

International Scholars: Influenced By Jainism

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When the quest is real, no matter where you were born, you find your way forward, you reach that place at the right time and you meet the right people who can take you to your destination.

Being born in India, and being overwhelmed with a particular religion may hamper the newness and curiosity to look and observe it with a different panoramic view, albeit according to me, the true voyage to grasp a religion or towards philosophy, may start in the following circumstances:

- When one develops a quest to decipher life, how it unfolds and what lies beyond, as one grows.
- One's confrontation with either some dear one's death or a serious disease.
- When one goes through either extremely sad or overwhelmingly joyous incidents in one's life.
- Or sometimes out of nowhere, one reads a tiny para, as in the case of Natalia Zheleznova - the famous Russian Scholar, and gets a spark throwing light upon one's consciousness to not only study more about it but also to dedicate her whole life to that gleam.

Albeit the reasons could be innumerable and it might also be true that a particular religion's theory could only be depicted, nearly accurately by its own disciples but still I feel that when an interested outsider has an introduction with the same, he or she could understand it in a totally different, unbiased new way and could explore it in a radical fashion that its own followers would not have done so. As, due to the absence of an emotional attachment, an outsider could imbibe it more honestly and unbiasedly; hence he or she could be able to find what couldn't have been found until now. This is the reason that I get highly influenced by the writings on Jaina philosophy by Western Scholars.

Philosophy is the study of general and fundamental problems concerning matters such as existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language. Philosophical methods include questioning, critical discussion, rational argument and systematic presentation.¹

For over 4,000 years, India, one of the most spiritually enriched places on earth, has been the cradle of spirituality. India, its people, its infrastructure, and, in fact, its very soil, encourage and nurture spiritualism, allowing religions to thrive, flourish and prosper.²

Our beloved country is a place with many religions, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Jainism, to name a few. Where spiritual tourism in India is increasing rapidly, we can understand there are people all over the world, who are looking for either peace or answers to some of their philosophical questions and perhaps they are finding them in India. As Oprah Winfrey said, on her first visit to India, "Though it might feel chaotic to a foreigner, there

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy> (Retrieved 5/09/2016 @ 9:45)

² <http://www.indianexcursion.net/different/spiritual-tourism.html> (Retrieved 09/09/2016 @ 9:45)

seems to be an underlying flow of calmness.”³

In today’s fast paced world when people are immensely satisfied with the growth of science and technology, there lie even bigger questions unanswered, which leave the human soul craving for something deeply satisfactory and peaceful. Science cannot solve them for they ooze out from the soul.

No doubt India has been the birthplace of some great men like—Mahavira, Rama, and Krishna who have not only shown the way towards truth and peace to the world, but they themselves led a life of goodness and compassion.

On the contrary, being Indians, we see religions, whether our own or others, in a personal, perhaps granted way and never raise questions to most of our queries. Sure, there are some minds that ask questions to satisfy their curiosity but they are looked down upon as atheists and the queries remain unanswered.

Whereas, as a third person, there are many foreigners who have a keen interest in knowing more about different Indian philosophies. They not only study them deeply, understand them, evaluate them and value them much more than us, but also they do it with an unbiased point of view.

The ultimate truth, the concept of soul and God, the Karma theory, the way cosmos works, the geography of the universe? I am quite sure that all these are universally the same. It is not possible that for a Hindu, the truth is different and for a Christian, something else. Similarly, moral values are also the same universally, though they can be relative under different circumstances. When we talk about non-violence, it means absence of violence everywhere. And if hurting an animate being is wrong, it is obviously wrong for everyone, everywhere.

Hence when we talk about religion, I believe it is also one and the same for all and it is absolute. All the different religions we see in the world today are due to relativity. If some answers can be found in a particular religion, others can be traced in some other. Then there are levels of human intellect, degrees of questions asked, scientific understanding of the answers and the courage to walk on the path understood.

An undying inquisition to attain freedom lies in the human subconscious after all the invigorations towards attaining peace or knowledge. Positive thoughts, eternal happiness, freedom of expression, solutions to our queries related to inner wisdom are a few of many curiosities, which all of us have in our lives.

When it comes to spirituality, there are many philosophies, which show the way towards truth, Godhood & emancipation, though I believe Jainism is a philosophy with all the answers to all the possible questions asked by the most intellectual seekers of the world. Hence I have faith that sooner or later, when all philosophies would be unable to answer some questions, Jainism would stand out strong with the answers not only in terms of religion and science but spirituality too.

I believe this philosophy has to be understood, not only by the world but also by its own followers, especially in today’s scenario when this philosophy seems to be the toughest to

³ <http://www.oprah.com/spirit/Oprahs-Trip-to-India-Oprahs-Interview-with-Deepak-Chopra> (Retrieved 18/09/2016 @ 11:50 AM)

understand, most people either make fun of it due to their unawareness of its significance.

Though as Buddha said, 'Truth can only be felt,' still we need a philosophy that takes us closest to the truth and that, I feel is Jainism.

