THE ASSEMBLY OF LISTENERS
JAINS IN SOCIETY

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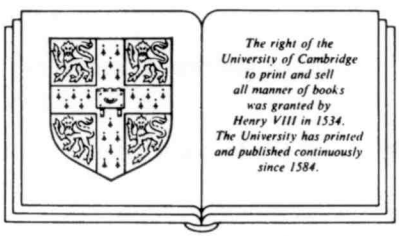

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Introduction

Michael Carrithers and Caroline Humphrey

The Jains of India are a relatively small section, about one-half of 1 per cent, of the Indian population. Yet they have exerted a significant influence on India's, and the world's, history. In ancient India, Buddhism and Brahmanism took up the characteristic Jain doctrines of *ahiṃsā*, non-violence and vegetarianism, and made them primary principles of Indian culture. In the medieval period, Jain practices and doctrines significantly affected major Hindu sects as well as quasi-Hindu ones, such as the Lingayats. In early modern and modern India, Jains have played a role in commercial and political life out of all proportion to their numbers. And through its indirect formative effect on Gandhi, Jainism has given the principle of non-violence to world culture.

For scholars, as for Jains themselves, the imaginative force of Jainism springs from two fundamental facts. First, Jain doctrine espouses an extraordinarily uncompromising and single-minded pursuit of individual asceticism. Jains are to avoid harm to even the smallest living thing, to purify themselves strenuously through self-mortification, and to conduct lives of strictest moral rectitude. These principles are embodied in those exemplary individuals, the ascetics, *munis*. Some go naked, while others wear face masks to avoid inhaling and killing the least insect. Many Jain laymen follow the ascetics' example by undertaking rigorous fasts. Both ascetics and laymen occasionally take a vow of self-starvation and die. Whatever complications and complexities are found to accompany Jain life, this individual asceticism remains a fundamental ideal and makes Jainism unusual, even in India.

But if Jainism seems to be in this respect a radically individual religion, it nevertheless possesses a powerful sense of the Jains as a

community. This sense is embodied in the image of the *samavasaraṇa*, the 'assembly of all'. The reference is to the occasion on which the founder of Jainism, the Jina, had achieved liberation from suffering through his austerities. He emanated a divine sound and all living beings in the universe, represented as being assembled in concentric circles below him, turn to listen. Hence Jains call themselves *śrāvaka*s, 'listeners'. This scene is represented with tremendous colour and detail in Jain sculpture, painting, and scripture throughout India. Probably no other traditional Indian religion possesses such a vivid symbolic expression of community. Whether this expression is realised in fact, as many Jains and other observers believe it is, remains a difficult question to which much of this volume is devoted. But Jains certainly possess extraordinary poetic imagery in which to conceive community.

The intrinsic interest and importance of the 'assembly of listeners' has not until recently found any collective response from the assembly of scholars. The conference, Jains in the Community, held at Cambridge in June 1985, which gave rise to this volume, was the first occasion on which studies of Jainism had matured sufficiently to support a truly international seminar attended by Indians and Westerners, Jains and non-Jains. Moreover, Indian studies have matured towards an increasing rapprochement between the speakers of very different scholarly languages, Indology and sociology. Indologists and social scientists were represented about equally at the conference, and found they had a great deal to say to each other. We hope that this volume helps us to achieve a profounder collective understanding of Jainism, an understanding equally available to Indologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and historians.

The form of this book derives to a great extent from the experience of the conference. In order to focus the papers and the discussion on common concerns, the editors wrote the position paper, 'Jains as a community', chapter 1 below. This was circulated to the participants before they wrote their papers. The position paper proposed a checklist of the characteristics of community which seemed to us to be important among Jains. This checklist was intended to emphasise the empirical differences between local Jain groups, or between periods of Jain history, or between Jain sects that we felt sure would emerge from

the papers. We hoped, on other words, that the rich diversity of the Jain world would be made clear as well as its fundamental unity. The position paper was also intended as a challenge for the participants to produce a better checklist, a better way of conceiving community among Jains in general.

The consequences were partly a pleasant surprise. The wide variation among Jains emerged very clearly from the papers, and even more clearly from the discussion. Moreover the variation was along lines that our limited imaginations could not have conceived beforehand. Jains in one part of, say, Rajasthan were different from Jains in other parts of Rajasthan in quite unexpected ways. Jains in the South differed from Jains in the North quite spectacularly and intriguingly. It therefore seemed appropriate to reflect the diversity, especially that which arose in discussion, in brief prefaces to the papers.

The consequences were also a discomfiting surprise. It turned out that there was variation not only between Jains, but also between participants. There were different opinions about what counted as constituting community, about whether this group or that could be called a community, and about how to approach the question altogether. The participants brought very different experiences and very different viewpoints to the conference. But these amiable disagreements were fruitful as well, for they forced us to see that our checklist had to be amended and expanded. Indeed they forced us to question the very idea of community. We have not rewritten the position paper nor rejected it, but have instead written a conclusion that reflects the richer and more complex picture which emerged through the conference. Therefore, we hope there is some dynamic development through the book.

Perhaps the most gratifying consequence of the conference was that we learned, all of us, how much more there is to learn. The Jain world, let alone the larger Indian world of which it is part, has been quite unimaginably prolific in symbolic forms, in social arrangements, in responses to the vicissitudes of history. We hope that this book, which is primarily documentary and ethnographic rather than theoretical in nature, will provide a basis for future work. This is an invitation to more research, to a yet deeper understanding of this fascinating version of human experience.

Readers should note that there are different styles of rendering Indian-language terms into English among Sanskritists, South Asian scholars and anthropologists. Since we felt it unlikely that our contributors would agree to a unified rendering we have kept the transliterations provided by the authors. The glossary gives the variants for particular terms as they appear in this book.

I

Jains as a community: a position paper

Michael Carrithers and Caroline Humphrey

Although Jains have exerted an influence on Indian society and religion out of proportion to their relatively small numbers, they have received very little attention from scholars until the last few years. The purpose of this volume is to represent the current state of Jain studies, from both a sociological and an Indological point of view, and to lay the groundwork for further studies. The theme which we have chosen, that of Jains as a community, concerns what we feel to be the central problem in our understanding of Jainism. If this can be solved, then we will be better able not only to comprehend Jains, but also to contribute to the wider sociology of Indian religion and society.

It should first be remarked that the sense in which Jains are a community has not always seemed problematical. V. A. Sangave, in effect the pioneer of sociological studies of Jainism, did not so regard it. In his seminal monograph, *Jaina Community: a Social Survey*, he assumed from the outset that Jains do constitute a community in a significant sense, and he proceeded to lay out for us the anatomy of that community on an all-Indian scale. The value of this assumption has been plain to any scholar who has used Sangave's work.

We feel, however, that the way ahead for the sociology of Jainism is to build on his work by questioning this assumption and, by questioning, to refine it. Such a course seems to be demanded by our own research, which has focussed more narrowly upon local groups of Jains and upon the fine grain of Jain life. We have found that, though it seems convenient to describe Jains as a community, the sense of this usage remains puzzling and demands elucidation. Such an elucidation would test the worthiness of the idea of community to take its place alongside such categories as caste, village, class, and region in the sociology of India.

It should first be remarked that the word 'community' itself, in our and Sangave's usage, is not limited to sociology. It is now used commonly in Indian English, and some equivalent is used in the Indian vernaculars known to us, to refer to Jains and indeed to the collectivity of members of any caste or religion: for example, 'the Maratha community', 'the Sikh community', 'the Harijan community'. Carrithers has noted that such a usage, in English and the vernacular, goes back in Indian journalism and public speech at least to the last decades of the nineteenth century, and it is certainly considerably older. In this respect the usage is equivalent to such English usages as 'the Jewish community' or 'the Italian community of New York', and as such seems to represent simply the recognition in common speech of the social reality of ethnic, religious, or other divisions in a complex society.

Sociologists and other scholars are entitled, however, to ask more of a term than that it be in common usage. It seems to us that there are five criteria inherent in 'community' which would justify its use as an autonomous analytic term for describing Jains. First, the Jains must share, in some significant sense (1) *a common culture, belief, and practice, as well as some common interests.* Moreover, they must be (2) *significantly different from the surrounding society in their culture, beliefs, practices, and interests.* This much is inherent in the ordinary application of the term in public speech, and subsumes what Jain spokesmen would probably insist upon, namely the specifically religious characteristics of Jainism.

But for Jains to fulfil these criteria alone would not justify speaking of them other than as a discriminable category in Indian society. They must also (3) *be conscious of an identity as Jains.* This is relevant because we have observed that there are many individuals and groups in India who are Jains, at least by birth, but who have little or no consciousness of such an ascription differentiating them from the surrounding society. Indeed, the campaigns by Jain leaders in this century to have Jains register as Jains and not Hindus on the census reflect just this.

Moreover, we are in essence asking of the term 'community' that it designate a distinct and real social entity with its own logic and irreducible explanatory power. This means that the community must, as such, be a distinct causal agent. It must be (4) *effective as a*

collectivity in social, political, and/or economic life. 'Effective' here has two senses. First, it means that membership in the collectivity is an attribute which not only distinguishes the members from others, but also significantly affects their place in social life. There seem, in contrast, to be discriminable collectivities, such as the worshippers of a particular deity who gather annually at a pilgrimage centre, who fulfil the first three criteria but who are not thus placed differently from the pilgrims to another similar god. Second, the community must be effective in that it urges its beliefs, or presses its interests, upon its own members and upon the circumambient society, whether through informal pressure or through formal organisations. In this latter respect the effectiveness of community admits of degrees. It is not necessary that such efforts always, or even frequently, be fully successful.

Finally, it appears to us that a community, to deserve the term fully, must be (5) *able to reproduce itself.* The sense of this criterion is that whatever we designate as a community must have some enduring existence, and not just be a temporary constellation, such as an interest group, whose existence is contingent upon temporary historical circumstances. Moreover, to specify how Jains reproduce themselves from generation to generation would be to show just how their specific culture and interests are preserved in the face of the so effectively assimilative Hindu society around them.

It seems unlikely that any local Jain group, still less the Jain population of India, always or completely conforms to all of these criteria. Rather, the criteria are meant as a checklist of significant features which may be compared against the material gathered by individual scholars. There might be historical variation within local Jain groups. We have observed, for example, that the Digambar Jain population of southern Maharashtra and northern Karnataka may very well have exhibited few of the relevant features at the end of the nineteenth century, but that by 1982 a combination of long-term efforts by local Jain leaders and political pressures had created a community where none existed before. Or there might be variations between groups. Jain farmers in the Deccan, for example, seem less effective or conscious as a community than the urban Jain businessmen there, whereas in Rajasthan it is the rural Jain traders who seem more effective and conscious than the urban businessmen. We regard

these criteria as an invitation to produce a detailed and coherent anatomy of Jainism and local Jain communities.

Indeed the criteria give rise to a number of specific questions. First, are Jains that different from the Hindus around them? Many Jains, for example, observe Hindu festivals. Moreover, the basic form of Jain worship, *pūjā*, uses much of the same materials and idioms as Hindu *pūjā*. In the south the Jain *bhaṭṭāraks* seem to play the role of caste gurus played by similar figures in Hinduism. Hindu terms, forms of thought, and indeed ideas of caste and *varṇa* seem to have permeated much of Jain literature. The attitudes of Jain laymen to Jain *munis* seem in many respects to be no different from Hindu attitudes to their own renunciants. And, in the south, there is a caste of temple priests which has been designated, perhaps justly, as 'Jain Brahmans', while in the north Brahmans proper sometimes act as priests to local Jain societies. These and many other pieces of evidence might make the sceptic query whether Jains are in fact different from Hindus, whatever the Jain consciousness of the matter might be.

Similarly, many Jains are businessmen; but are they significantly different, or do they organise themselves separately, from other businessmen? Various Weberian hypotheses have been proposed to suggest that they are in fact culturally distinct as businessmen, or that they organise themselves better as an interest group within business. Others have argued that such divisions do not play a significant part in the Indian commercial world, or that there is a 'business community' which transcends caste and religious barriers.

Moreover, it is notable that Jains in nineteenth- and twentieth-century India have been very prolific in founding specifically Jain social and religious associations. It might be asked, however, whether such organisations are really at all effective – as many such Indian organisations are not – in achieving their objectives, and therefore whether such organisations in fact conform to criterion (4) above by making the community an effective collectivity in social, political, or economic life. Some such organisations, for example, seem more an arena for status display, a way of turning financial capital into social capital, than a method of furthering the ends of the community. And in the same vein it might be asked whether the very size and internal variation in some very large Jain populations, as in the southern Deccan or Gujarat, do not prohibit their acting effectively for ends

to which they commonly subscribe. Members of the same local group frequently belong to different political parties or factions, and may represent different economic classes and opposed interests.

