

Jainism

Mark D. Harris

MD, MPH, MBA, MDiv, PhD,
ThM, DBA

MD Harris Institute Inc.



History (1)

- Jains claim that Jainism was founded 8.4 million years ago. Vardhamana (Mahavira, 599-527 BC) was a prince who, as legend has it, left his palace at age 30 to begin 12 years of rigorous asceticism.
 - Similar to the story of Siddhartha Gautama
- He achieved perfect enlightenment, attracted many followers, and starved himself to death at age 72.
- Emperor Ashoka (273-232 BC), grandson of Chandragupta (350-295 BC), led the Mauryan Empire and followed the Jain faith.
- As a tiny fish swimming in a Hindu (and to a lesser extent, Buddhist) pool, Jainism did not play a prominent role in ancient Indian history.

Jains and Sikhs



History (2)

- The sword of Islam, which first conquered large parts of India around AD 1000, struck especially hard at Buddhists and Jains.
- Adherents to Indian religions were not considered “people of the book” like Jews and Christians were, and so fell into the category of “idolaters.”
- Hindus were partially protected from persecution by their sheer numbers, but Buddhists and Jains had no such shield.
- Except for the reign of Akbar (1542-1605), the Jains suffered under the children of the prophet.



History (3)

- The British colonization of India put an end to the persecution by Muslim authorities.
- The British promoted trade, which allowed Jains to practice their traditional economic activity. Colonial officials made public nudity illegal, which penalized Jainism's naked monks.
- The Jain population in India grew slowly from 1881 (1.22 million) to 1941 (1.44 million).
- However, as a percentage of the Indian population, Jainism declined in the same period (0.49% to 0.37%).
- After Indian independence from Great Britain (1947), such nudity laws were abolished.



Holy Books (Upangas)

- The Aupapatika (spontaneously arising)
- The Rajaprasniya (relating to questions of King Prasenajit)
- The Jivajivabhigama (understanding of the animate and inanimate)
- The Prajnapanana (enunciation)
- The Suryaprajnapti (moon and sun)
- The Jambudvipaprajnapti (description of the island of the Roseapple tree)
- The Candraprajnapti (moon and sun)
- Books 8-12 deal with the results of actions

Holy Books (Agamas/Angas)

The Acara (behavior)

The Sutrakrta (relating to heretical views)

The Sthana (possibilities)

The Samavaya (combinations)

The Vyakhyaprajnapti (exposition of explanations)

The Jnatadharmakathah (stories of knowledge and righteousness)

The Upasakadasah (ten chapters on lay attenders)

