, although it is not as strictly codified or enforced as in Jainism. There are few strong condemnations of violence, and most of them are found in Mahayana Buddhism. The *Dasabhumika Sutra*, an important Mahayana text, asserts that one who follows the teachings of the Buddha "must not hate any being and cannot kill a living creature even in thought."[\[16\]](#) Apart from several aphorisms in the *Dhammapada*, Hinayana Buddhism has little textual evidence for *ahimsa*. In the

Mahavagga, *ahimsa* is prescribed for newly ordained monks: "A Bhikku [Buddhist monk] who has received the *upasampada* ordination, ought not intentionally to destroy the life of any being down to a worm or an ant."[\[17\]](#) Two salient points should be noted: first of all, total *ahimsa* is prescribed for the Bhikku, and not necessarily for the layman. Second is the use of the word 'intentionally': Buddhism stresses the intention of an action; thus, if one accidentally steps on and kills an insect, no negative karma results. In Jainism, good intention may mitigate the harmful act done but does not wholly prevent the accumulation of karma. Thus, if a Jain did not mean to step on an insect, karma would still result, but it would be the most easily expiated of karmas.

The hierarchy of living beings is present in Buddhism also. The more highly developed a being is, the worse a sin it is to kill it, and humans are more highly developed than animals.[\[18\]](#) As in Jainism, animals are considered to have mental faculties and are capable of interaction with humans. But Buddhism, with its doctrines of impermanence and non-existence of the self, does not accept as the Jainas do that each living organism has an immortal life force.[\[19\]](#) Indeed, one excellent example from the *Mahavagga* illustrates the Buddhist conception of *ahimsa* and how it may be interpreted in the light of the impermanence of all things:

At that time the retreat during the rainy season had not yet been instituted by the Blessed One for the Bhikkus. Thus the Bhikkus went on their travels alike during winter, summer, and the rainy seasons./ People were annoyed, murmured, and became angry, saying, 'How can Sakyaputtiya Samanas go on their travels alike during winter, summer, and the rainy season? They crush the green herbs, they hurt vegetable life, they destroy the life of many small living things....Now some Bhikkus heard those people that were annoyed, murmured, and had become angry. These Bhikkus told this thing to the Blessed One. In consequence of that and on this occasion the Blessed One... thus addressed the Bhikkus: 'I prescribe, O Bhikkus, that you enter upon Vassa [retreat during rainy season]'...[\[20\]](#)

If the Buddha had prescribed the rainy retreat as a consequence of the people getting angry and comparing the Buddhists to other schools whose monks did retreat (such as the Jainas), then *ahimsa* seems to have been used as a means to mollify the crowd, and was not necessarily an end in itself.[\[21\]](#) Even if the "in consequence" of the text refers to the fact that many life forms were being killed, this passage suggests that *ahimsa* towards all living things was not a fundamental, immutable law as it was in Jainism. That is, the Buddha could prescribe *ahimsa* as a concession to either the living things that were being injured or to the people who were angry. Thus, *ahimsa*, in a sense, becomes impermanent, just as all things in Buddhism are.

Jainism conceives of *ahimsa* in the most encompassing way and has been remarkably consistent, even within its few sects, over the millennia.[\[22\]](#) Buddhism is more flexible in its interpretation of *ahimsa* and stresses one's intentions as the sole bearer of karmic material. However, it is precisely because of the fact that Buddhism was able to make concessions and be flexible in some of its doctrine that it could spread as far as it did, for *ahimsa* was spread to East Asia not by the Jainas, but by the Buddhists.[\[23\]](#)

The differences in the conception of *ahimsa* in Jainism and Buddhism are a little surprising considering the exemplary and very similar non-violent lives that both Mahavira and the Buddha lived, both in their historical lives, and in lives past. An examination of *ahimsa* in practise, i.e., as lived by Mahavira and the Buddha, will perhaps further clarify the role of *ahimsa* in these two great religions.

As with the Buddha, many of Mahavira's previous lives are recorded in the Jaina scriptures. In one such birth as a lion, Mahavira had the good fortune of hearing a sermon on the importance of *ahimsa*. He was so moved by these words that he stopped eating all food normally consumed by a lion, died, and was subsequently rewarded with human birth.[\[24\]](#) The *Jataka* tales relate two well-known previous lives of the Buddha and his devotion to *ahimsa*. In one story, he was an ascetic who had been falsely accused of a misdeed by the king. He tried to speak in his defence, but realized that it would be to no avail. The king, blinded by rage, began to cut the ascetic into pieces with his sword. "Even as he saw his limbs being cut off, the ascetic felt no pain, because he had made a habit of friendliness [to all living beings]; rather, when he saw that the king had fallen from virtue, he grieved for him."[\[25\]](#) In another celebrated tale, the Buddha was a prince who saw a starving tigress about to devour her own cubs. He felt compassion not only for the young cubs, but for the tigress whose hunger was leading her to commit such a heinous crime. The prince then jumped to his death from the edge of the cliff so that the tigress could eat him instead.[\[26\]](#) Finally, there is a story about Mahavira's sense of *ahimsa* before he entered his historical birth, in the womb of his mother Trishala. "He lay completely still, lest his kicks should cause his mother pain. Only when he perceived with his supernatural knowledge that Trishala feared him dead did he stir slightly to reassure her."[\[27\]](#)