There are also powerful sectarian divisions among Jains, especially in Gujarat and Rajasthan. In Jaipur, for example, many organisations and *ad hoc* committees designate themselves 'All Jain', while systematically excluding all Digambars from participation. In the same regions different sects compete for membership among the same nominally Jain population. Under these circumstances the effectiveness of community among Jains must be radically modified by these sometimes bitter internal divisions.

Finally, it might be asked whether we do not already have a perfectly good analytic term for describing Jains, namely caste. After all, Jains form castes just as Hindus do, and the rules and attitudes governing those castes lead to much the same consequences as among Hindus. They are endogamous or, at best, hypergamous, and in many places Jain castes have the same sort of consciousness of themselves that we have postulated for Jains as a religious group. Conflict has occurred on the basis of caste within Jain local societies just as it has within Hindu society. Moreover, each Jain caste interacts with the Hindu castes around it, as part of a hierarchy of interaction and attribution.

On all these grounds it might therefore be argued that Jains are not a separate community, and that they can be adequately explained by ideas of Hinduism and caste already available to us. Just such a view is taken in India by Hindus and by some sociologists who are not Jains.

We feel, however, that to take such a view would be radically to miscomprehend Jains and Jainism. Thus, though Hindu terms, ideas, and practices have exerted a tremendous influence upon Jainism, Jains have usually interpreted and applied such offerings from Hinduism according to the peculiar genius of Jain culture. It is true, for example, that some Jains have adopted the sacred thread, but their use of it is quite contrary to its use among Hindus. Jains, like Hindus, take vows and fast, but their way of doing so is unmistakably Jain. The Jain religious calendar, though sharing many dates and festival periods with Hindus, has its own peculiar observances and logic.

Similarly, while it is true that much Jain literature, particularly in the early medieval and medieval periods, has taken over Hindu terms

1 The division of labour in the reproduction of Digambar Jainism in action at the consecration of a new image in the village temple at Halondi, near Kolhapur. A village priest (*upadhye*) in the foreground makes the requisite offerings while Laxmisen *bhaṭṭārak* (at 11 o'clock from the priest) presides with the ritual text. The *muni*s are present as charismatic observers – one of them recommended that the temple be expanded with the new image – but have no part in the ceremony.

and ideas, these are set in a doctrinal context which is peculiar to Jains. In fact it seems most appropriate to regard Jain literature as a quite distinct sphere of discourse in which Jains address other Jains, and argue against Hindu writers. And to do so they have developed their own original philosophical methods.

Moreover, Jain literature and its associated practices subsist upon a base of peculiarly Jain institutions. The order of Jain *muni*s, whether Digambar or Svetambar, observe rules which clearly distinguish them from Hindu ascetics. The organisation of Jain temples, even in the south where Hindu influence has arguably been greatest, is quite different from the organisation of Hindu temples. And even those most Hindu figures, the *bhaṭṭārak*s, 'caste gurus', participate in a distinctly Jain way in the life of the community. Indeed, if we take the

Jain laity into account, there are grounds for arguing that the Jains are not just distinct in their religious organisations, but are actually better at being a community, better at organising themselves and bringing different sections of the community together for common religious and cultural purposes.

Finally, the proposal that Jains are explicable solely with reference to caste is vulnerable to the objection that it does not explain all that needs to be explained. It is true that Jains are organised in local caste groups or in wider marriage circles, and that such groups are communities in the narrow sense, not used here, that they are groups of kin or caste mates known to each other in a village, neighbourhood, or marriage circle. But this is not an interesting use of the term 'community', nor does it exhaust the integrative resources of Jain society. Jain castes do interdine with each other. Jain temples, at least within the larger sect divisions, are commonly open to any Jain caste. Many castes, such as Aggarwals and Oswals, include both Jains and Hindus, and the Jain members of such castes clearly have an interest in a Jain community not shared by their Hindu caste mates. The traditional communal Jain ceremonies, as well as the modern Jain organisations, usually accept as wide a participation as possible from the Jain society of a particular sect or region. Indeed, the very existence of such communal institutions, ranging from the traditional *pañcakalyān* ceremony to the educational and religious trusts, certifies a larger sense of community than one limited to a village, neighbourhood, or even regional endogamous group.

There do appear to be natural limits, however, to the extent to which Jains can effectively form communities. In the first place, the division between Digambars and Svetambars, as well as between sects within those categories, means that an inevitable constraint is placed upon the participation in community practised by any populace of Jains. It is true that Jains have sometimes cooperated across these barriers, and it could even be argued that the very conflict that arises between them, as over pilgrimage sites, reveals a deeper shared culture. Nevertheless, effective communities, in the sense of organisations or informal groups which represent coherent aims to Jains or to the wider society, seem to be confined within particular sects and particular regions.

Moreover, communities which are effective in this sense are probably not to be thought of as being continually effective or active.

In northern Karnataka and southern Maharashtra, for example, the public expression of the effective community is vested to a large extent in the Dakṣin Bhārat Jain Sabhā, with its community newspaper and its educational institutions. Though the Sabhā has carried on its affairs in a well-organised manner since the turn of the century, there have been many periods in which it was hardly visible, and hardly important, to the vast majority of Digambar Jains in the area. Jains continued to marry endogamously and attend the local temple without its intervention. It has, however, evinced the potential to react, or to help organise a reaction, against perceived threats or to take advantage of perceived opportunities. Here we had best speak perhaps of potential communities which rise only occasionally to the surface of social life.

These potential communities are also imagined communities, to adapt the phrase which Benedict Anderson (1983) applied to nation states. That is, a sense of common culture and shared interests is created and kept alive, through the terms of public discourse and journalism, although the participants in that common sensibility may in daily intercourse, or in the extension of marriage circles, have nothing to do with each other. In this respect the creation of an effective and active community is continually desiderated by the elite of Jain society, as if the community always already existed but merely needed to be awakened to its nature.

But even if Jain communities are potential and imagined, they are by no means unreal. They are distinguishable social entities, effective in the social and political life of India. And in this sense Jains are a test case, close to, but not part of, the Hindu mainstream. On the one hand we have every reason to believe that groups as far or farther from the mainstream – Christians, Muslims, Sikhs – will evince the importance of community at least as much as Jains do. On the other hand, there are many movements and organisations, similar to the Jain ones, which are closer to or within the mainstream. Though scholars have been in the habit of referring to these as castes and their organisations as caste associations, in the present perspective it seems more useful to refer to them as communities – effective, potential, or imagined. Ideas and practices of caste may provide the foundation upon which a community's identity and separateness are erected, but do not in themselves create a community. In this respect, we argue, India is not just a society of castes or of classes, but also a society of communities.

6

Local Jain communities

Caroline Humphrey

All three of these chapters discuss relatively small local groups of Jains in Rajasthan, but they come to different conclusions as to whether these groups are 'communities' in terms of the criteria in the position paper (chapter 1). Howard Jones says that his circle of Jain businessmen does make a community, while Christine Cottam Ellis and N. K. Singhi, both discussing much larger groups, maintain that Jains in the final analysis have a dominant identity which derives from outside the purely Jain sphere.

The issue here is the differing contexts of these three studies. Although all are in rural Rajasthan, the three groups do seem to be rather different, even allowing for the individual emphases of our authors. It is not, perhaps, so important for us to state our opinion on the issue of whether these are, or are not, communities. Readers can make their own judgement. But what is interesting is to compare the materials we are given, look at the elements of cohesion and divisiveness among the three groups of Jains, and discuss whether these correlate with the local contexts.

To begin with, the papers deal with Jain groups of very different scale. Jones has a small group of 150 Jains, all of them engaged in business and finance, living in an isolated village with a total population of around 1,000. Cottam Ellis describes the 1,400 or so Jains of a small market town with a population of 11,000. Singhi deals with a yet larger group, the 5,000 Jains of a town which was earlier a mini-state, now with a population of nearly 24,000.

Both Jones and Cottam Ellis discuss long-established Jain groups which are essentially made up of businessmen, and the more profitable end of business at that. Chandrapur, Jones' village, is however in a region dominated by the tribal population of Bhils, and exists more or

less to provide goods and services to these rather poor farmers. In Jain credit transactions there is a distinction between goods sold on account and pawnbroking, which in practice disbars Bhils from acquiring the former and Jains from borrowing through the latter. The other business people of the village are much less prosperous, and are engaged either in services or in trades, such as selling vegetables, which the Jains will not do for religious reasons. Thus, both in terms of their overt occupation, shopkeeping, and their more covert moneylending activities, Jains are distinct. Mandi, Cottam Ellis's market town, on the other hand, is located near the city of Jaipur, is surrounded by a prosperous farming hinterland made up of people from a variety of different castes, and is currently embarked on an economic upswing involving small-scale industry. Other merchants, Hindus and Muslims, are involved in the same kind of businesses as the Jains. While Jains in Chandrapur village completely dominate the business economy, the Jains in Mandi town are only half of the merchant community. In Mandi the shared merchant (Mahajan) identity predominates over the purely Jain one.

The differences in identity among the Jains in the two cases thus perhaps should be seen as contingent rather than necessary. Where the Jains are more or less the only businessmen, surrounded by the radically different Bhils, they are readily identified by others and themselves as a community. Where they are part of a burgeoning economy in a complex social environment they identify with other merchants and do not separate themselves off. This would suggest that scale and economic context are what determine Jain identity *vis-à-vis* other groups.

Things are more complicated, however. Cottam Ellis makes the interesting point that Muslim merchants are not really considered to be Mahajans, and that the Hindus and Jain businessmen share a common life style in terms of language (Marwari), food restrictions, and clothing. Belonging in many cases to the same castes, Jains and Hindus sometimes intermarry. What Cottam Ellis's chapter shows splendidly, more so than any of the other chapters in this volume, is the extent to which Jains enter the wider Indian social world, the ascetic, exclusive, and yet philanthropic culture of middle-class Western India. This is a matter not just of economic factors, but of socially defined groups ('castes') and what we might call religious style, excluding Muslims and Saivite Hindus.

Cottam Ellis shows how Jains join in activities together with Vaishnavas (business associations, the cow-sanctuary, even picnic parties) and it appears from her account as though these have the same weight as purely Jain institutions. Carrithers, however, observed in Kolhapur (to some extent this can also be seen in Banks' material) that many older and less cosmopolitan Jains regard the Jains as a community apart. Moreover, many very well-educated people will throw themselves wholeheartedly into Jain, but not into other, voluntary associations. In very large populations of Jains, such as in the city of Jaipur, Humphrey noted that even all-Jain institutions, for example, those which organise all-Jain parades through the city, are less fervently supported than similar organisations based on particular Jain sects. In other words, we should not forget that religious activity itself, whether defined at the 'Jain' or the sect level, is a potent motivating force for many people.

This leads us to a discussion of the internal divisions of Jain society. Singhi makes the significant observation that the role of Jains in the premodern state may have some bearing on the matter (see also M. Carrithers' chapter). In his town of Sirohi some Jains were not businessmen but mainly officials in the service of the state government. This group coincided with the Bisa 'sub-caste' of the Oswals. Even now, he says, there are marked differences in life style between the two groups. The modernity, stress on education, and free-spending ostentation of the Bisa Oswals contrasts with the conservative and restrained habits of the actually rather richer merchants, the Porwals and Dasa Oswals. We are led to wonder, given that there are persistent differences in life styles between Jains of different occupations, how this correlates in general with distinctions of caste and sect?

This is no easy question to answer. It might appear, for example, that one could make the generalisation that the larger the Jain population the more likely it is to be divided by sect and sub-sect. However, the southern Jains, although farmers as well as businessmen, are virtually all Digambar. Differences of sect occur among the northern Jains of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat (Cottam Ellis notes that there are three sects and three castes among the merchant Jains of Mandi, but does not say how they interrelate). But even in Rajasthan, Singhi's chapter shows that a comparatively large community may lose its sectarian divisiveness. His Svetambar Murti Puja Jains were formerly divided into a number of sub-sects (*gacch*s)

and supported a large number of temples, but recently sectarian divisions have disappeared, the *Tapagacch* prevails, and people attend any temple near their home. One could speculate that this might have been due to lack of religious leadership in the other *gacch*s. Certainly, it was not caused by the rabid attacks on the Jains from Hindus, since Singhi records that although the Jains were forced to unite to defend themselves physically and legally, integration was only temporary and their social internal divisions into 'castes' remained intact.