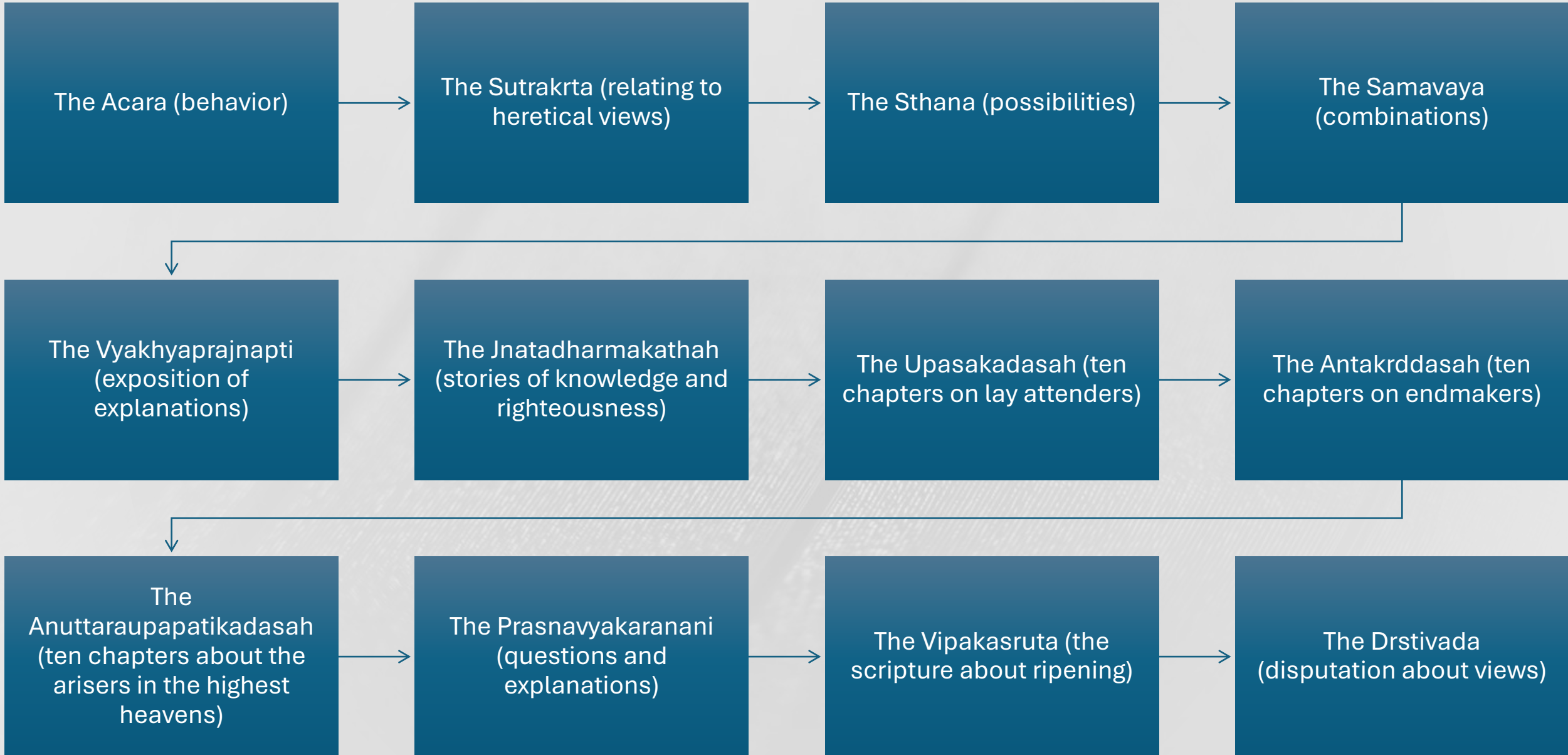
The Antakrddasah (ten chapters on endmakers)

The Anuttaraupapatikadasah (ten chapters about the arisers in the highest heavens)

The Prasnavyakaranani (questions and explanations)

The Vipakasruta (the scripture about ripening)

The Drstivada (disputation about views)