As portrayed in the scriptures, the historical lives of both Mahavira and the Buddha were paragons of the practise of *ahimsa*. But how consistent were these lives with the respective religious writings? The stories about Mahavira seem to be corroborated by both his teachings and the ancient scriptures of the Jainas. Even

today, very old or infirm Jains will stop eating and fast to death in a ritual known as *sallekhana*--the highest and holiest form of *ahimsa* that a human can perform, in order to move one closer to the ideal of total non-injury or violence.^[28] In Buddhism, on the other hand, there are canonical passages that advise one not to sacrifice oneself for an inferior living being.^[29] Neither Buddhism nor Jainism justify the hierarchy of living beings present in both religions with the ideal of complete *ahimsa* as seen in the previous lives of Mahavira and the Buddha. Perhaps the discrepancy is best expressed by this paradoxical passage from the Mahayana *Avatamsaka Sutra*, "The bodhisattva will not give up one single living being for the sake of all beings, nor will he give up all beings for the sake of one living being."^[30]

Two incidents from the lives of the Buddha and Mahavira concern the accusation that both ate flesh at some point in their lives. While flesh-eating in itself does not necessarily constitute violence or injury, the abstention from flesh is very closely related to *ahimsa* and usually follows directly from the practise of non-violence. Thus, flesh-eating by either Mahavira or the Buddha would certainly change the common perception of *ahimsa* as preached by them. In one version of the Buddhist *Mahaparinirvanasutra*, the cause of the Buddha's death was said to be a dish of pork given to him by the blacksmith Cunda. According to one scholar, however, the Pali word that this interpretation is based on, *sukaramaddava*, is of uncertain meaning. Furthermore, the Chinese version of this sutra does not support this meaning of the word *sukaramaddava*. Thus, we are uncertain as to what the Buddha's last meal really was.^[31]

There is a remarkably similar incident from the life of Mahavira. Makkhali Gosala, the leader of the heterodox Ajivika sect, once violently challenged Mahavira's teachings. Mahavira remained in a state of complete equanimity, and when Gosala's attacks failed to produce any response from the meditating Mahavira, he cursed Mahavira with death. Although Mahavira did not die, he did become ill. One of Mahavira's disciples, named Siha,^[32] was upset that Mahavira's illness might be fatal. To reassure him, Mahavira sent Siha to find a medicinal substance called *kukkutamamsa*, which some thought referred to chicken flesh. However, the *svetambara* commentators^[33] have concluded that *kukkutamamsa* refers to the flesh of a certain seed-filled fruit and later scholars have verified their claims. In fact, it was not until an Indian publication about the Buddha in 1941 that anyone thought that *kukkutamamsa* might refer to chicken.^[34] Furthermore, the story gives the impression that Mahavira did not actually need the medicine and only requested it to assuage his disciple. Therefore, it does not make sense that he would eat an impermissible

food item that was not even needed for his physical survival. Also, an omniscient being such as Mahavira had become would have gone beyond any attachment to life and so would probably not have tried to save his physical body by breaking the vow of *ahimsa*.

These two incidents of practical *ahimsa* in the lives of Mahavira and the Buddha lead us to a brief discussion of vegetarianism in the two religions. Abstention from flesh would seem to follow naturally from not harming any form of life. In Jainism, this is unequivocally the case, but in Buddhism, the issue is more complex. A practising Jain is strictly vegetarian, abstaining from flesh, fish, and fowl completely.

Depending on the degree of religiosity, the Jain also avoids eggs, onions, garlic, and root vegetables (because the act of extraction from the ground destroys life). In short, the ideal Jain diet causes the least amount of harm to the least number of living organisms. The Jainas reject the Buddhist notion of eating flesh if the animal has died of natural causes, concluding that the dead animal's flesh breeds countless living organisms.