Singhi describes carefully how the Jains of Sirohi nevertheless maintain an identity as Jains. For a start, Singhi states that Jain 'castes' (*nyat*) are not real castes. Rather they are non-hierarchical residential groups which maintain several reciprocal and equivalent symbolic exchanges with one another. They exist to specify social rules, for example on widow remarriage, which the Jain religion does not concern itself with. We should note that unlike the castes in Cottam Ellis's town, the Sirohi *nyat*s are made up only of Jains. *Nyat*s are endogamous groups. (Singhi does not discuss the relation between endogamy and hierarchy, but see the chapter by Sangave in this volume.) Whatever status differences might have existed between the *nyat*s in the earlier political economy have now been eradicated. It is the little gifts made to all three castes, when someone gets married, at a serious illness, and when the parents die, which indicate membership of the Jain community. These are ritualised. There is much criticism if they are not reciprocated. Most important of all, perhaps, is the fact that the size of these gifts is fixed. In other words, there is no competitive giving here, otherwise so prominent and divisive a feature of Jain donations, and this preserves a sense of equality. Equality between the castes is also maintained in the religious sphere by the insistence that all three groups should have equal representation on temple management committees (*pedhi*) despite their actual differences in size and wealth. Such obligations contribute to the reproduction of the community, since they are inherited at birth, are tied to kinship, and should not be disavowed even if a person moves away from the locality. They presume, in fact, that people will not move away.

Singhis's paper also gives us the most detailed picture in this book of the extraordinarily elaborate series of fasts, rituals, religious activities such as pilgrimages, and various associations which Jains go

in for. It may well be that a community of a certain scale is necessary before these are developed to full complexity, but note that Jones and Cottam Ellis have put their emphases elsewhere. As Singhi mentions and we should stress, larger Jain festivities, such as fairs, the inauguration of a statue, or the taking of orders by an ascetic, are widely publicised in the region and often draw tens of thousands of Jains from the neighbourhood. It is a duty and a pleasure to attend these, even if one has to travel into a different state to do so. Thus tiny groups of Jains are not in fact as isolated as they might seem.

One point made in both Jones' and Singhi's papers is the opposition which exists between Jains and neighbouring tribal peoples (see also C. Humphrey's chapter for a discussion of this). We seem to be dealing here not only with an economic relation which may have persisted for centuries (Jones), but also with a radical difference in life style and values, in which Jainism becomes the archetype of the merchant ethos (Cottam Ellis) in general.

Such distinctions rise above the purely local and make it impossible finally to conclude that Jain identity is entirely context-dependent. In fact, these three chapters, particularly those of Cottam Ellis and Singhi, raise a new criterion for the existence of a community: the intensity of interaction through various institutions and the consequent issue of a dominant identity in the range of possible identities. Only Jones describes the dominant identity as Jain. For Cottam Ellis it is the wider merchant (as opposed to purely Jain) identity, and for Singhi it seems to rest with the local 'caste' (*nyat*). It is clear from both of these chapters that the situation has not been historically constant. In particular we may speculate on the role of the premodern state in organising and dramatising local communities, which now have fallen back on other resources, or found new ones. What is apparent in rural India, however, is that the Jain identity has been continuously present as an option, and that the religious and cultural features which distinguish it have not changed all that much for a very long time (see Carrithers, chapter 17). In the cities, however, and in Jain groups outside India, as we shall see in Part 5, the presence of alternative 'models' of Jainism as a religion introduces a further set of issues.

13

Fairs and miracles: at the boundaries of the Jain community in Rajasthan

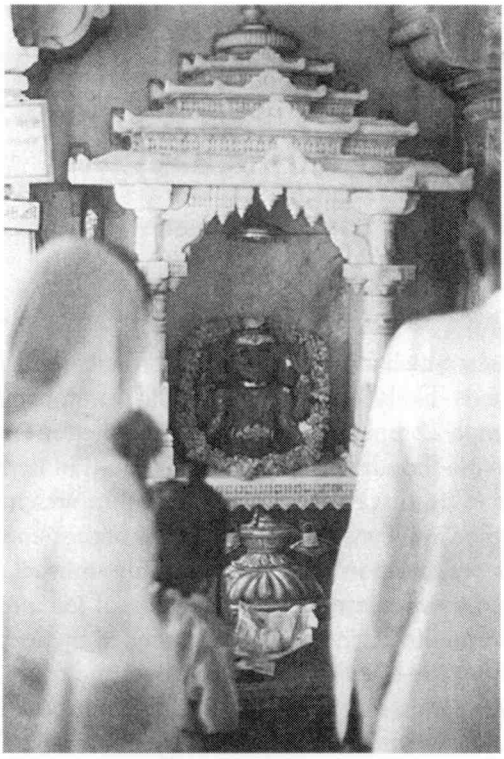
Caroline Humphrey

If you ask a Jain which are the main centres of active Jain worship in Rajasthan, he is likely to reply with the local names for three important 'temple complexes':[1] Kesaria-ji in Udaipur District, Mahāvīr-ji in Sawai Madhopur District, and Nākoḍā-ji in Barmer District. We could add to this list Padampura, near Jaipur, which is, as it were, a temple complex in the making. But in terms of the general pattern of Jain religious organisation these are all highly unusual places. They are not situated where there is a concentration of Jain population, but rather in the rural hinterland. They are attended by people of all Jain sects; indeed they are open to scheduled castes and tribes, people who normally never pass the austere portals of Jain temples. Each of them has as its focus a celebrated *mūrti*, the image of a Tīrthaṅkar, which is attributed with miraculous powers, foreign to the proper Jain understanding of the nature of the Tīrthaṅkar. All of these temples are strongly linked by virtually identical myths to particular territories. And at each of these sites we find that there is an annual fair (*mela*) of enormous popularity and regional economic importance.

Non-Jains are attracted to the *mela* for religious as well as economic reasons: the opportunity to take *darshan* of the miraculous image, to make requests for miraculous boons, and participate in its ritual procession (*jatra*) with which the fair culminates.

Religious fairs are a significant interface of Jain relations with other communities. The Jains define themselves by their adherence to a *separate* religion. But, as a predominantly trading group, they are concerned to establish a religious attraction and a legitimation for their economic position *vis-à-vis* other communities. However, the

[1] By 'temple complex' I mean a cluster of religious buildings and service facilities round one main temple.



8 Śvetāmbar Jain family worshipping Nākoḍā Bheru-ji at the pilgrimage centre of Nākoḍā, south Rajasthan. Photo: J. Laidlaw

problem is more complex than this. There is a contradiction between religious and economic motives. Essentially, Jainism as a religion is not exclusive: anyone more or less[2] can become a Jain by adopting Jain beliefs and life styles. Indeed, many Jain *munis* (ascetics) are of non-Jain origin by birth.[3] But in present-day rural Rajasthan the economic interests of the group which carries the religion are against expansion.

I shall argue that popular elements of Indian religion, the cult of *yakṣa*s, long since absorbed into popular Jainism, are used to attract non-Jains, and that, besides this, Jains allow an accretion of regionally current symbols and concepts of the supernatural to be 'mapped on' to

[2] Certain Jain sects are currently more inclined towards conversion than others (e.g. the Kanji Swami movement in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh), but even so converts are only really encouraged within castes where there are already Jains.

[3] Arvind Aggarwal, personal communication.

9 Ghantakaran, a protector deity in a Śvetāmbar Jain temple in Jaipur, 1983. Photo: C. Humphrey

the Jain *sacra*. But the Jain community manages nevertheless to hold itself aloof by not revealing 'Jainism' itself. Rather, they permit a multiplicity of meanings to ritual acts, 'Jain meanings' and those held by non-Jains. The fair is the occasion for this flowering of communal religious activity, in which, nevertheless, the various communities mark themselves off as different. This is the only occasion on which Jains interact on a *religious* level with other groups, and, perhaps for this reason, it is these huge fairs which 'draw out' the Jains as a community, despite their internal sectarian divisions. Paradoxically, it is perhaps the unfettered celebration on these occasions of popular cults, the possibility of miracles, which Jains as it were 'share' with other communites, which allows all Jain temple-going sects to claim a stake in these holy sites.

As traders and moneylenders in rural areas, Jains operate a series of tightly-knit family businesses which depend on a certain amount of mutual help, while being in competition with newer trading arrivals. The position of traders as middle-men between the towns and the rural hinterland is one which rests on difference, the division of labour between producers, and between producers and entrepreneurs. They convey manufactured goods from the world of the city and agricultural products from the populations of the countryside. The Jains as traders need to maintain supra-local and even supra-regional links in order to perform this middle-man role (Cottam 1980). But if the Jains were to attempt by religion either totally to exclude or totally to convert the rural peoples their structural position would be entirely changed.

For this reason I think we can see parallels to the story I am about to describe among other trading groups in rural western India. Muslim merchants of South Rajasthan and northern Madhya Pradesh also promote their own fairs (*melas*) in the annual cycle (Agrawal 1980). In the Hindu Pushtimarg faith, centred on the temple complex at Nathdwara, we can see an even closer parallel. Patronised largely by Oswal trading people from Gujarat and southern Rajasthan, Nathdwara again brings together the miraculous statue,[4] the supernatural link with a specific territory, and the popular annual fair (Jindel 1976).

[4] The Pushtimarg followers of Vallabhacharya do not in fact allow the sacred image to be called '*mūrti*', as this term implies a separation of the divinity from the physical representation. The concept of '*swarup*' unites the divine with the image, which *is* the deity.

Although the patterns of inclusion and exclusion in these two examples are in detail different from the Jain case, they can be seen as variations in the management of a similar structural situation.

Let us look more closely at our four Jain temples with their fairs. Normally, Jain temples are situated in centres of Jain population, usually cities or towns, and temples are attended regularly by Jains living near by. They are owned or managed by distinct Jain sects or by sections of castes subsumed within sects (Banks 1985). Non-Jains very rarely visit these temples. But all of the four '*mela*-temples' are located in country districts where there are unusually high proportions of scheduled castes and tribes but very few Jains (Mathur 1976). The cult has created, alongside the main temple, other subsidiary temples, *dharmśālā*s where visitors can stay, sometimes a medical centre, a small bazaar, and a settlement of artisans, servants and others connected with service at the temple. Special transport and other facilities are laid on at the time of the fair only.

To take Kesaria-ji as an example, we find that the surrounding district is populated by 90 per cent Bhil tribals with around 10 per cent of Hindus/Jains.[5] The small temple town of Rishabhdeo, named after the first Tīrthaṇkar Ṛṣabha (or Ādināth after his enlightenment), locally called Kesaria-ji, has a population of about 5,000, of which 50 per cent are Jains, the rest being Hindus (mostly Brahmins) and a very few Bhils. Of the Rishabhdeo Jains, 95 per cent belong to the Digambar Bispanthi sect and the Nārsinghpura and Dasa Humada sub-castes (S. L. Doshi 1978). A small group of Śvetāmbar Jains arrived in the town about 100 years ago and has been in more or less continuous competition with the Digambars for control of the temple. At present the main temple, though apparently owned by the Digambars, is open for worship by both sects, Digambars in the morning and Śwetāmbars in the afternoon. The temple contains Hindu and Bhil deities[6] as well as the central Jain image, and people

[5] I am indebted to Matthew Jones for this information about Rishabhdeo. The figures given are those locally supposed to be the case and perhaps exaggerate the proportions of Bhils in this area. Mathur (1976) gives scheduled tribes as 33.66% of the population of Udaipur District as a whole, 63.64% in Dungarpur, and 72.93% in Banswara, while the average in Rajasthan is 12.13%.

[6] There is a pair of silver-clad deities in the temple which apparently depict Bhil gods (these may be *bhomia*s). When in the temple, the Bhils ignore all Jain *mūrti*s except for the one found in the ground. Sometimes, on the way out, they pay respects to the large stone elephants on either side of the main doorway. Matthew Jones, personal communication.

from these communities regularly worship there. On the occasion of the annual fair tens of thousands of people of all groups worship at the temple. In contrast to the normal Jain pattern, we see here (a) the temple-complex as an outpost among aliens, and (b) a mixed caste and sectarian pattern of management among the Jains, together with a supra-community pattern of worship.