At the same time I also believe that any philosophy cannot be imposed on any seeker. It depends upon the intensity of one's quest and the ability to understand the answers of the questions asked. Jainism has been the cynosure of many philosophers across the world.

Here is how Jain philosophy has influenced some of the distinguished scholars globally:

Jainism has traditionally received academic attention especially from German Indological scholars (the names of Hermann Jacobi, Walther Schubring and Ludwig Alsdorf being the best known).⁴

Dr. Herman Jacobi (1850–1937) the famous German scholar who was also conferred the title Jain Darshan Divakar — Sun of the Jain doctrine by The Jain Community,⁵ said, "In conclusion let me assert my conviction that Jainism is an original system, quite distinct and independent from all others; and that therefore it is of great importance for the study of philosophical thoughts and religious life in ancient India."⁶

The famous Irish Play writer and co-founder of London School of Economics, George Bernard Shaw (1856 -1950)⁷ mentioned, "I adore so greatly the principles of the Jain religion, that I would like to be reborn in a Jain community."⁸

The famous scientist & philosopher Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955)⁹ said, 'the eternal mystery of the world is its intelligibility. True religion fastens to this element of intelligibility and creates a system of thought and action, which leads to true harmony and bliss. And it is indeed so with Jainism.'¹⁰

Walther Schubring (1881-1969) enriched Jainology and Prakrit studies with his vast contributions. It was owing to his untiring efforts that the Jain Canons were made known to the scholars. He obtained a Ph.D. degree in 1904 for the dissertation Das Kalpasutra, (The-Kalpasutra, the Ancient Collection of Rules for Jain Monks). One of his teachers was, Dr. Herman Jacobi. From 1904 to 1920 Schubring served as an academic librarian in the Royal Prussian State Library, Berlin, where he prepared a voluminous descriptive catalogue of Jain

⁴ Dr. Robert Zydenbos' (PDF version of the) book: Jainism Today and Its Future, (pp.30) Published in 2006 by Manya Verlag Munich

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_Jacobi (Retrieved 05/09/2016 @ 10 AM)

⁶ <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralsm/affiliates/jainism/quote/greatmen.htm> (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 12 PM)

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 12:30 PM)

⁸ <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralsm/affiliates/jainism/quote/greatmen.htm> (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 12:30 PM)

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Einstein (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 12:33 PM)

¹⁰ <https://jainkkapil.wordpress.com/2013/04/17/some-quotes-on-jainism-from-personalities-around-the-world/> (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 12:25 PM)

manuscripts.¹¹

An Italian scholar Mr. L.P. Tassetori (1887–1919)¹² said, “Jainism is of a very high order. Its important teachings are based upon science. The more the scientific knowledge advances the more Jain teachings will be proven.”¹³

Ludwig Alsdorf, (1904-1978) had an authority on Jainism. Alsdorf obtained a doctorate in 1928 in Hamburg for the thesis -- *The Kumarapalapratibodha*. A contribution to the knowledge of Apabhramsha and the narrative literature of the Jains.¹⁴

When we talk about some international seekers, how can we ignore some present ones who have got highly influenced by Jainism and are working for its spread:

PierreAmiel, (born 1931) is a retired Public Administrator from France. After retirement in 1993, he decided to promote Jainism in French language, and started to write articles in Jain Spirit, a Jain magazine published from England. In 1998 his first book on Jainism, French translation of Lord Mahavira: A Study in Historical Perspective was published. In the very next year, his another book *Le Jainisme, Philosophie et Religion de L’Inde* a translation of Dr. Vilas Sangave's English book ‘Aspects of Jain Religion’ was published. In 2003, one of his own book was published which later got translated in English and published as ‘Jains Today in The World’ by a Jainology research Institute in India. In 2008 his book B.A.-B.A. *Jainisme* was published. He has also introduced *Tattvarth Sutra, SamaySar and NiyamSar in French language*.¹⁵

Dr. Michael Tobias, (born 1951) is a filmmaker, author and ecologist. He has written several books on Ecology, animal rights, Jainism and other subjects. One of his famous books is *Life Force: The World of Jainism*, which is known as the Best book on Jainism. He produced a film on Jainism, *Ahimsa –Nonviolence*, which was released all over the United States and appreciated at a large scale.¹⁶

Dr. Peter Flugel is the chair in Centre for Jaina Studies and member in Centre of Buddhist Studies in SOAS, University of London. He has published extensively on the history, anthropology and sociology of contemporary Jain schools and sects, Jain relic stupas, Jaina-Vaishnava syncretism, and on the socio-political and legal history of the Jain tradition. He is

¹¹http://www.herenow4u.net/index.php?id=62442&tt_address_pi1%5Buid%5D=175&no_cache=1 (Retrieved 10/09/2016 @ 11:32)

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luigi_Pio_Tessitori (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 12:20PM)

¹³ <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralsm/affiliates/jainism/quote/greatmen.htm> (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 12:25 PM)

¹⁴ <http://www.herenow4u.net/index.php?id=2780> (Retrieved 10/09/2016 @ 11:42)