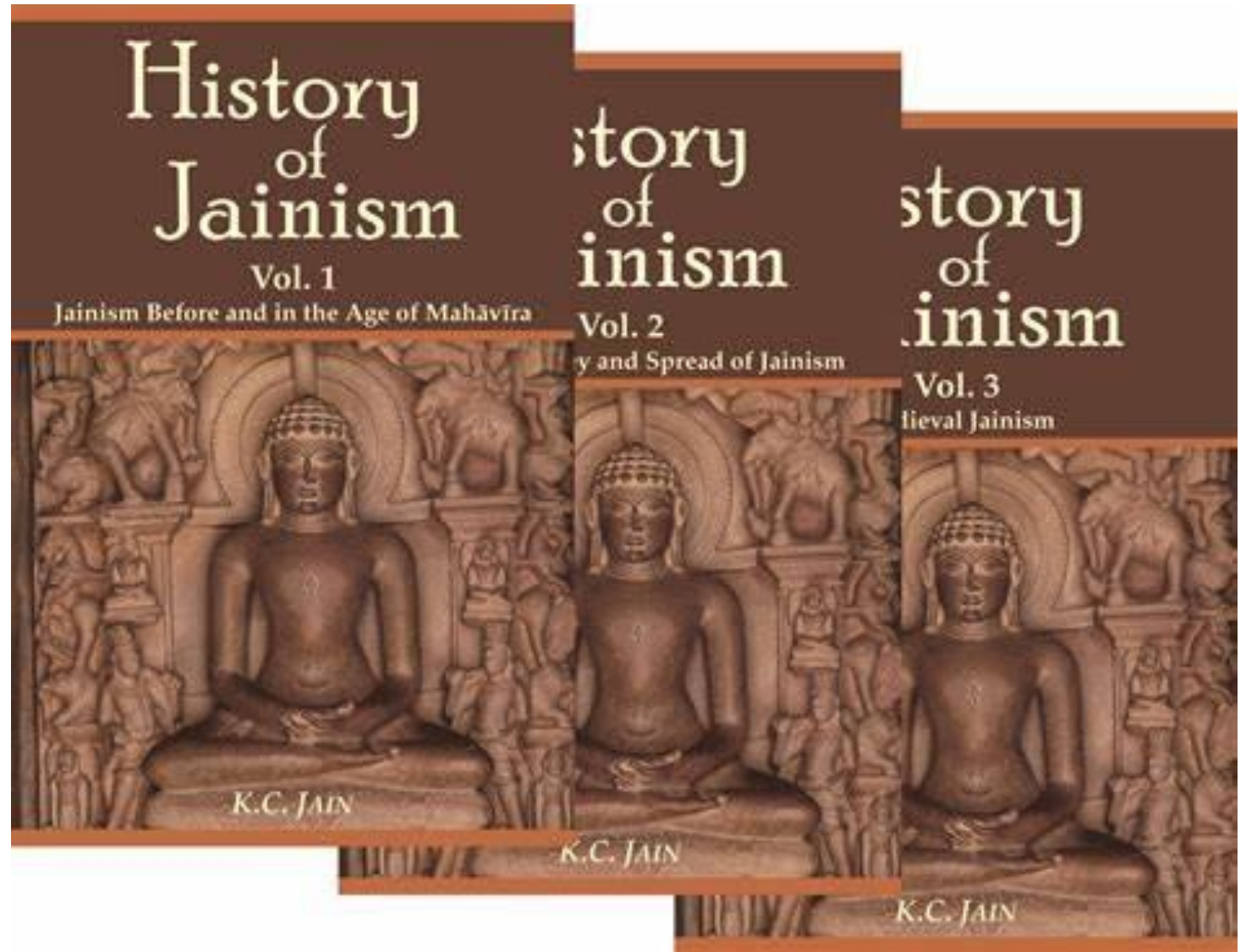


Holy Books (Chedasutras)

- The Dasasutraskandha
- The Kalpasutra (monastic law)
- The Vyavahara (rules for nuns and monks)
- The Nisitha (atonements for breeches of ascetic behavior)
- The Mahanisutra
- The Pankalpa (lost or never existed)
- The Jitakalpa

Holy Books (Mulasutras)

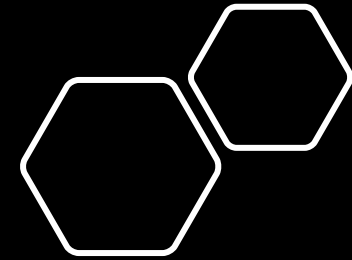
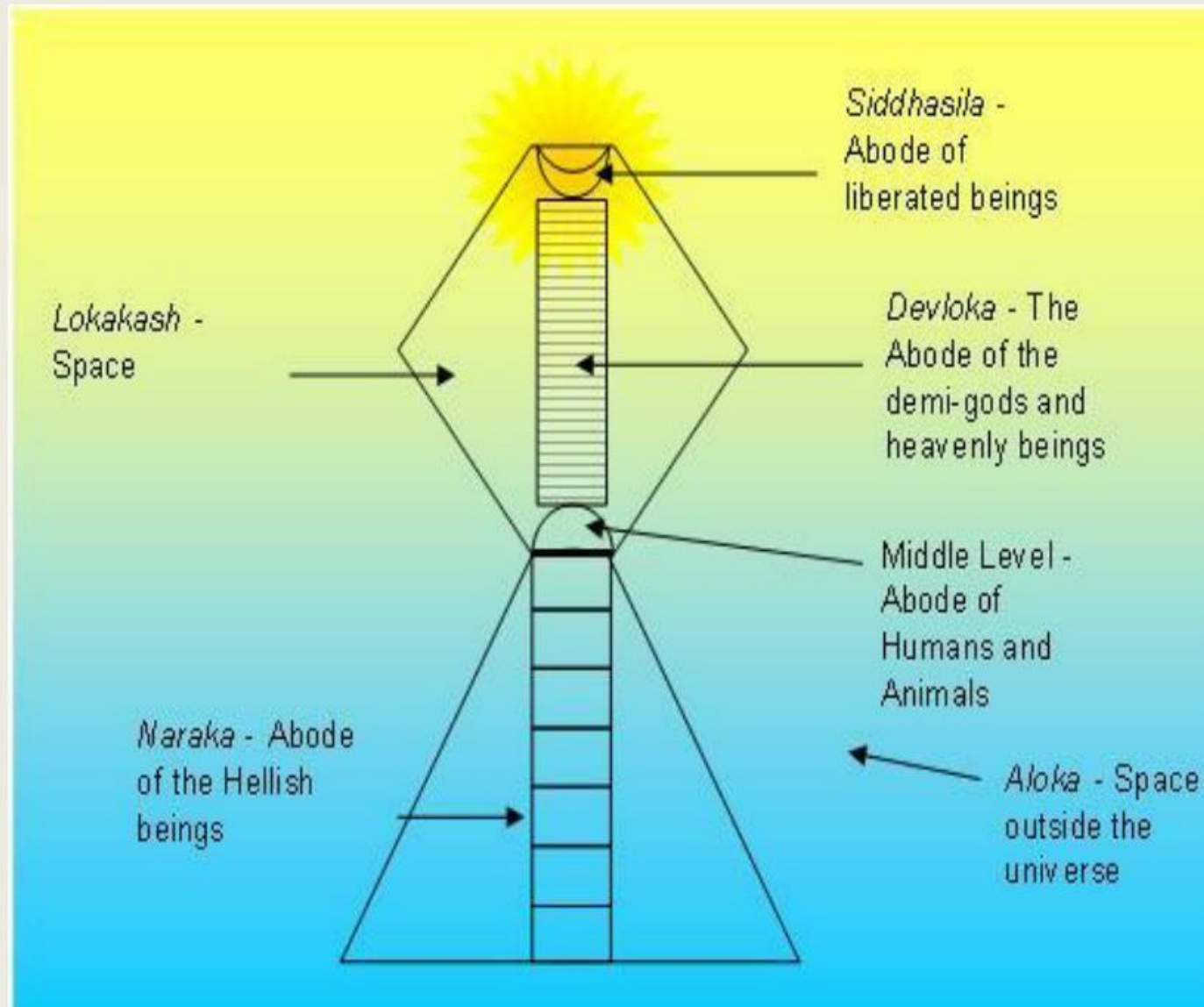
- The Uttaradhyayana (later chapters)
- The Dasavaikalika (ten evening treatises)
- The Avasyaka (obligatory)
- The Pindaniryukti and Oghaniryukti (alms and care of monastic equipment)