Mahāvīr-ji, to take another example, has historically been the seat of a Bhaṭṭārak, a Jain semi-religious semi-secular official whose kingly demeanour, settled residence (*maṭh*), and rule over landed property (*adhikā kṣetra*) is in sharp distinction with the detachment from property and wandering existence of the Jain ascetic. At Mahāvīr-ji several prominent trading familes from different castes and sects have competed to construct and restore the temples and images. The lists of lesser donors, whose names are inscribed on the temple walls, include a wide range of Jain and non-Jain surnames: Aggarwal, Saraf, Bakhliwal, Saraogi, Sogani, Jaswal, Chabra, Gujar, Singhi, Kasliwal, Porwal, and Gupta. Here we see the institutionalisation of attachment to territory, together with supra-*jāti* patronage of the temple.

Although our 'fair temple-complexes' are the foci for pilgrimages, they cannot be identified simply as Jain *tīrth*s (sacred pilgrimage sites). Sangave notes that Jains divide their *tīrth*s into two categories, *siddhakṣetra*s from where the ascetics realised their liberation, and *atiśayakṣetra*s which are sacred for other reasons, including the presence of *mūrti*s which bestow favours on their devotees (1980: 254). Our temples fall into the latter category. But economically important fairs do not exist at all *tīrth*s. Visitors at most Jain *tīrth*s are either Jain pilgrims or tourists interested in the architecture, but they do not on any large scale include devotees from other non-Jain communities. Hence, though the 'fair temples' have much in common with *tīrth*s, and Nākoḍā-ji is sometimes called a *tīrth*, I would separate them out as having distinct characteristics in the socio-economic structure.

Fairs in western India are based on *jatra*s (religious processions), *ur*s (Muslim festivals), *pradakṣina* (circumambulations of holy sites) and other religious occasions. They vary in size from small ones which attract only the people of a given locality to larger ones of zonal and ultimately regional significance.

We can suggest a parallel between, on the one hand, Agrawal's

local, zonal and regional fairs and on the other the 'levels', in Eschmann's typology, of temple influence: local or tribal, subregional, regional, and all-India levels (Eschmann 1978: 84). Our three main 'fair temple complexes' would appear to have regional status. Jains travel to Mahāvīr-ji, for example, for religious purposes throughout the year from all over Rajasthan and from neighbouring parts of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Some people even come from Assam and Bihar. At the fair itself virtually the entire population of the village hinterland turns up. Traders of regional status (Agrawal 1980: 136–40), conveying goods from cities as far away as Bharatpur, Mathura, Agra and Delhi appear at the Mahāvīr-ji *mela*.

The religious significance of the Jain fair

The annual fair at the temple complex is the occasion for the procession (*jatra*) of the *mūrti* (image of the deity) and its most intensive worship. In order to understand the religious attraction of this event for non-Jains we must look at the mythical history of the cult of these images. I shall describe the example of Mahāvīr-ji. The other temple complexes have very similar myths.[7]

Local informants told me the following story. In a village called Chandangaon, inhabited entirely by non-Jains, a dairy farmer called Krapa Ram of the Jat caste[8] found that one of his cows was coming back every evening dry of milk. He decided to follow it to see what was happening. To his astonishment he saw the cow go to a spot in the fields and voluntarily give forth its milk to the ground. In curiosity he

[7] (a) The *mūrti* of Pārśvanāth was discovered underground at Nākoḍā village when a Jain layman had a dream. Everyone went to the indicated place, but dig as they might they could not discover the statue. Then in another dream, the Bheru-ji pointed out the spot. The idol was found, but it could not be raised from the ground. Only after the Nokar Mantra was said would it be moved. Two villages disputed over which should have it. They then put the *mūrti* on a cart, but without an ox to pull it. When the cart was pulled towards Nākoḍā village it would not move, but when it was drawn towards Virampur, it moved easily. Although the temple is now at Virampur, the image is known as Śri Nākoḍā Pārśvanāth.

(b) At Kesaria-ji, a long time ago, a Bhil farmer had a cow which did not give milk in the evenings. He followed it to see who was stealing his milk. He found that the cow was standing under a tree and giving its milk of its own accord. The Bhil dug there and found a black statue of Pārśvanāth in the ground. The spot where the statue was found is called Paglia-ji, and is located just outside the present temple complex. It is at Paglia-ji that the annual *mela* is held.

[8] In C. S. Gupta (1966: 69) this is given as Kripa Das of the Chamar caste.

dug at the place and discovered a buried statue. The villagers decided to build a small hut over the *mūrti* where it was found. This place is now called '*devaṭa-ka Tila*'. The deity miraculously fulfilled their desires and soon became very popular and a focus for intense worship.

After a while a rich Jain *seth* (merchant), Amar Chand Bilala, got to hear about the god, and when he went there he realised that it was a Jain deity. It was a Digambar Jain idol and he had to have it. The god miraculously saved a Jain *diwan* from an execution which the Maharaja tried to carry out. The merchant built a huge temple for it at his village, called Baswa. The *mūrti* was bathed with milk and holy water and a chariot prepared for its journey.

Krapa Ram felt very sad that it was to go. 'Are you going to desert the poor people for the rich people? Do you prefer almonds and rich dried fruits to our humble drop of milk?' he asked. His wife told Krapa Ram that it served him right for neglecting family life for the god. The *mūrti* was placed on the chariot, with the *seth* in the driving seat, but try as he might the cart would not move. The *seth* prayed to the god and asked, 'Why does the chariot not move?' The deity replied, 'Until Krapa Ram pushes the wheel and sees me off without complaint, I will not budge.' Then Krapa Ram touched the wheel, and the chariot moved.

In this story we see several key features of the 'fair temple complex'. The idea of the deity is identified with a specific *mūrti* of a Jain Tīrthaṇkar which has miraculous powers. The image is located territorially by the site of its finding in the earth, and subsequently, even though rich temples may be built for it, this original spot remains sacred. The non-Jain finder of the *mūrti* always retains some rights over it. At the Mahāvīr-ji *mela* the parading of the image re-enacts the myth: starting in its chariot at the site of finding, a descendant of Krapa Ram must touch the chariot before it goes on its ritual journey to the main temple. Although the story suggests that two different villages were involved, in fact the site of finding is today located in the temple complex, a few hundred yards from the main temple. A small shrine (*charan chhatri*) with a representation of the footprints of the deity is erected there. People of the Jat caste control this site and make a small charge for people to worship there (something which is resented by the Jains, who sometimes try to refuse to pay).

At Padampura near Jaipur, the 'fair temple complex' in the making,

we find a similar sacred geography. In the centre of a humble village is the shrine with footprints, where the cow gave her milk and the image was discovered. Near to it is the wooden shed-like 'temple' constructed by the villagers for its worship. Some quarter of a mile away there looms the immense marble temple, still unfinished, in which the miraculous Jain *mūrti* is now housed. Every year at the *mela* the image is taken out by chariot, going round the boundaries of the village, into the shrine, and then back to the main temple.

At the Padampura fair, which lasts for several days, the streets of the village are filled with shops and booths. Thousands of devotees and fairgoers throng the village, cramming the huge *dharmśālā*s, and spilling over into tented encampments. Before the main day of the fair there is a great auction for the right to bathe the idol, to place garlands round its neck and silver canopies over its head, the rights to leading places in the procession, or to make offerings at the *pūjā*. It is Jains who take part in the bidding and win these prestigious roles. People from many other communities surge into the temple to worship the god. However, they are only allowed to take *darshan* (holy sight of and from the deity), not to perform *pūjā*, which is reserved for Jains alone. At Mahāvīr-ji, people of the Mina and Gujar tribes come in great numbers. However, because of a fight which took place between them some years ago, they are allotted different days for ritual participation. The Minas accompany the chariot with the *mūrti* to the river, where it is given a ritual bath. They then disperse. On the following day, the procession returns to the temple, now accompanied by the Gujars. At this temple also, *pūjā* is reserved for Jains alone.

But the tribal people believe in the efficacy of the *darshan* of the miraculous Tīrthaṅkar image. Orthodox Jains would say that the sacred gaze brings spiritual calm. They might even agree with the notion that the beauty (*abha*) of the image varies with the time of day, in the morning, during the day, and after sunset. But, on the whole, Jains do not agree that the Tīrthaṅkar image can itself grant this-wordly boons to the faithful. This function they would reserve, if they agree with it at all, for the protector deities of the Tīrthaṅkara. But non-Jains are oblivious to this distinction. Once in the temple (for further discussion, see p. 219), they make requests for safe birth of children, for luck in business, for relief from illness, for success in examinations or new jobs. Often people make vows: if the god will

grant them what they wish, they will make a gift to the temple. At Mahāvīr-ji women wishing for children make swastika signs in red paint all round the white outside wall of the temple. At Rishabhdeo there is a story that a wealthy man with no heir went to the statue and promised to give a baby's weight in saffron (*kesar*) if a son were to be granted to him.

His wishes came true and he was as good as his word. This is the origin of the name Kesaria-ji for this *mūrti* of the Tīrthaṅkar Adinath, for whom an offering of saffron is thought still to be particularly appropriate. On another occasion, when a Brahmin impudently threw a 1 rupee coin at the image, saying 'If you have any strength you will show it to me', the coin immediately flew back and hit the Brahmin on the head. At Padampura, all castes go to the temple for relief from spirit-possession. This takes place at the evening *ārtī*, not the morning *pūjā* (which only Jains in a state of ritual purity are allowed to perform). People possessed by spirits because of some sin they have committed go night after night to the temple. The process of finding out which spirits are present and what they want in order to be appeased and go away is called 'the god's court' (*bhagwan-ka darbar*, the term *bhagwan* being reserved normally for the Tīrthaṇkar). The exorcism of spirits seems to be shared by the Tīrthaṇkar image and the protector deity (see also p. 222). None of these activities are specific to the Jain religion, and indeed they are considered by some devout Jains as inferior, non-religious, or even inimical, concerns.

We see that at the fair, and in a less intense fashion throughout the year, the Jains, albeit with restrictions, open these temples and lend their 'gods', for the benefit of other communities. In order to see why this happens we must look more closely at the position of Jain fairs in the rural economy.

Fairs in the regional economy

We turn now to the status of these large temple-based *mela*s in relation to other fairs. Agrawal's study of fairs in northern Madhya Pradesh (Agrawal 1980) shows clearly that religious fairs (*mela*) must be distinguished from periodic markets (*hat*) which have no religious significance. Religious fairs are held on auspicious days (*tithi*) in a series of luni-solar calendars which are used for religious purposes but

also by traders and others in daily life. *Mela*s occur in traders' cycles, commonly a winter cycle and a summer cycle, in districts defined by administrative and geographical boundaries. It so happens that the three religiously inauspicious months (roughly May–August) coincide with the three months of heat, when farmers are busy. Because they use a different calendar, Muslim fairs sometimes come into conflict with the Hindu ones, that is, they sometimes occur on the same dates in the same district, but the Jains adjust to the Hindu cycles and fit their fairs to take spaces, both geographical and in time, in the regional series.

The 'fair temples' are located in rural districts, surrounded by populations of isolated villages or scattered settlements. Permanent bazaars are a long way away. Many villages do not have made-up roads or regular transport to towns. Seasonal fairs are the main economic outlet, and it is for this reason that their location and timing is so closely tied to the agricultural cycle. As T. B. Naik wrote about the Bhils, 'These fairs are, as it were, instantaneous cities, where the Bhils can buy all their needs. The towns are difficult to get to. But the fairs are held quite frequently, almost every month in their very midst. It is easy for them to purchase what they want, and they can also sell goods, grains, a horse or cow that is in excess in the family' (Naik 1956: 200). We can indeed see that the agricultural economy is one reason for having fairs at all. To maintain a permanent bazaar it is necessary to have constant flows of products for sale, and a population with money to buy at all times. But farmers have products to sell primarily at harvest times, and these of course are also the times when they have money to buy. Thus Agrawal found that the upland Malwa plateau, which has double-cropping, has two series of short fairs in spring and autumn, while the lowland Nimar district, with its single crop, has fewer and longer fairs during the winter alone (1980: 64, 127). From the fair cycles he cites, we can see that simultaneous fairs occur when there are many crops, which are difficult to transport, to be bought up all over a district. Traders go to any fairs in their cycle, but they give preference to those of their own religion. Attendance at fairs is high, from both traders and the public, when the flow of economic goods coincides with the religious importance of a locale.