[\[35\]](#)

Buddhism's less strict vegetarianism is not widely discussed in Buddhist literature.[\[36\]](#) In the *Vinaya*, meat-eating is to be refrained from only under certain conditions and flesh and fish are included among the "superior and delicate foods" which an ill Bhikku is allowed to eat.[\[37\]](#) The crux of Buddhist notions of vegetarianism centres around intention. If "the monk has neither seen nor heard that the meat offered to him comes from an animal butchered for him in particular, and if he has no reason to suppose that it was," then the flesh becomes acceptable to eat and no negative karma is earned.[\[38\]](#) By extension, it becomes worse for a Buddhist to wilfully kill a bug than to eat a dead animal.[\[39\]](#)

It is interesting to note, however, that in Hinayana Buddhism, "while only a few are vegetarian, this is universally admired, and most people have an uneasy conscience when they think about meat-eating."[\[40\]](#)

Vegetarianism is seen as the ideal diet, although the meat-eating is tolerated.[\[41\]](#) Chapter eight of the Mahayana *Lankavatara Sutra*, provides the clearest and strongest condemnation of flesh-eating in Buddhism:

For innumerable reasons, Mahamati, the Bodhisattva, whose nature is compassion, is not to eat any meat.... in this long course of transmigration here, there is not one living being that having assumed the form of a living being, has not been your mother, or father, or brother, or sister, or son, or daughter.... how can the Bodhisattva-Mahasattva.... eat the flesh of any living being that is of the same nature as himself?[\[42\]](#)

The Sutra further goes on to express the evils of eating flesh and the terror of the animals that are killed, denies that the Buddha himself partook of flesh, and describes the horrific punishments that are in store for those who do eat flesh.^[43] Some of the strictest Buddhist vegetarians have been in China and derive their code from this particular Sutra as well as the Mahayana *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*.^[44] Ruegg makes the important point, however, that the Mahayana Sutras do not necessarily derive their ban on meat-eating from the principle of *ahimsa* and therefore do not differ with other Buddhist schools that apparently, do not consider vegetarianism to be a requisite of accepting *ahimsa*.^[45] Thus, while *ahimsa* equates with vegetarianism in Jainism, it does not in Buddhism.

This brief and by no means exhaustive account of *ahimsa* in Jainism and Buddhism suggests some general conclusions. *Ahimsa* originated with Jainism, certainly no later than the 9th century B.C.E. and it is in Jainism that *ahimsa* has been most rigorously and consistently applied. The historical Buddha preached the philosophy of *ahimsa*, but did not appear to place the same emphasis on it in his formulation of the 'middle path' of Buddhism. While *ahimsa* is a very important doctrine in Buddhism, it does not occupy the central place that it does in Jainism. Although the conceptions of *ahimsa* are similar in both, Buddhism stresses the intention of an action and is more flexible in its application of *ahimsa* than is Jainism. Both Mahavira and the Buddha appeared to have adhered to a severe definition of *ahimsa* during their lives, but while later Jaina scriptures are consistent with Mahavira's life, the Buddha's rigorous personal *ahimsa* finds few parallels in later Buddhist scriptures and literature. Vegetarianism does not necessarily follow from *ahimsa* in Buddhism, but cannot be separated from *ahimsa* in Jainism.

Because Buddhism divided into many different schools of thought, *ahimsa* was not as well defined as in Jainism, which has remained relatively constant over the millennia. But the *ahimsa* in Jainism, while paradigmatic, was also unapproachable for most people. Buddhism's flexibility gave *ahimsa*, in one form or another, to large areas of Asia. Flesh-eating inhabitants of areas such as Tibet and Southeast Asia could practise the *ahimsa* of Buddhism while retaining their traditional diets. And the Emperor Ashoka's transformation to beneficence (and subsequent promotion of Buddhism, which was a critical step in its growth) was probably most influenced by the Buddhist teachings of *ahimsa*.^[46] In the final analysis, it seems most likely that while Jainism gave *ahimsa* to Buddhism, Buddhism spread *ahimsa* to the world.

Bibliography

- Chapple, Christopher Key. Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Dauids, T.W. Rhys, trans. "Mahavagga," in Vinaya Texts. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881.
- Harvey, Peter. An Introduction to Buddhism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Jacobi, Hermann, trans. "Acaranga Sutra," in Jain Sutras Translated from the Prakrit. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884.
- Jaini, Padmanabh S. The Jaina Path of Purification. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979.
- Kraft, Kenneth, ed. Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Nonviolence. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- Parakh, Shantilal D. Tirthankarasana. (in Hindi) Dahigaon, India: Tirthankara Sahitya Sadan, 1978.
- Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli and Charles A. Moore. A Source Book in Indian Philosophy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.
- Rahula, Walpola. What the Buddha Taught. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1974.
- Ruegg, D. Seyfort. "Ahimsa and Vegetarianism in the History of Buddhism." Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula. Ed. Somaratna Balasooriya et al. London: Gordon Fraser, 1980. 234-241.
- Schumann, Hans Wolfgang. Buddhism: An Outline of Its Teachings and Schools. Trans. Georg Feuerstein. Wheaton, Ill.: Quest Books, 1973.
- Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro, trans. The Lankavatara Sutra: A Mahayana Text. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1932.
- Wolpert, Stanley. A New History of India. New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1989.