¹⁵ <http://hubpages.com/religion-philosophy/Some-Western-Converts-to-Jainism> (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 3 PM)

¹⁶ <http://hubpages.com/religion-philosophy/Some-Western-Converts-to-Jainism> (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 3:09 PM)

also working on questions of comparative philosophy, pluralism and non-violence. He is the editor of the International Journal of Jain Studies.¹⁷

Robert J. Zydenbos (born 1957, Toronto) is a Dutch-Canadian scholar who has doctorate degrees in Indian philosophy and Dravidian studies.¹⁸ He has taught at universities in Germany, India and Canada. At present he is a professor of Modern Indology in the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich, Germany. In particular he has occupied himself with Jainism, the Vaishnavism of Madhva, and Virashaivism.¹⁹ He is the author of the famous book 'Jainism Today and Its Future.'

Claudia Pastorino (born 1965 in Genoa, Italy) is an Italian singer-songwriter, author, and an advocate for animal rights, vegetarianism, and Jainism. She has dedicated her efforts to learning Jainism. In 2002 Pastorino published, with Edizioni Cosmopolis, *Jainism, the most ancient Doctrine of Nonviolence, Compassion and Ecology*, an Italian translation of *The Book of Compassion*. In 2003, she published *Essence of Jainism: History, Philosophy, and Tales*, by Editori Riuniti.²⁰ She has also translated Saman Suttam in Italian.²¹

Dr. Patrick F. Krueger, (born 1972 in Germany) attended Rudolf Steiner School of Anthroposophy (Theosophy) until 1990 and spent afterwards several years in Sweden, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Later, at Free University of Berlin he was introduced to Jainism and Jain Studies by Professor Klaus Bruhn who is one of the leading experts in Jainology and was once a student of Ludwig Alsdorf and Walther Schubring. Patrick Krueger is focused on Jain Art, History and Religion. Under the motivation and guidance of Prof. Bruhn he founded the Center for Jain Studies at the Department of History and Cultural Studies of Free University of Berlin in 2011, where he is a lecturer in History of South Asian Art and Jainology. In addition to his academic activity he is committed to spread the knowledge of Jainism and Ahimsa to the non-academic public.²²

Dr. Natalia Zheleznova, (born in 1972, Ulyanovsk, Russia),²³ is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences. Her academic field of study is Jain Philosophy and Digambara tradition. She has delivered several lectures on Jainism and Indian Philosophy in Moscow State University during past 10 years. She has visited many Jain pilgrimages like: Shravanabelagola, Girnar, SammetShikhar, Shatrunjaya, Sonagiri, and

¹⁷ <https://www.soas.ac.uk/staff/staff30946.php> (Retrieved on 10/09/2016 @ 2:43 PM)

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_J._Zydenbos (Retrieved on 15/9/2016 @ 11:55 AM)

¹⁹ http://www.herenow4u.net/index.php?id=62442&tt_address_pi1%5Buid%5D=281&no_cache=1 (Retrieved on 15/9/2016 @ 12 PM)

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claudia_Pastorino (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 12:39 PM)

²¹ [http://www.herenow4u.net/index.php?id=62442&tt_address_pi1\[uid\]=2518&cHash=241a2b04df](http://www.herenow4u.net/index.php?id=62442&tt_address_pi1[uid]=2518&cHash=241a2b04df) (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 12:53 PM)

²² http://www.herenow4u.net/index.php?id=62442&tt_address_pi1%5Buid%5D=812&no_cache=1 (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 2:45 PM)

²³ <http://eng.iph.ras.ru/zheleznova.htm> (Retrieved 17/09/2016 @ 3:16 PM)

Hastinapur.

She has translated twelve Jain Scriptures from Prakrit/Sanskrit to Russian, *Ashtapahud*, *Ratnasaar*, *Tattvarthsutra*, *DravyaSangrah* and *Sarvarthsiddhi* to name a few. Currently she is working on the translation of *Rajavartika*. She said, 'I find extreme logic in Jain scriptures.'²⁴

People from the west are finding peace in India, whether through some Mantras, Pilgrimages or some Gurus. But when we talk about scholars; things become more serious and deep studies and the academic part of a particular philosophy comes forward.

Life is not about conversion to any particular religion, it's about the journey of awakening, self-improvement, having a vision and the courage to adopt what is right.

My intent of writing this paper is not to prepare a list of western scholars of Jain philosophy, but to tell the readers that we have vast set of options to understand and study the authenticity and beauty of the same philosophy and we are open to learn foreign scholars' way of understanding them. I can put forward that it can be a beginning to explore newer horizons of Jain philosophy, for the upcoming generation of research scholars.

The way many meditation courses are available today and the way spirituality and philosophical curiosity are spreading their wings into the different realms of the society; it indicates that sooner or later, Jain philosophy will be understood the way it should have been. That day Jainism will regain its importance and get the well-deserved understanding.

²⁴ Personal Interview on 09/02/2016 in Delhi