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Teaching and researching religions, languages, literatures,
films, and ecology of India and Asia

3 Unique Contributions: The Worlds of Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism

Posted: 09/21/2015 5:59 pm EDT | Updated: 09/21/2015 6:59 pm EDT

Mahavira was born a little before the Buddha. While the Buddha was the founder of Buddhism, Mahavira did not found Jainism. He is the 24th great teacher (Tirthankar) in the Jain tradition that was founded in the present era by Rishabh or Adinath, thousands of years before Mahavira.

While most Hindus believe in a god (or goddess) that is the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe, Jainism rejects any such god (or goddess). For Jains, the universe is an eternal phenomenon, never created and never to be destroyed. It is a self-sustained, self-managed phenomenon that runs on the principle of cause and effect (karma and reincarnation).

While Hindus and Buddhists also accept Karma philosophy, Jains describe Karma as particles that pollute the soul. For each soul to attain moksha, it must rely on its own efforts (purusharth) to cleanse off these karma particles. Mahavira, like the Buddha, was born as a prince but renounced his royal life at the age of 30 and became an ascetic. For next 12 years, he practiced meditation to the extent that all hardships became negligible for him. People tortured him to the extent of piercing his ears with nails and throwing stones at him, but they could not

disturb his meditation. Eventually, at 42, he became omniscient but did not achieve moksha yet because he still had the karma of his name, age, and body. Finally at the age of 72, he left his body and all the remaining karma and achieved moksha. The Jain moksha state is the last frontier of the universe where the soul remains eternally blissful and detached forever.

For Jains, Mahavira and other tirthankars are merely role models, not the provider of any materialistic or even spiritual gifts. Jains must depend only on their own individual efforts to achieve the moksha.

I love all three -- Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism -- for their three unique contributions to the world. Hinduism gave us the concept of Brahman that unites the entire universe in a single transcendental reality that is hidden behind the materialistic phenomena we see in the world.

Jainism gave us the idea of non-violence that led to the largest number of vegetarians that have always existed in India. The value of vegetarianism is only recently being recognized in the West, as we know.

Buddhism gave us the most developed techniques of meditation and pranayama. The phrases like "take a deep breath", "live in this moment", and "mindfulness" that we now take for granted were first preached and practiced by the Buddha about 2500 years ago. All the three unique messages from these three Indic traditions remain relevant and important to the world today.

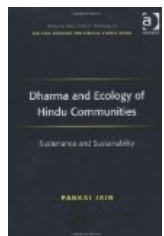
The Hindu concept of oneness of the universe and the Jain concept of nonviolence are most urgently required today to save the planet from ultimate ecological destruction. The two biggest reasons for ecological destruction are over-consumption and pollution of natural resources in the form of burning fossil fuels (including in automobiles) and consuming meat. CO2 emission from raising cattle for meat consumption and from vehicles, both widely practiced in the so-called developed world has led to the climate change that has endangered the entire planet's survival today. Only the reverence and respect for other species, plants, air, water, and the Mother Earth, that Indic traditions teach, can save the planet. The current American way of economy is a sure path to ultimate destruction. Similarly, the ultimate happiness has only moved away by the American way of consumption and the Buddhist teaching of mindfulness and meditation can lead us to the ultimate bliss.

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Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability (Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology, and Biblical Studies)
by Pankaj Jain



Conversations

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Satish Mullick

THE BIGGEST reason for ecological, and other destructions, is increase in the number of human beings that results in over-consumption, and pollution. The Pope has spoken about the climate change and it's effect on the humans, If He is really concerned about that, He should address the human reproduction.

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Steven Ostertag · Bloomfield High School

It is all about opposing Abraham and the foundations of Western civilization.

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Jay Kumar

Western civilization started with Greeks--nothing to do with Abraham. Contributions to the world from Abrahamic faiths came much later--during renaissance in 15th century CE

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Richard Stanaszek · La Alma at Costa Mayoga

Forget mindfulness, and meditation when there is duplicity of the mind. You only create what you fear.

gesu

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Shyamnath Veerasamy · None

Climate change is not now; it has always existed and will always exist. The problem today is that world population is too high and the natural process that brings nature to equilibrium can no longer achieve its goal. Global warming occurred around the year 900 A.D. It was the time when the Vikings sailed to Greenland and established a colony there and when people grew grapes in England. The feedback mechanism was the melting of the icepack. Today, this

mechanism cannot achieve its aim because we have decreased the number of plants (forest) and increased the number of animals (Human beings are animals) and hence increased the amount of carbon dioxide. So, first we need to stabilize world population.

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Cape Padman

This is a beautifully written article on three 3 great religious traditions of India. Very few westerners have even heard of Jainism. It is a great religion, Mahatma Gandhi was very much influenced by Jainism . Mahavira, the 24th great teacher of Jainism was called "Jina" the conqueror. He did not conquer kingdoms but he conquered his own self. He is called the " Mahavira" ,the great hero ,not of the battles of the world but of the battles of the inner world. So was Buddha. Both Jainism and Buddhism are offshoots of Hinduism. Buddha was a reformer of Hinduism He reclaimed Hinduism from sangu... See More

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