

Contemporary issues in eastern religion - jainism



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Interaction Influence Charles Anderson, founder of The GodWeb, averred that Jainism “ is an ancient religion that originated in India and teaches that the way to liberation is to live with respect for all beings, including animal” (Anderson, 2010, par. 1). Jainism’s origin is traced from the Indian tradition, as contrasted to the religious tradition of the West. Paul Marett explained that “ the West the scene is dominated by Judaism, Christianity and Islam, three religions which have close (though not always harmonious) links, and which trace their origins back to the ancient Middle East” (Marett, n. d., par. 1).

The core beliefs of Jainism focus on the existence of the soul for every living being, karmas, and the concept of non-violence, among others. These beliefs were deeply rooted in Indian traditions and belief in reincarnation and karma. As closely related to Hinduism, Marett indicated that “ in many ways the Jain community has been influenced by the customs and traditions of the larger Hindu community. Jain influence on Hinduism must include non-violence and vegetarianism Mahatma Gandhi, as is well-known, was deeply influenced, particularly in his attitude to non-violence by the Jains” (n. d., par. 5).

In contrast to the predominant religions of the West, like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Jainism’s interaction with them are manifested in ways of communal living. As opposed to Christianity and Islam, religions that believe in a supreme being, Judaism and Jainism, “ is both a religion and a community, a close-knit community with a way of life and worship which keeps religion in a central place in society. Unlike Jainism the religion of Judaism centers around the worship of a single all-powerful creator God. The code of right and wrong is strict but Judaism pays less attention to life after

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death than almost any other religion" (Marett, n. d., par. 7).

Likewise, as averred by Ahmad (2010), " through various interactions in India, Jainism had an influence on Hinduism and Buddhism, and they share concepts such as the seeking of freedom from worldly life and reincarnation of the soul. Some scholars suggest that Hinduism adopted vegetarianism through strong Jain influence across India" (par. 6).

In the modern world, Jainism's influence could be exemplified by the practices of monks and nuns who believe in celibacy and adhering to austere lifestyle. By living in a community committed to peace and non-violence, the traditions of Jainism are manifested.

Further, devotees of Jainism are known to be vegetarians thereby influencing societal groups who are committed to animal rights and welfare. The dilemmas of the modern world were clearly traced on issues that seem to veer away from non-violence and respect for all living being. As indicated in Jain Network (2010), " they interpret dilemmas of the modern world below:

- Abortion is prohibited, as Jains believe that life starts at conception.
- Family planning: Jain texts advocate restraint in sexual activities and celibacy. Some Jains use modern methods of contraception with regret.
- Addictive drugs like alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and other hard drugs are prohibited.
- Eating out: only vegetarian food appropriate to the Jain diet.
- Euthanasia is prohibited, as it is a form of violence.
- Organ transplant is allowed, provided the donor is not harmed.
- Organ donation is allowed" (Jain Network, 2010, par. 7).

The core values of Jainism remain to pervade modern society despite its origins being traced thousands of years ago. This simply means that by

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respecting life in its entirety, the interaction and influence of Jainism with other religions are clearly manifested through contemporary practices of advocates of vegetarianisms, animal rights and welfare, non-violence, and preservation of life.

References

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