But, as Braudel has pointed out, the fair is more than an instance in the usual trade cycle (1979:82). We can gain some insights from his

magisterial survey of commerce in Europe in the early modern period. The tight circle of exchanges between the countryside and the local town is represented by the regular market. The function of the fair is to interrupt and expand these links. Big fairs can mobilise the economy of an entire region. Braudel continues, 'The fair is envisaged as a pyramid. The base consists of many minor transactions in local goods, usually perishable and cheap, and then one moves up towards the luxury goods, expensive and transported from far away. At the very top of the pyramid came the active money market, without which business could not be done at all – or at any rate not at the same pace. . . . It does seem that the fairs were developing in such a way as, on the whole, to concentrate on credit rather than commodities, on the tip of the pyramid rather than the base' (1979: 91). In Europe, 'fairs were not so much "natural markets" arising from the presence of commodities and buyers and sellers seeking one another out, but rather artificial constructs of patrons, the result of privileges and franchises granted to trade at certain places and times, whereas it is laden down elsewhere by dues and taxes' (1979: 93). Fairs thus began to decline with the rise of capitalism and free trade.

It is not clear to what extent we can extend this analysis to contemporary rural India. Such is their religious importance that the authors of the *Census of India 1961* reports on Fairs and Festivals disagreed even on their economic significance, some seeing them as basically religious occasions (Trivedi 1965) and others as economic events held only 'in the name of religion' (ibid). However, the contrast between the fair and the regular market or bazaar does seem to hold: the one flourishes in the absence of the other. Fairs occur where regular, efficient markets are not present.[9] In the eighteenth century, fairs used to spring up outside cities, to avoid the *octroi* and other taxes, the 'dispersed market', as Bayly terms it (Bayly 1980). In the British period, when taxes were charged on trade across administrative boundaries, fairs appeared on the frontiers. Agrawal notes the gradual decline of one such fair, at Multan on the boundaries of Ratlam, Dhar and Gwalior States, after Independance, when such frontier taxes were abolished. Earlier, Multan had been given special facilities to promote trade by the rulers (Agrawal 1980: 47, 120–1).

[9] Jains are 1.8% of the population, but hold 10% of the fairs in Dhar District (Agrawal 1980: 111).

Another type of fair in India grew up in response to through trade, as opposed to local trade (Bayly's 'entrepôt markets' 1980: 21). Rapid growth was determined by administrative boundaries, or by particular trades, for example, at points suitable for cotton bulking, rather than by local demand. A further type was the 'regional entrepôt' which emerged at geographical borders. Here, characteristic products of one region were exchanged for those of another (*ibid.*).

Amongst the various Jain temple fairs we can probably find all of these economic types. Certainly, Nākoḍā-ji and Kesaria-ji were sited on important and ancient through-trade routes, and the latter also seems to have a 'regional entrepôt' function in trade between forest and agricultural regions.

Jains in the structure of economic and political relations

S. L. Doshi's study of the Bhil tribals of south Rajasthan in the region of the Kesaria-ji temple complex (1978), and Agrawal's work on the adjacent parts of Madhya Pradesh (1980) both make clear that Jains have a large share in rural trade[10] and that much of this is conducted at fairs. Secondary trading groups in the region are Shia Muslims (Bohras) and Kalaks (distillers). The Jaina are also the main moneylenders (*sankar* or *sahukar*), now being superseded in some places by cooperatives and banks. People of all communities take loans, but the borrowers *par excellence* are the tribals. Bonded labourers (*sagari*) would often work for the *sahukar*s in lieu of payment (S. L. Doshi 1978: 35). The ties between the moneylender and his borrowers (*asami*) were often set up at fairs. The district being divided up into the various *sahukar*s' territories, moneylenders did not compete with one another. Despite laws against moneylending and debt-bondage, and the expansion of Jains into the grain trade, selling of merchandise, medicines and management of cotton factories, moneylending still remains the traditional Jain occupation in these districts (Agrawal 1980: 100–50). Muslims do not engage in moneylending, perhaps because of prohibitions against taking interest. Now, whether the

[10] Braudel points out that a hierarchy of markets worked well in China when there was a stable government, but when wars arose between dynasties, fairs sprung up for trade between the people of the different states. When things became peaceful again, fairs disappeared from the interior, and remained only at the external frontiers for trade with non-Chinese populations (1979: 131).

Jains are involved primarily in trade or in moneylending, the economic relations are 'vertical', cross-caste and cross-community.

But it is not only, or even primarily, traders, merchants and moneylenders who benefit economically from fairs. The income from the fair itself, taken from traders' rents for stalls, taxes on bullock carts, and other charges, goes to the organisers. The expenditure, on allowances for officials, and provision of water, light and sanitation, is invariably less than the income, according to Agrawal (1980: 173). In the case of Jain fairs the profits today go to fair management trusts usually associated with the temple. At Mahāvīr-ji, for example, the Bhaṭṭārak used to manage both the temple and the fair until he was accused of corruption in 1923, when the fair was handed over by the Digambar Jain Panchayat of Jaipur to the Court of Wards. In 1930, the Panchayat took over from the court and has kept control ever since. The Digambar Jain Panachayat also now manages the temple. Fairs, of course, produce thousands of donations from the public to the temple (for a detailed study see Agrawal 1980: 167–81). Temple income from all sources (from the land, from donations by individuals, from government grants, and from charities) goes not only on the daily services, but also to create the splendour of buildings and public ritual which demonstrate Jain status *vis-à-vis* other communities. One of the most visible of these shows is the *rathayātra* at the fair itself. This is a 'ritual space' in which a hierarchy becomes manifest (by means of the auctions among Jains and by the customary restrictions observed by other communities mentioned above).

'Vertical' relations are the basis also for Jain political support. Jains are spread throughout western India in small numbers (an average of 1.9 per cent of the population in the districts of Rajasthan: Mathur 1976). K. A. Gupta's study of politics in a small town in agricultural north-west India shows a faction led by Rajasthani Jains opposed to one led by Hindus (1976). The issue was control of the town council, which could exert considerable influence on local trade and business. Over time, allegiance to either of these factions was highly variable, but the author makes the interesting observation that the Jain faction recruited its support among other communities exclusively by economic ties (i.e. with groups either trading with or working for the Jains), while the Hindu faction gained support from a range of ties including kinship, caste, and political patronage as well as economic links.

These studies do not describe our 'fair temple complexes' themselves, but the available ethnography seems to present a sufficiently consistent picture. Jains in the rural districts, at the frontiers of their operations, have a need to establish and maintain 'vertical' ties. This does not just apply to groups 'below' them in the hierarchy of esteem. If we look at the history of the Rishabhdeo temple, we see that links with Hindu state power are also important. The temple seems to have been founded in the eighth century by Digambar Jains. On an important trade route from the coast to the state of Mewar, the temple attracted rich donations from travelling merchants. From the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries it was the subject of disputed ownership between Digambar Jains, Hindus, and latterly Śvetāmbar Jains, the outcome depending on each group's relationship with the Rajput rulers of Mewar.[11] As in other parts of India, patronage of outlying temples and *tīrth*s, especially where a kingdom was dependent on the loyalty of tribes, was an essential presupposition for consolidation of royal power (Kulke 1978: 129).

Jains were, however, careful to keep a certain autonomy in relation to such political patronage. A tax-free land grant of the village of Jaisinghpura from the Maharaja of Jaipur was accepted for the upkeep of Mahāvīr-ji in 1782, a time when a Jain held the office of Diwan in the State (C. S. Gupta 1966: 69). But when the Jaipur Maharaja proposed rebuilding the temple the Bhaṭṭārak objected, saying that the original Jain family of *seth* Amarchand Bilala should keep the right to reconstruction. Only when the king replied that he wanted to build a temple from religious feeling, and not in order to claim rights over it, did the Bhaṭṭārak agree that the Maharaja and others should be allowed to contribute.

Besides these 'vertical' links, we can discern also 'horizontal' relations of competition between various Jain groups for control over these extremely lucrative and prestigious temples. The case of Kesaria-ji has already been mentioned. In Jaipur, Śvetāmbar Jains claim that Mahāvīr-ji was first controlled by Jodh Raj Paliwal, a Diwan at court, and a Śvetāmbar Jain from the small and comparatively poor Paliwal caste. Subsequently, the Digambars, wishing to establish a pilgrimage site of their own in the north when they gained power at the Jaipur court, first managed to convert most of the

[11] The period of Śvetāmbar ascendancy at this temple is attributed to their power for a time at the court of Mewar.

Paliwals and then took control of the temple. The remaining Paliwals then appealed to their co-sectarians, the rich Oswal Śvetāmbars, for help. But the Oswals, not wishing to offend the powerful Digambars, remained inactive. To this day the temple remains in Digambar hands, although a court case brought by the Paliwals is still enmeshed in an endless legal process. From this we see that, despite deep sectarian divisions, sacred sites are able to evoke aspirations for control across the spectrum of temple-going Jain groups.

At these temple complexes, income is also spent on a network of religious and charitable institutions for the benefit of all. Of course, some institutions exist primarily for Jains (teaching halls, places for the preparation of special Jain foods, *dharmśālā*s where only a Jain way of life is acceptable, etc.). But the hospitals, orphanages, dispensaries and schools, which operate under the title 'Jain', are commonly open to all, and therefore not sectarian. These institutions present a locus of 'horizontal' Jain integration. We may cite the several large public *dharmśālā*s, hospital, library, higher secondary school, girls' school, roads, water-works, and the electric power station constructed at Mahāvīr-ji as an example (C. S. Gupta 1966: 71).

Popular beliefs and religious misunderstanding

How is religious legitimation given to an institution, such as the temple fair, which is by definition cross-caste, cross-religion, and even cross-sect?

In Rajasthan, there is no love lost between social groups which mark themselves out by occupation, life style, and religious practices as different from one another. S. L. Doshi remarks on the hostility which exists between the Bhils and the Sunni Muslims (who run the police), and between the Bhils and the trading groups (Banias) who are mostly Jain (1978: 145). In Rishabhdeo town, Jains are quick to point out that Bhils are untrustworthy rogues, prone to stealing, even killing, consumers of alcohol and meat, with no respect for the sanctity of marriage. Bhils are despised for their spendthrift attitude to money. Bhils, on the other hand, tend to see Jains as miserly and likely to cheat them over loans and trade. Although worship of the Jain Tīrthankar at Kesaria-ji Temple represents some acknowledgement of

Jain spiritual power, Bhils take a pride in visiting the temple without the humble demeanour of caste Hindus. In the *rathayātra* at the fair they dance wildly in front of the procession, as it were defying it to move forward.[12] We see these attitudes duplicated at Mahāvīr-ji where it is Gujar and Mina tribals who go to the Jain fair. I have heard city Jains from Jaipur complain that Gujars are so wild that they would fight Minas for access to the deity, and that they storm into the temple without removing their shoes. There is no foundation at least for the latter rumour, but its existence demonstrates the latent hostility between social groups.

This chapter is not the place to explore the various markers by which different social groups distinguish themselves in Rajasthan. We could note only the major divisions, between the so-called tribal peoples 'who are content to be called "the sons of the earth" (*Bhomaputra*) or "the sons of the forest" (*Venaputra*), while Rajputs attribute celestial descent to themselves' (Tod 1829: 445), between vegetarian groups, such as the trading castes, and meat-eating groups, such as the Rajputs, or between those who wear the sacred thread and those who do not. A vast number of sometimes cross-cutting, but above all public, markers set groups apart.

But there exists nevertheless a common pool of ideas at the sub-religious level of 'popular belief'. Some of these concepts and attitudes are extremely widespread. We find, for example, the myth of the cow which offers its milk to the buried deity in many Hindu cults, some as far away as Nepal (Miller 1979: 106). The theme of the interred statue is probably linked in Rajasthan to the magical powers attributed to wandering holy men who, among both Hindus and Muslims, are believed to 'take *samadhi*', concentrating all spiritual power in the head, where it attains a last moment of self-surrender which will join it with the universal spirit. At this moment of death the disciples lower the holy man, seated in the lotus position, into a pit and bury him with earth. They then build a *chaitri* to mark the spot (Carstairs 1957: 101), a shrine which has the same form as the *charan chhatra* erected over the spot of our buried Jain statues, or erect a *samadhi* shrine in the Muslim idiom. Famous *samadhi* shrines are the sites of Hindu and Muslim fairs (e.g. the Jambheswar Fair in Bikaner District organised by the Bishnoi sect: C. S. Gupta 1966: 49–54).

[12] Matthew Jones, personal communication; Howard Jones, personal communication.

We could perhaps link this theme also, at the psychological level, with the phantasy of suddenly acquiring wealth. Carstairs noted as a widespread phenomenon the daydream or actual dream of the god-like stranger who gives instructions to go to some spot, dig there, and treasure would be found. Rumours were rife that this had actually happened. Carstairs found all his village informants to believe that this might happen to them, any day (Carstairs 1957: 90).