-
- [1] Albert Schweitzer, Indian Thought and its Development, trans., Mrs. Charles E.B. Russell (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1957) 82.
- [2] Schweitzer 81. Many other sources, including Chapple and Jaini reject the possibility of *ahimsa* having a Hindu origin.
- [3] Peter Harvey, An Introduction to Buddhism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 9.
- [4] Harvey 125.
- [5] Christopher Key Chapple, Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions (Albany: State

University of New York Press, 1993) 9.

[6] Padmanabh S. Jaini, The Jaina Path of Purification (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979) 10. See also, Chapple 9, and Schweitzer 79.

[7] Jaini 33.

[8] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, A Source Book in Indian Philosophy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957) 250. While the generally accepted scholarly dates for the coming into existence of the Vedas is *circa* 1500 B.C.E., they are almost certainly much older (and indeed, are seen by Hindus as eternal).

[9] my own transliteration from the Sanskrit of one of the verses is, "asutapurva ***vsabho jyayaniya*** araya surudhaha santi purvah divo na pata vidathasya dhibhi ksatram rajana pudivodadhathe" (emphasis added) Rg Veda 52-38 from Shantilal D. Parakh, Tirthankarasana, (Dahigaon, India: Tirthankara Sahitya Sadan, 1978) 62.

[10] Chapple 3.

[11] Christopher Chapple has assembled an impressive array of evidence, citing the recent work of several scholars, that suggests a possible Indus Valley link with Jainism and pushing the historical origins of Jainism back to before 3000 B.C.E. See Chapple 5-9.

[12] Acaranga Sutra I, 4, 1 in Hermann Jacobi, trans., Jaina Sutras (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1968) 36.

[13] Jaini 167.

[14] Chapple 11. Rocks are not included in the category of non-living matter, and are considered to have one sense.

[15] The mind is considered to be a sense and animals have the sense of mind.

[16] Chapple 29.

[17] Mahavagga I, 78, 4 in T.W. Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg, trans., "Mahavagga", in Vinaya Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881) 235.

[18] Harvey 38.

[19] Chapple 21.

[20] Mahavagga III, 1, 1 and Mahavagga III, 1, 3 in Davids 298.

[21] One might argue that in this incident, the Buddha's concession contributed to *ahimsa* by reducing the level of conflict, tension, and discord.

[22] Chapple 21.

[23] Chapple 20.

- [24] Chapple 12.
- [25] Kenneth Kraft, ed., Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Non-Violence (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) 32.
- [26] Kraft 33.
- [27] Jaini 8.
- [28] Chapple 99-109 and Jaini 227-233.
- [29] Kraft 41.
- [30] Kraft 46.
- [31] D. Seyfort Ruegg, "Ahimsa and Vegetarianism in the History of Buddhism," Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula (London: Gordon Fraser, 1980) 240-241n. See also Schweitzer 101.
- [32] This may be the same Siha mentioned in Harvey (p. 30) and Schumann (p. 24), who went to the Buddha and found his theory of karma more convincing than that of Mahavira. Walpola Rahula relates the same story on page 4 of his book, but gives the disciple's name as Upali. It is an interesting possibility that the Siha who figures prominently in the episode where Mahavira supposedly ate flesh may have been the same one who later begged the Buddha to accept him as a disciple.
- [33] *Digambaras* claim that the omniscient being, or *kevalin*, that Mahavira had become, ate nothing at all.
- [34] Jaini 24n and Chapple 4.
- [35] Jaini 169.
- [36] Ruegg 234.
- [37] Ruegg 234.
- [38] Ruegg 234-235.
- [39] Harvey 203.
- [40] Harvey 204.
- [41] This view holds true in almost all other religions, including Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity, Judaism, and most probably Islam.
- [42] Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, trans., The Lankavatara Sutra (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1932) 212.
- [43] Suzuki 211-222.
- [44] The Mahayana *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* is a different text from the Hinayana Sutra of the same name.

[45] Ruegg 238.

[46] It is interesting to note the suggestion, however, that Chandragupta Maurya, the grandfather of Ashoka and founder of the Maurya dynasty, became a Jaina mendicant during the last years of his life and fasted to his death with the Jain vow of *sallekhana*. See Jaini 6n and Stanley Wolpert, A New History of India (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 61.

Note:- *Originally written in December 1994 at Yale University and revised in July 2000 for the Malaviya Centre for Peace Research, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India.*