Jain Beliefs (1)

- Jains are typically polytheist or atheist. They generally hold that all sentient beings are gods but are in spiritual bondage. This bondage occurs because people do not have the right perception, right knowledge, and right conduct.
- The universe consists of seven levels, including the **Supreme Abode** (dwelling place of liberated souls), **Upper World** (abode of heavenly beings), **Middle World** (earth and visible universe), **Nether World** (seven hells, with varying types and degrees of suffering), **Nigoda** (abode of the lowest forms of life), **Universe Space** (clouds that envelop the upper world), and the **Space Beyond** (an immeasurable realm without properties).

The Jain Universe



Jain Beliefs (2)

- The universe contains two kinds of objects, living and nonliving. Nonliving objects have five characteristics.
 - They consume space (akasa).
 - They endure for a specified time (kaal).
 - They are constituted with matter (pudgala).
 - Fourth and fifth, these objects display motion (dharmastikay) and rest (adharmastikay).
- All objects, living and nonliving, include the following three characteristics. They originate (utpada), are destroyed (vyaya), and display some amount of permanence (dhrauvya).

Transmigrating Souls (Samsari Jiva)

Amanaskas: Beings not capable of reasoning.

Samanaskas: Beings capable of reasoning.

Based on Reality (English translation of the Jain text, Sarvarthasiddhi)
by S.A. Jain



- 1. Sense organ of touch,
- 2. Strength of body or energy,
- 3. Respiration,
- 4. Life-duration.

- 5. Sense of Taste,
- 6. Organ of Speech

- 7. Sense of Smell

- 8. Sense of Sight

- 9. Sense of Hearing

- 10. Mind*

According to the Sacred Jain text, *Tattvarthasutra*: (The two kinds of transmigrating souls are those), with and without minds.

Sthavara -
Immobile beings

Trasa -
Mobile beings

Jain Beliefs (3)

- Jains posit that five types of benevolent beings (*panch parameshthi*) help humans in their earthly journey. Therefore, they should be thanked and praised. These beings include
 - Supreme humans (arihantas)
 - Perfect souls (siddhas)
 - Master teachers (acharyas)
 - Scholarly monks (upadhyayas)
 - Ascetics (sadhus).
- Jains admit, however, that their beliefs may be mistaken (anekantvada). To a Jain, time (kalchakra) has no beginning or end.

