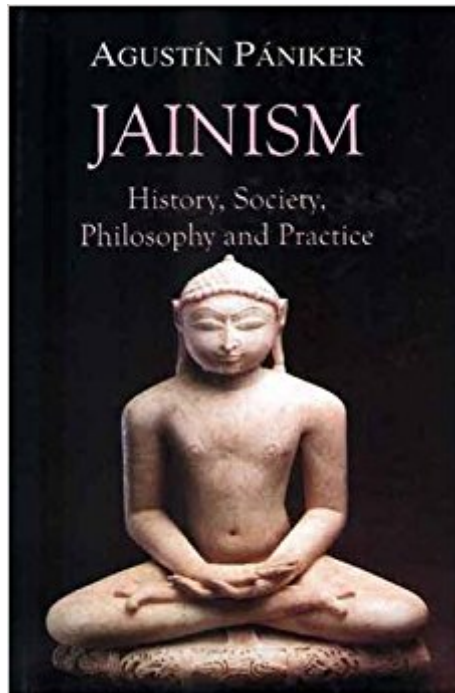




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Jainism: History, Society, Philosophy And Practice



Synopsis

Jainism is a tradition which dates back thousands of years, which is unbelievably rich and profound, and which has certain unmistakable signs of identity. Contrary to what some might think, it is not in any sense a poor relation of Buddhism, nor is a strange, atheistic and ascetic sect within Hinduism. Jainism is, above all, the religion of non-violence (ahimsa), an ideal which all other religions of India were subsequently to make theirs and which was made universal by Gandhi in the 20th century. Like Buddhism, Jainism is a religion without God which paradoxically opens to the truly sacred in the deepest reaches of all living beings in the cosmos. And it is also the religion of non-absolutism (anekantavada), a particular form of philosophical pluralism, which seems astonishingly modern.

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Customer Reviews

First things first, I cannot express how excellently written this text is. I was actually very surprised that once I started into the book with how clear, down to earth and in such an understandable conversational tone that this book is written, Paniker clearly having a deep understanding of Jainism. This being said, I was also very surprised that there are no other reviews of this text. For sake of an excuse, perhaps the topic of Jainism just doesn't have the interest.... But I am still unsure. I actually purchased this book quite a short time ago, and having very little knowledge on Jainism I was very excited for its arrival, and I devoured it in just a few days. This book is well written as I stated above, it starts out with an excellent and thorough explanation of the Cosmology of Jainism and then works in the stories and history of the Jinas, or those who achieved release from samsara, or basically the endless cycle of rebirths. Then moves on to its growth as a society, to its practices, and much more. As what is stated several times in the text, Jainism, is usually thought of

by westerners as a form of highly ascetic Hinduism, or even a sub sect of Buddhism. But this is not the case, it is a tradition all its own. Though to understand not only Jainism, but Indian spirituality in general, we have to gain an understanding of cross pollination and evolving spirituality. The Indian view has always been more live and let live, and mercurial, then what we in the west have become used to throughout the centuries.

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