Another motif, which it is not possible to investigate here in detail, is the relation between milk and the snake which lives underground. At the Teja-ji *mela* near Kishangarh, the foundation myth cites the cow which offers her milk to a spot in the ground, here a hole inhabited by a snake. Teja-ji is the most popular deity of the Jats in Rajasthan, and supposed to offer cures for snake-bites (Prabhakar 1972: 49). At the Baneshwar Fair the myth gives the cow offering her milk to a Śiva lingam found in the ground. The cow struck the lingam with her hoof, causing the top of it to break into five parts. This lingam is called Swayambhū Lingam, that is, self-born (Prabhakar 1972: 57). That similar ideas penetrate into Jain popular practices is seen from the Jain shrine outside Jaisalmer, where devotees offer milk to a cobra living in a hole in the ground. If the cobra accepts the offering this brings the devotee great good luck.[13] The popularity of the cobra-hooded Pārśvanāth, the only Tīrthaṅkar to be widely recognised by non-Jains outside the fair context, can also be related to the snake theme (see Jaini this volume). The association in their different ways of the cow and the lingam/snake with metaphors of fertility is surely not irrelevant to the preoccupation with bearing children which is found among the devotees at the temple-complexes.

Indeed it seems clear, as already mentioned, that the image of the Jain Tīrthaṅkar is attributed, by its non-Jain worshippers, with popular symbolic values which have nothing to do with Jainism. The statue of Tīrthaṅkar Ādināth, at the Ṛṣabhdeo temple complex near Udaipur, is, as we have seen, popularly known as Kesaria-ji. There may be an association of ideas with Kesaria Kanwar, a name for Gogadev, worshipped near Udaipur as a snake-god. In this case, saffron was again brought as an offering to the deity by a merchant wishing for an heir (Kothari 1982: 18). It is noteworthy that Gogadev

[13] Josephine Reynell, personal communication.

is both the subject of a *bhakti* cult among pastoral tribes for his rescuing of cows from Muslims, and worshipped by Muslims as Goga Pir on the grounds that he converted to Islam (Sharma 1968: 226; C. S. Gupta 1966: 45). The Rishabhdeo statue mentioned above is also known by Bhils as Kala-ji or Karia-baba, and it seems probable that they have their own mythology associated with the deity in this form.[14] At both Kesaria-ji and Mahāvīr-ji the tribal peoples sing devotional songs which have nothing at all to do with Tīrthaṅkars or with any aspect of Jainism. At any rate, Jains in Jaipur suggested to me that popular worship at the temple-complexes of Mahāvīr-ji and Padampura has its own rationale, though they were vague and possibly incorrect as to what it consists of. They associated it with the idea of the earth-deity, Bhomia. Bhomia is a generic name for minor territorial deities, widely worshipped in the form of stones. 'The Jats who come to our Jain festival,' said my Jain friends, 'must think of our Mahāvīr statue as a *bhomia* of their people, because the statue was taken out of the ground.'

Here it must be made clear that what is being suggested is that it is the statue of the Tīrthaṅkar which is perhaps regarded as a *bhomia* by non-Jains. This, if it is true, represents a denial by the tribal people of distinctions rigorously upheld by the Jains in most religious contexts. In religious discussion Jains hold the Tīrthaṅkar to be simply a prophet in a non-theistic religion. Popular beliefs intrude into the carefully maintained categories of a major religion. It is this which is allowed at the temple fairs, whereas it would be inadmissible at a normal Jain temple. Tribal people, it is acknowledged, can believe what they like. Not only is this not resented by Jains, but the ritual acknowledges, as we have seen, the necessary role of the non-Jain finders of the *mūrti*.

Whatever may happen at *jatra*s when the ordinary people briefly assert their mastery and defiance in the Jain world, the distinctions between ritual categories which allow such mastery to be represented continue to be upheld. They are not absolute, however, but seem to exist in overlapping agglomerations of ideas. Thus, what must be experientially separate because it is material, for example, the structured space of the temple or the different iconographic forms of the

[14] N. K. Singhi, personal communication.

deities, is often conceptually ambiguous. This means that possibilities exist for Jains to see as exclusive ('not theirs') what another group may regard as inclusive ('ours').

Virtually all Jain temples have *bhomia* images, formless stone-shaped heads, which are regarded by Jains as the local protectors of the temple. Such *bhomia*s are found at the shrines of all deities in Rajasthan, such as those to Mata-ji, Dev Narayan, Teja-ji and Goga-ji. An unclear similarity exists between *bhomia*s and other protector spirits called Bhairon, Bhairav, Bheron, and Bheru-ji, these being minor incarnations of Shiva. Although the Bhairon is iconographically distinct from the formless *bhomia*, being in the shape of a martial bust with weapons and moustaches, the functions of the two are not distinguished, and many people in my experience use the terms interchangeably. What is significant for us is that these essentially earthly territorial protectors are attributed with similar functions to yet other protector deities, the Jain *śāsan-devtā*s (themselves identifiable with the ancient Indian *yakṣa*s) which guard the Tīrthaṅkars. From at least the eighth century AD, according to iconographic materials, each Tīrthaṅkar has been associated with a male and a female *yakṣa*/*śāsan-devtā*. The names of these deities differ from region to region, and they are commonly thought to be a Jain concession to Hindu popular cults of place (Misra 1981). If we look in detail at the pattern of worship at our 'fair temple complexes', we find that protective gods of one kind or another are given unusual prominence.

Usually at a Jain *pūjā* in a town temple, the protector deities (*śāsan-devtā*s, *bheru*s and *bhomia*s) will be given only a rather perfunctory offering after the main worship of the Tīrthaṅkars and their disciples is completed. But at temple complexes such as the Nākoḍā Pārśvanāth or Padampura, the seekers after boons will usually only take *darshan* at the main shrine and then proceed to lengthy prayers and *āratī* in front of the protectors. At Nākoḍā village it is clearly the protector, known as Nākoḍā Bheron Dev, who has the most popular appeal. Located on an ancient long-distance caravan route, Jain activity was known at this place, under different names, from the third century AD onwards. The present main temple at the complex was initially dedicated to the Tīrthaṅkar Mahāvīr, and then subsequently to Pārśvanāth when this idol was found underground. But what endured through all changes

was (a) the site, and (b) its territorial protector Bheron Dev. According to legend, it was Bheron Dev who indicated the presence of the Pārśvanāth *mūrti* in the ground. A shrine to Bheron Dev is located just outside the sanctum of Pārśvanāth. The guidebook to the temple says that it was since the image of Bheron Dev was restored that the *tīrth* has gained such enormous popularity.[15]

At Padampura there is a similar distinction between the main temple, dedicated to the Tīrthaṅkar Padamprabhu, and the shrine of the guardian deity Kṣetrapal which is located in the temple wall beside the main entrance. Kṣetrapal is represented as a figure, so thickly layered with vermilion that one cannot distinguish his shape, bearing a tiny Tīrthaṅkar image on his head. Māhavīr-ji also has an important Kṣetrapal shrine, here understood to be a form of Bhairav.

Some clues to this duality can perhaps be found if we look at shrines associated with multi-community religious fairs in other parts of the Hindu world. We can cite here a series of *jatra*s in Nepal, where the shrine to the main deity, offered only milk and vegetable produce, is separated from the site where animal sacrifices are made to a territorial protector spirit, Bhairung. At one of these *jatra*s, Thami tribal people perform ritual 'blood drinking' after the sacrifice, thus saving the life of the high goddess, according to the myth, and allowing the high-caste Newar Hindus to hold the festival without defiling themselves. 'The Newars cannot hold their annual ritual without us', the Thamis say (Miller 1979: 56–7). At another *jatra*, associated with a large *mela* in the remote hills, Tamang tribal people do a similar service for Hindu Chhetris, and the site of the sacrifice is again distinct from its associated 'pure' shrine (*ibid.*: 105–15). In both of these cases, the *mela* is frequently the occasion for outbursts of hostility between the autochthonous tribal people and the incoming high castes.

In Rajasthan, although animal sacrifices do not of course take place at Jain festivals, Jains sometimes exaggerate the 'uncleanness' of the tribal and low-caste participants in the myths. 'It was a shoemaker who found the statue', they say about Padampura, but the man is still alive today and he is a Jat farmer. What all of this indicates is that the Jain *jatra*, while uniting society in common celebration, has

[15] Another popular Jain explanation is the following: the *mūrti* when it stops is choosing a protector. The magic of stopping the chariot is the *mūrti*'s, while the miracles for people are the *bhomiya*'s. James Laidlaw, personal communication.

means of creating distinctions: between the humble site of finding the statue and its magnificent temple residence, between the Jain Tīrthaṅkar and the warrior-protector, between *pūjā* and *darshan*, between the pure Jain worship and the sinful aura of spirit-possession. What is not clear, however, is that non-Jains recognise these distinctions according to the same values as Jains.

Thus we find, as mentioned above, that the Tīrthaṅkar, contrary to Jain ideas, is not really distinguished from other deities. At Mahāvīr-ji the term 'Devata-ka Tila' is used by ordinary people for the spot where the statue was found, though Jains normally distinguish clearly between deities '*deva*' and the Tīrthaṅkars '*bhagwan*'. Both here and at Padampura, the miraculous *mūrti* is also called 'baba' by the common people, a term which is also employed for Bhairavs and Bhomias. At Padampura it is supposed to be the Kṣetrapal who rids people of evil spirits. But fact, those possessed go first into the temple, where in a state of unconscious hysteria they writhe on the floor in front of the miraculous *mūrti* of the Tīrthaṅkar, the women's hair flying in the air, in complete disregard for conventionally correct temple demeanour. Excited by the rhythmic clapping and chanting of the *āratī* ritual, the possessed finally rush out of the temple to the Kṣetrapal shrine, where the protector god may, or may not, exorcise the spirits – 'on the order of the Tīrthaṅkar', as I was told.

In some ways, in this situation of 'vertical' patronage, we are reminded of the process of 'Hinduisation' of autochthonous gods as tutelary deities by royal kingdoms, described by Kulke in relation to the cult of Jagannath (Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathi 1978). But here we have, if anything, the opposite: the penetration of popular religion into Jainism. The possessed at Padampura are comprised of both Jains and non-Jains. There is no doubt that many Jains will acquiesce in these practices, but I never met any Jain who did not simultaneously distinguish them from 'real Jainism'. Jains will always, for example, make a radical distinction between the Tīrthaṅkar and the protector deities. What distinguishes this situation from the Hindu case is the holding back by the Jains of 'Jainism' itself, and it is this, I shall argue, which is one of the features by which we can identify the Jains as a community.

It seems clear, given the deep sectarian divisions between Jains, that what 'real Jainism' is must differ according to the religious and

philosophical concepts of the various groups. This is not to say, however, that there are no underlying values which distinguish Jains from other communities. It is not possible to tackle this enormous question here. But what we can do is to look at the contexts in which Jain (as opposed to non-Jain) values for distinctive ritual categories *are* acknowledged.

This is the case in the competition between different Jain sects over what are commonly acknowledged to be Jain *sacra*. It is one of the relatively unusual features of the 'fair temple complexes' of Māhavīr-ji and Kesaria-ji that Śvetāmbars and Digambars are in dispute over their ownership.[16] As great wealth is at stake this is not perhaps surprising. It is clear that, irrespective of the legal rights and historical antecedants, the most politically powerful Jain caste in the region tends to gain control, and Jain castes do not cross-cut the Śvetāmbar–Digambar divide. But what is perhaps more remarkable is the fact that whichever sect has control of the fair temples, people of the other nevertheless go there as devotees.

In the cases of Padampura (Digambar), Nākoḍā (Śvetāmbar), and Mahāvīr-ji (Digambar), control is clear and the pattern of worship is settled. Devotees of the other sect must simply accept what they find. But at Kesaria-ji, the main temple accommodates both forms of worship. The rivalry here led to fighting in 1927 in which four Digambars were killed and forty-four were injured. Subsequently, a police presence was established and it was generally acknowledged that people of all religions could worship there. The Śvetāmbars and Digambars agreed to divide the day between them; not a simple matter but an operation involving a different form of *pūjā* and the complete redecoration every day of all of the Jain *mūrti*s. Though non-Jains are hardly ever knowledgeable enough to tell the difference, it is impossible for a *mūrti* to be at the same time Digambar and Śwetāmbar (in disputed cases, see note 16, the image is thickly covered with paint, which covers up the crucial features). This very fact makes the point that there is a frame of reference within which ritual distinctions are acknowledged by all Jains. Individual people or groups may have their own 'meanings' for particular sets of marks

[16] Other examples are known from Madhya Pradesh, for example at Shripuj, where there has been a long-standing dispute over ownership of the temple, again focussed on the sectarian attributes of the main *mūrti*.

within this symbolism, but the understanding that there are differences between Digambar and Śwetāmbar rituals is universal among Jains. Such distinctions are not merely empty formalities but have their roots in deep philosophical disagreements between the sects. What is clear is that they are commonly accepted *by Jains* to be indicators pertaining to 'Jainism' itself. These matters are not brought to the attention of non-Jain devotees. The Bhils are allowed to continue with their idea of 'Kala-ji' for Tīrthaṅkar Ādināth, and Jains neither know nor care what this tribal concept might be.