Lifestyle

- Jain monks are divided into two main groups.
- Svetambara (white clad) Jains wander about seeking food and enlightenment from Jain laypersons in the society in which they live. Men and women.
- Digambara (sky clad, naked) Jains walk naked on their journeys. Jains are required to abandon all material possessions. Their diet must be strictly vegetarian. Usually only men.
- Jains cannot visit violence on any living thing, even insects. Jain monks and nuns will frequently carry a broom when they walk so that they can sweep insects out of the way rather than stepping on them.



Jain Monks

- Digambara and Svetambara

Jain Daily Prayer

- Bowing to Arihantas
- Bowing to Siddhas
- Bowing to Acharyas
- Bowing to upadhyayas (learned teachers)
- Bowing to holy men
- Performing five obeisances
- Eradicating all defilements
- Seeking happiness
- Giving praise.

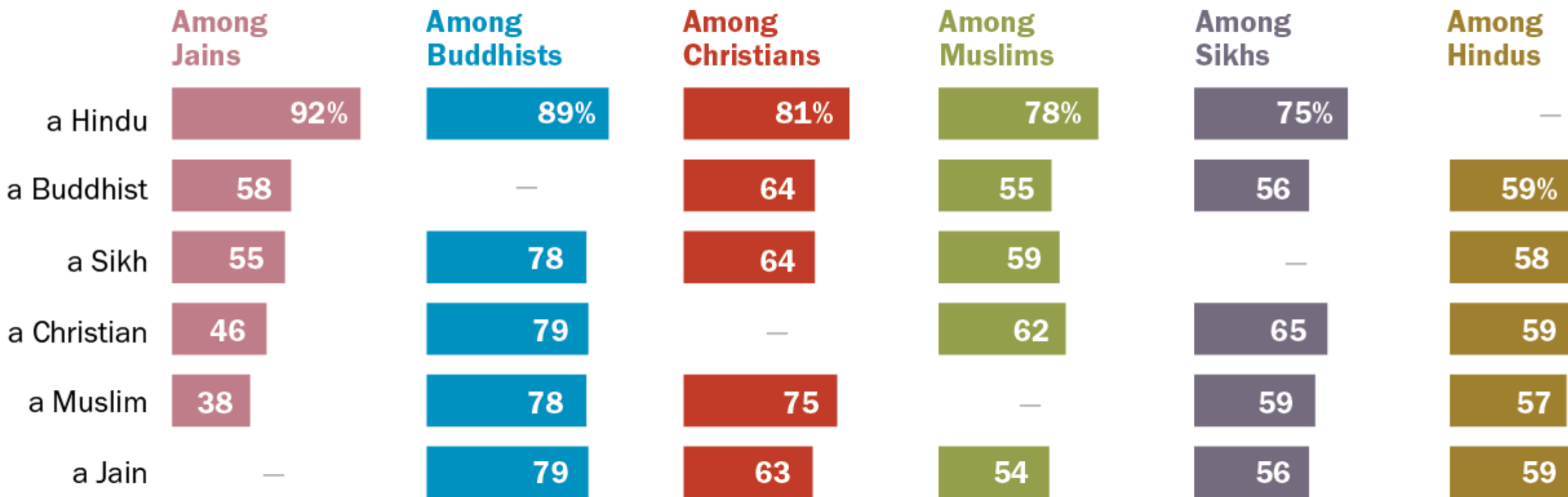


Jainism Today

- Jainism is alive, albeit shrinking relative to the population size today. Jains are scattered around the globe from east to west, but the vast majority live in India.
- Jains have a fertility rate of 1.2, the lowest in all India.
- Jains compete in a tough religious marketplace, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists Sikhs, Jews, and others. Christians must reach out to these millions and share the real good news...the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

About nine-in-ten Indian Jains willing to accept a Hindu as neighbor, fewer willing to accept a Muslim or Christian

% of Indian adults who say they would be willing to accept _____ as a neighbor



Note: Respondents were not asked about having followers of their own religious tradition as neighbors (for example, Christians were not asked about having Christian neighbors).

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation”

Conclusion

- Discussion



References

- H. Wayne House, Charts of World Religions, Zondervan, 2006