The Jain fair with its religious festival provides a legitimation for Jain presence in regions where they are in a minority. Fairs are, it seems, often created 'from above' by patrons who can benefit from having a fair at that site. By giving the autochthonous population rights in their ritual, the Jains acknowledge the supernatural power of the place and the people of that place. This is in some ways analogous to the high-caste–tribal relations in rural Nepal, and even to the symbolic ascetic purity attributed to the tribal hunters and gatherers of Central India by caste Hindus (Gardner 1982). At the same time, the Jains draw 'the sons of the earth' into their sphere of hierarchical religious patronage. In this situation the lower castes and tribes accept Jain conditions (restrictions on which days they can enter the temple, being allowed to do *darshan* but not *pūjā*, etc.) in return for the miraculous beneficence of the merchants' god. The economic conditions which tie poor farmers to moneylending Jains reinforce the actual hierarchy hidden behind the access to the deity. Though it is not only the poor who throng to Jain *jatra*s, hostilities of occupation and life styles prevent the Jains from encouraging converts and non-Jains to accept Jain values. As a religion Jainism is theoretically open to all who accept its principles and beliefs. Indeed, some farming people at Padampura village call themselves Jains. But there is a chasm of upbringing and understanding between people brought up as Jains and those who merely desire benefits from Jain deities. Popular regional beliefs and practices tend to bridge this gap, and some Jains do undoubtedly take part in popular religious practice, but even so it seems apparent that Jains can hedge themselves off by hierarchising these practices within their own religious system. In 'vertical' relations Jains lend their gods as well as their money, but just as the Tīrthaṅkar can be worshipped simultaneously as a miraculous *baba*

and reserved for devotion as a pure and ascetic prophet, so the wealth engendered by the fairs can be used for status-making display and also for internal charitable purposes within the group.

The 'vertical' articulation of social relations at the 'fair temple complex' thus serves in fact to allow Jains to appear as a distinct community while opening their *sacra* to all. At the same time, we can only say that these are 'Jains', as opposed to some distinct sub-section of Jains, because all Jain groups acknowledge the paramouncy of these sacred places. If this acknowledgement is actually manifest in 'horizontal' rivalry for public acknowledgement of one set of sectarian ritual markers over another, it is nevertheless true that it is these religious fairs, at which non-Jains suddenly irrupt into the circle, that more than almost any other institution evoke a common Jain enthusiasm. Because popular religious cults are thought of by Jains as 'not Jain' they do not have sectarian attributes, and it is this which allows *all* Jains to take part in them if they wish. The 'mapping' of popular enthusiasms onto the austere Jain Tīrthaṅkar has the effect of raising religious emotions. That doctrinal differences are then frequently called into play in relation to the essential Jain *sacra* is a corollary of the fact that the Jains know the importance *as a community* of the triumphant festivities of the fair.

14

New Jain institutions in India and beyond

Caroline Humphrey

These chapters discuss recent Jain institutions, particularly in the context of the modernising movements which swept through India in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The issues raised by all three chapters are: the extent to which the leadership in such institutions is founded on purely Jain criteria, the importance of the institutions, and the degree to which they depart from strictly Jain values. Do they indeed question the validity of the notion of 'strictly Jain values' in the present day?

In order to answer such questions we must have some notion of what Jain values are and what constitutes 'primaeval' Jain institutions. M. Carrithers chapter is the only one in this section to address these questions directly and in relation to a specific sociological reality. Readers should note that the level at which Carrithers is analysing the notion of community is twofold: (1) the experienced local community, as discussed also in J. Reynell, Howard Jones, C. Cottam Ellis and N. K. Singhi, and (2) the imagined sense of the larger community, a concept which is also mentioned by M. Banks. As M. Carrithers' chapter is also the only one to discuss the sociology of the southern Jains, we should sketch its critical features, as distinct from the north and west, here.

Southern Jains are not divided into sects, but all belong to the Digambar group. Even the distinctions within the Digambars found in the north (mainly the division between the *muni*-led traditions on the one hand and the modernising Kanji Panth on the other) seem to be absent. Southern Digambars do have castes, but as V. Sangave points out these are now commensal, which is not always the case in the north. The largest number of southern Jains are farmers, which also differentiates them from Jains in the north, who see farming as an occupation harmful to living creatures, that is, involving *himṣā*.

Moreover, although the southern Jains are a minority, as in the north, they have a strong rural base with sufficient numbers and economic clout to figure significantly in the local political scene.

M. Carrithers argues strongly for the continuity of essential Jain institutions over the centuries. The 'primaeval' Jain institutions are local endogamous communities, temples with their priests, the function of women in rearing the next generation, the *muni*s with their transmission of religious traditions, and the *bhaṭṭārak*s who both managed the 'religious' wealth of the community and promulgated Jain doctrinal literature. Despite the decline of certain of these elements in various periods – the *muni*s before the revival of Santisagar at the beginning of this century and the *bhaṭṭārak*s in the last few decades – Carrithers maintains the essential structure has continued in the *longue durée*. In the past, those Jain institutions which were tied into this structure were thereby enabled to prevail in conflicts with new movements, despite the general trend in Jain as well as Indian society as a whole to modernisation. Carrithers suggests that the Southern Indian Jain Association (Daksin Bharat Jain Sabha), the foremost of the modernising institutions, has managed to attain its present powerful position by virtue of the fact that it has taken over much of the functional space previously held by the *bhaṭṭārak*s, that is, the promulgation of doctrine.

The modern Sabha does not have the managerial function of the *bhaṭṭāraks* in relation to property, nor their role in mediating between the lay people and the ascetics. Indeed, some members of the Sabha are, if anything, opposed to what they see as 'backward' and 'ill-educated' practices. If the Sabha (and similar organisations) has gained its force at the expense of the *bhaṭṭārak*s, it would be interesting to speculate whether the *bhaṭṭārak*s' managerial and mediating functions are now felt as a lack. Among the Śvetāmbar Sthānakvāsi Jains of Jaipur, who of course do not have temples, prominent Jains openly regretted the gulf between ascetics and lay people, and the absence of any more mundane religious figure to draw together the various groups of worshippers.

Readers will note that in the Jain context the word 'modernise' has a particular reference. Both Carrithers' and Sangave's chapters make clear that 'modernising' essentially implies an emphasis on Jainism as a moral force applicable in principle to Indian society as a whole, as

opposed to the 'traditionalist' focus on ritual and worship. 'Modernising' to Jains, as Banks and Carrithers point out, may mean in part the rediscovery of ideas which were 'always there'. But many of the ideas so prominent in the early twentieth century clearly came from outside the religious context. Issues such as brideprice, dowry, age of marriage, child initiation, admission of Harijans to temples, and so forth, divided Jains into conflicting groups. Indeed, into warring groups – despite *ahiṃsā* – such were the passions raised. Have such conflicts seriously threatened to dissolve a Jain sense of community? These chapters suggest that they have not, for a variety of reasons.

First, as Banks and Carrithers indirectly suggest, such conflicts are not new (e.g. the rise of the Sthānakvāsis in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries) and nor are they likely to cease. It might be imagined, however, that the recent reform movements are different from those in earlier times in that their leadership is largely lay. In Carrithers' Sabha, the leadership is made up of laymen and may be characterised as follows: it is (1) capable of making informed judgements by virtue of education; (2) it is in touch with a wider world through the English language; (3) it achieved status through criteria external to Jainism, and (4) it was devoted to a natural constituency, that is, an implicit community. Only the second of these is a new phenomenon. Mukund Lath pointed out at the conference (1985) that the Adhyatma movement arose from within Jainism, though its leaders too were premodern, educated lay people. Jaini, in chapter 3, this volume, gives the further example of the lay Pandit Asadhara who in the thirteenth century led a reform against the popular worship of *yaksha*s (guardian deities of non-Jain origin).

Secondly, as Carrithers points out in his chapter the Jains were among the first in India to start such reform associations at the end of the nineteenth century. The reforms often brought the growing English-literate professional middle classes into conflict with more conservative elements, but the effect was not to homogenise Jains with other Indians. Indeed, the intention and the effect were frequently to emphasise the difference between Jains and others, especially Hindus. The moral superiority assumed by Jains over the 'laxity' of Hinduism had spin-off effects, as we see in Sangave (e.g. the purging of Hindu elements from the Jain marriage ritual). It is significant that the very surnames Jain and Jaini were a product of the reforming era, at the

turn of the century, as Padmanabh Jaini has remarked at the conference, 1985.

Thirdly, both Carrithers and Sangave show that the very fecundity of reform movements among Jains, and the energy and passion with which they were/are promoted, implies that they have increased the sense of a distinct Jain identity. The disagreements between Jains over some of the reforms argue as much for the intensity of this sense as they do for divisiveness. This is a point which appears in the chapters by Reynell, Humphrey and Cottam Ellis.

Sangave's example of the conflict between Jains on the issue of worship in temples by the Dasa (lower status) caste groups is highly instructive. Dasas were excluded from temples by the higher status Bisa (Visa) groups in a range of castes divided in this way. Readers may note that in Sirohi, according to Singhi, Dasas and Bisas now worship together. But in Meerut, United Provinces, in 1910 the judge's decision went against joint worship, and what did many Dasas do but abandon the Digambar and join the Śvetāmbar sect. Structurally similar is the case of Kanji Swami in the 1930s. Originally a Sthānakvāsi *muni*, he came into conflict with his colleagues over his radically new interpretation of doctrine (and perhaps over some other matters too) and ended up by embracing the Digambar scriptures, but not their monks or rituals. Kanji Swami was influenced by Srīmad Rājchandra, the Gujarati Jain reformer mentioned in Banks' paper. Both examples, the Dasas and Kanji Swami, suggest that there does exist a vision of a total Jain community within which disagreements and realignments can be accommodated. Some people might grumble that Kanji Swami was 'not a real Digambar', but most of his now very large following has come from Digambars, not from the original, disaffected Sthānakvāsis.

An important point to emerge from both Banks and Carrithers is that the reform teachings themselves, even in England, usually refer to very early Jain doctrine. To use Banks' term, they are 'neo-orthodox'. Chitrabhanu's movement in America, mentioned by Banks, shows the extent to which 'Jain doctrine' is flexible when it makes converts. But the vast majority of Jain reform movements do not seriously aim to convert non-Jains. The aim and the idiom are to remind Jains of their own principles.

Conclusion

Michael Carrithers and Caroline Humphrey

The discussions of a Jain 'community' in this book have not always been in agreement. Yet we feel that the idea is useful. It can be seen to be operational on at least two levels, that of the notional or ideal community (Carrithers, Banks), a theory held by Jains themselves, and that of actual communities, several of which are described in this volume. Even in the latter sense 'community' points to a reality which is complex, multivalent, subject to many historical contingencies, and often virtually in abeyance. Nevertheless, there are distinct sections of Indian society, made up of Jains, which cannot be adequately defined in terms of other prevalent concepts, such as 'caste', 'sect', 'class' or 'political group'. If such groups can best be described as communities, even though not all of the criteria outlined in the position paper (chapter 1) may be present at any given time, the essential element is the matter of social reproduction. The Jains, with their history stretching over millennia, give us an example of this process – one for which this book has only been able to hint at the complex agencies involved.

The chapters submitted by contributors provided us with defining criteria of community additional to those in the position paper. One of these in the synchronic dimension is the intensity of interaction occurring within the given social group (Cottam Ellis). When considered, this leads to the question of the dominant identity within a choice of identities. Do people who are Jains have most to do with other Jains, and if so, does this have the effect that they consider their dominant identity to be Jain? One important point to emerge from these chapters is that the women's point of view here may be different from that of men. Several papers (Reynell, Carrithers and Banks), suggest that women find public identity through specifically Jain

institutions (*pūjā* at the temple, ritual fasting, confessions, etc.), whereas men may find it elsewhere, for example in business or caste associations which are shared with non-Jains. It is significant that Cottam Ellis and Singhi, both of whom emphasised the male point of view, are the two contributors who concluded that the Jains they studied do not form a community (in the sense of taking a dominant identity from being Jains).

It is clear, however, that everyday interaction is not the whole story. The historical or longer chronological perspective shows a reality of community which is not necessarily shown in daily life. An example is the mass pilgrimages held to celebrate sacred anniversaries. Virtually all Jains take part in these at some point in their lives. Some people spend a remarkable amount of time trundling in buses or trains, or even walking as a penance or to acquire merit, to distant holy sites. At these places there can be an immense convergence or assembly of Jains. The celebrations in February 1981 at Sravana Belagola in Karnataka, itself normally a tiny and sleepy town, of the 1,000th anniversary of the consecration of the statue of Bahubali are a case in point. Tens of thousands of Jains attended from all over India. This elaborate ritual, the *mahāmastakābhiṣeka*, has been performed every fifteen years or so in recent times.

Another crucial feature to emerge from many of the chapters (e.g. Humphrey, Sangave, Banks) is the importance of conflict and sectarian differences between Jains as markers of community. Paradoxical as this might seem at first sight, it was generally concluded that such conflict can and does only take place within the framework of accepted values. It is the shared values which define what is the focus of competition, whether this be pilgrimage sites (see Carrithers 1988), temples or even 'magical' images of the Tīrthaṅkar (Humphrey, chapter 13, this volume). Thus, although the fissiparous tendencies of the Jains on sectarian matters has often been noted, the corresponding fact that sub-sects are engaged with one another, and define their stance primarily as against other Jain groups, has been neglected. The importance of this can be seen from the following two cases. Sangave shows in his paper that early in this century Digambar 'Dasā' Jains, debarred for reasons of caste from participating in common worship, reacted to a court decision against them *not* by setting up their own sub-sect, but by joining the Śvetāmbars. In the 1930s there occurred a similar case in reverse: Kanji Swami, a Sthānakvāsī Śvetāmbar monk,

resolved his differences with his sect by leaving it with his followers and joining the Digambars. This is now a significant movement among Digambar Jains in the North and has survived and gained strength after Kanji Swami's demise. We point to these examples as a socio-religious phenomenon which deserves future investigation. It is not known, for example, what happened to Sangave's Dasā folk when they 'converted'. Śvetāmbars and Digambars normally do not intermarry. Are the new Dasā Digambars accepted as marriage partners by their religious *confrères*?

Let us leave the subject of 'community' and turn now to Jain society in general. One significant feature to emerge is the importance of women. This was not immediately apparent because in scripture and iconography women are given particular and secondary roles, and the doctrinal assessment of women's moral 'worth' is lower than that of men: among Digambars, for example, women must be reborn as men before they can achieve enlightenment. In highly public and open ceremonies such as pilgrimages or *pratiṣṭhā* rites women are normally invisible or allotted a clearly inferior place. In ascetic organisation monks take precedence over nuns. But, as Reynell's pioneering research has shown, women are crucial in the actual preservation and reproduction of Jain practices and values (Reynell in this volume, and Reynell 1985a). This is recognised informally by Jains in the idea that it is on women's religious devotion the men's economic success depends. Something analogous is true of Hindus, for example women taking *vrata*s for their husbands. But the difference is that while both Jains and Hindus take such vows for instrumental purposes, in the Jain case such vows and fasts always have a *mokṣa* orientation as well. This is given public recognition, as when after some spectacularly arduous fast a woman is carried, weak but triumphant, through the streets of her native town to general rejoicing. Furthermore, as the greatest number of Jain ascetics are women, it is common, indeed the rule, for men to find themselves being given religious instruction by women. We do not know, however, whether the high religious standing Jain women have in practice can be related to a high status accorded them more generally in social and economic life (Sangave 1980). There is an intriguing hint in Jones' paper that this may be so: the biggest moneylender of all in his community was in fact a Jain widow. Further comparative research is necessary on this subject.

The differences brought out in these chapters between Jains in the

south and north of India seem to correspond to differences between the rural and the urban. In the north complexity of organisation and the tendency to sectarian fission seem to arise in the intense competitive urban environment. The competitive idiom is carried even into intracaste and intrasect relations, as in the public auctioning of ritual roles so clearly described in Singhi's chapter. In the South, although such competitiveness is not absent, the Jains appear rather as a solidary elite in the rural-based political economy. The *bhaṭṭārak*s, as it were 'abbots' of Jain religious property, are still very much part of the scene, and their power, though now much diminished, stems from involvement with peasant states. In the South, Jain castes are just castes, endogamous, but not further divided by sectarian differences. In other words, Jain castes here behave very much like Hindu castes; and this was the case especially before the twentieth-century reform movements. Now there is some intermarriage and much interdining, but all indigenous Jains are Digambaras and there have been no new sectarian splits. There are fewer ascetics amongst Digambara than Śvetāmbara Jains, and few, if any, doctrinal arguments between them – indeed, ascetics here are not particularly active in doctrinal/philosophical matters.

In the North, on the other hand, leaders in the urban environment, both lay and ascetic, compete with other leaders. A characteristic pattern is for lay leaders to back differences on the doctrinal level between *ācārya*s. Because of the long history of schism and the development of schools and traditions, *ācārya*s themselves are more numerous and more learned than in the South. Some Jain sub-sects are exclusive, while others are proselytising. There has been a tendency for sectarian differences to spread outwards from the cities into the countryside, for example, as new temples are built, but the rural environment is not really conducive to the maintenance of such distinctions in the long term. As Singhi's chapter shows, temples originally founded on a sectarian basis may, in a small town, actually come to function as common places of worship for the whole community.

In the South, the Jain lay population is basically sedentary, made up of farmers or small traders. Here, it is the religious leaders, the *bhaṭṭārak*s and the *muni*s who are peripatetic, visiting local groups by turn. In the North, the laity is also well travelled, has a relatively

higher level of education, and a wider perspective. This may well be related to their more extensive business organisations and contacts. The 'Marwaris', although of course not all of them are Jains, are the classic example. Jains in the North recognise a broad sacred geography of all-India dimensions. Pilgrimage to holy sites dispersed over the country could be seen as a reflection of the interests in wide commercial travel – or, as Jains might prefer to put it, vice versa. Certainly the relation between the two is historically complex (Agrawal 1980). We would not argue that sectarian conflict over sacred sites is a direct expression of commercial competition, but the two have emerged over the centuries in a single environment, that of intense urban-based mercantile expansion. This is a subject on which further research is required. In the North, the higher levels of education and differentiation among Jains has led to a greater overt self-awareness than in the South. Evidence of this is the publication of numerous lists of Jain businessmen, directories, and Who's Whos, some of them on a sectarian basis and others not.

Jainism as a religion propounds the true path, the presumption of a superior way of life. Who is purest? Who is oldest? In the North these questions fuelled fissiparous tendencies, whereas in the South they determined Jain relations to the surrounding society. In the South Jain castes have related to low Hindu castes in the villages simply as high castes. But in the North, despite the internal differences, an identifiable Jain culture helped create the religious style of the merchant community as a whole. With the emergence of Gandhism, itself inspired by Jain ideals to a certain extent, this style was reinforced and given further legitimation. Both business and Gandhian styles derive from a wider Indian ideology which places value on asceticism and symbols of purity (Hay 1979). Carrithers argues that even in premodern South India this orientation towards purity gave Jains a functional role in the wider society which enabled them to maintain an identity in the long term.

In the North, the Jain style and the presumption of superiority, where it reaches outwards to confront other groups, defines itself against both lower-caste Hindu and tribal groups. Occasionally, as we see from Singhi, Hindus and tribals have combined in overt opposition to traders, 'Banias', in this case Jains. The Jains' economic success is popularly attributed to the magical power of their *sādhus*

and sacred statues, which thereby attain a paradoxical value for their poorer neighbours. The deepest relation, of economic dependency and yet opposed cultures, is between Jains and tribal peoples such as the Bhils (Jones, Humphrey). This is dramatised in complex rituals in which both Jains and tribals participate.

Consciousness of Jain superiority is also inherent in the Jain use of royal/military symbolism (Dundas; Carrithers 1988). This has been elaborated over the centuries in the use by Jains of Pan-Indian languages and idioms to create a deliberately distinct ideology. Lath's chapter gives an important example of this technique. There are Jain versions of central Indian literature, such as the Ramayana, which change the nature and goals of the action, and go as far as inverting the moral import of the main characters (Jaini). There is a special Jain style in the *kathā* (story) literature. This is not simply a matter of historically distant texts, but stories which are widely and lovingly read, particularly by women (Reynell 1985a), who relate them to the younger generation.

This characteristic of Jain practice, the tendency to use the form and yet maintain a different meaning for important elements of Indian culture, is shown again in Jaini's chapter on popular religion. Jains worshipped Hindu *yakṣa*s (guardian deities) such as Āmbikā and Padmāvati, but the Jain religious leaders continued through the centuries to preach on their correct significance as protectors and attendants of the Tirthankars. Now it may well be that the Jain laity was not always correct or dutiful, and sometimes regarded the *yakṣa*s as intercessors, but they could hardly have been unaware of the doctrinal position. Indeed, Jaini notes that the semi-legitimisation of *yakṣa* worship within the faith might have forstalled the influence of Vaishnava and Śaiva *bhakti* movements among the Jain laity. The present-day popularity of worship of images of the Tīrthaṅkaras, noted by both Jaini and Humphrey, is not unambiguously a corrupt form. The *pūjā* to the Tīrthaṅkara is not something which the ascetics do, but for the laity it has a 'correct' motivation, the symbolic representation of the steps to liberation, and this sense is preserved even by people who do not always practise it (Humphrey 1984).

Similarly, Jains participate in caste without accepting the Brahmanical ideological framework of caste (Lath). So Jains will intermarry with Hindus of the same caste, and Jain women virtually always take

up their husbands' domestic religious ritual, perhaps together with some Jain devotions. But intermarriage between Śvetāmbars and Digambars is extremely rare, perhaps because in this case domestic religious observances fall under the umbrella of the purity oriented religion directed by the *munis*' religious ideology. Even the simplest rituals are different in detail in the two sects. These 'details' have wide symbolic import. Evidently doctrinal distinctions within Jain religion are more deeply felt than the Jain–Hindu interface. Rituals in the latter context simply fall 'outside religion', and it is with the same attitude that Jains view caste, which is simply not felt to be a religious matter (Lath, Singhi).

Of all Indian religions Jainism is most similar to Theravada Buddhism. Both hold the *śramaṇa* or wandering ascetic to be the essential exemplar of the true path of renunciation, an idea which coexists with and dominates various forms of lay religiosity (Jaini). How do we explain the different fates in history and society of these two faiths? The conference could not, of course, do justice to this vast subject, but did touch upon some significant points of difference.

The Jains, unlike the Theravadins, resisted the rise of popular cults based on the worship of relics, offerings to the dead, and the expectation of a future Teacher. Despite the strong social and emotional pressure that the medieval *bhakti* movements must have exerted, no cult of Śiva or Vishnu ever developed within Jainism, while forms of these cults are important in popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka (Jaini).

Whereas Buddhism retained its ties to political ideology in Sri Lanka and South-East Asia, Jainism lost such links with the rise of Vīraśaivism in the south of India and the arrival of Muslim power in the North. Thus, although Jainism retains a royal idiom (Dundas), it lost its ties to (or functional place within) an effective political ideology. In medieval South India there were Jain kings or at least kings willing to act as Jains, and Jains developed an ideology of kingship (Dundas, Jaini). When Jains lost actual power as a religiously defined group, unlike the Brahmans, they retained the royal idiom in Jain contexts, but could only participate in political reality on other terms, that is, as members of a highly educated and wealthy middle class. In the North, they also retained the royal idiom in internal ritual contexts, but were able to adapt to Muslim public styles.

Also, as Carrithers has remarked, insofar as Jains always fitted into a pan-Indian style of status through purity, which they themselves had helped to create, they managed to retain a reasonably high position in the political economy as a whole.

We conclude by stressing the fact that Jain society is pervaded by Jain teaching. There are, to our knowledge, no sizeable and coherent groups of Jain origin which are purely secular in their orientation. Of course some people are more devout than others, and some more influenced by Western secular life styles than others, but even the most worldly tend to be highly aware of Jain values. This derives, we could perhaps say, from two deep and continuing sources: the strict teachings and instructions of the appointed leaders, ascetics and pandits, on the one hand, and the informal but devout upbringing by Jain women on the other. No one who has sat for hours in one of those vast gatherings of Jain laymen and, especially, women in a preaching-hall could ignore the devotion which the laity accord the religious teacher. This is a latter-day re-creation of the circle gathered at the feet of the Tīrthaṅkar and this is why we have called this book *The Assembly of Listeners*.