

BOOK REVIEW

JAINS IN INDIA AND ABROAD: A SOCIOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

Editor: Prakash C. Jain

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The original publication of Prakash C. Jain's *Jains in India and Abroad: A Sociological Introduction* in 2011 contributed significantly to Jain studies. In general, Jainism, the Jains, and Jain cultural products have been relatively neglected in modern academia; while this is true even of Jain philosophy and literature, social scientists in particular have taken little heed of the Jain community. One volume cannot rectify this situation alone, but this book presents an impressive range of data related to multiple areas of Jain sociology, not neglecting the diaspora. This second edition incorporates an entirely new chapter on the vital topic of the status of Jain women and replaces data from the 2001 Indian census with data from the most recent census year, 2011. The bibliography has also been updated.

After two chapters introducing the Jain community and the Jain way of life, the third addresses Jain population and demography, primarily on the basis of the 2011 census data. The reader learns, among other facts, that there are fewer Jains in India (4.45 million in 2011) than Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, or Buddhists (62-63); that the Jain population increased between 2001 and 2011 by a smaller percentage than any of these other communities (64); that the Jain literacy rate is higher than that of any other community (78-79); and that 79.68% of Jains lived in urban areas in 2011 (68). Jain notes that the community's demographic "profile... comfortably puts the community into the category of an urban middle and/or upper middle class" (84).

The fourth chapter is concerned with the small but influential Jain diaspora and its connections to its ancestral homeland. Jain's remarks on diasporic Jain communities in Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, the United States, and Canada incorporate information on the history of the Jain presence in each area as well as the current situation. The chapter also includes discussion of a number of entities that connect Jains in and outside India, which brings out the significant and multifaceted nature of these linkages. Academic entities—including ISJS, a clear example of international collaboration, which owes its existence to associations based in North America and the UK and is "supervised by a joint Indo-American Academic Council" (113)—feature here alongside Siddhachalam, a Jain pilgrimage site established in the US by the Indian-born monk Muni Sushil Kumarji (116), Sarvodaya Teerth, a "retirement and

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vacation resort community” in the US created by the Indian nun Acharya Chandanaji (117), and organizations such as the Jain International Trade Organization (111-12) and Jain Social Groups’ International Federation (112-13).

The fifth, completely new, chapter addresses the status of Jain women. In addition to female asceticism and relevant aspects of Jain law, Jain discusses Jain women’s social, economic, political, and demographic circumstances. The picture presented is mixed, although Jain clearly shows that Jain women’s status has improved dramatically over the last century. The 1931 census report shows that the proportion of widows among Jain women (221 out of 1,000) was above the national average (157 out of 1,000) and higher than that reported for any of Hindus, Muslims, or Sikhs, a fact that Jain attributes to a high rate of polygyny among Jains at the time (125). Additionally, child marriage of Jain girls was common until the mid-twentieth century. Now that “monogamy is the widely prevalent norm” (124), the proportion of widows has contracted dramatically: the 2011 census report shows that, out of the six major religious communities, there were fewer widows than among Jains only among Muslims (125). The percentage of married female Jains who got married below the age of 18 was down to 16.2% in 2011, and more than half of those had married at 16 or 17 rather than a younger age (126). Although Jain presents this information in Chapter 3, it is appropriate to note here that today’s Jains are the major religious community with the highest female literary rate, 92.91% as of 2011 (79), but also the community with the lowest female work participation rate, 12.27% (82). More concerning, there were only 954 females to every 1,000 male Jains in 2011 (130), and the gender ratio among children aged 0-6 was even lower (887 according to Chapter 5 [130], 889 according to Chapter 3 [72]). The difference between these ratios indicates that devaluation of females in favor of males is not a fading legacy among the contemporary Jain community, but remains a dispiritingly lively reality.

The sixth chapter, “Towards a Sociology of the Jain Community,” presents a literature review and identifies a variety of topics that could profitably be investigated by future scholars. These range from “the causes and effects of falling population growth rate, low sex ratio and allied aspects of fertility behaviour” (136) and “[p]atriarchy and its impact on the status and role on [*sic*] women and youth” (144) to “the entire range of political activities of Jains at national, provincial and local levels” (152). Jain also discusses various conceptual frameworks of which other researchers might usefully avail themselves in their investigations (166-67).

A recurrent presence haunting the text is that of Max Weber, whose study of Hinduism and Buddhism incorporates (202-17) “the very first serious sociological treatment of the Jains” (Cort 9). Weber turned to the study of Asian religions after writing *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (published in 1904-05), in which he argued that the “Protestant ethic” contributed to the development of capitalism in the West. This ethic was an “amalgam” of “the rejection of monasticism and its replacement by Luther’s idea that the pursuit of a manner of life pleasing to God could only be pursued in a worldly ‘calling’” and the doctrine of predestination, which “blocked completely any possibility of *achieving* salvation by means of good works or rituals”: since “uncertainty about one’s state of grace... was intolerable,” it “came to be thought that ceaseless work in one’s worldly calling... could be an indication of

an individual's state of grace" (Babb 124). In his brief discussion of the Jains, Weber links their economic success with their religion and makes multiple comparisons between Jains and Protestants—e.g., writing that "[d]er aus der Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Puritanismus bekannte »asketische Sparzwang« wirkte auch bei ihnen im Sinn der Verwertung des akkumulierten Besitzes als Erwerbskapital statt als Gebrauchs- oder Rentenvermögen" (the "ascetic compulsion to save" known from the economic history of Puritanism worked in their [the Jains'] case also in the sense of the employment of accumulated property as investment capital instead of money for use or rent) (213)—but "never actually [claims] that the Jains [are] Indic versions of the ascetic Protestants of the West" (Babb 127). Despite the "deeply flawed" (Babb 126) nature of Weber's understanding of Jain practice, based on sources that "did not allow him to distinguish clearly between ideological prescriptions for lay life and the actual practices" (Cort 9), his analysis had a powerful effect on Jain during his graduate student years, inspiring him to write a term paper that would become the final chapter of the book under review (vii), which engages with Weberian views in multiple sections (153-64). In the case of Jainism and the Protestant ethic, Jain (163) endorses Nevaskar's statement that "the Jains... developed most of the essentials of the spirit of modern capitalism centuries ago" (235), made in a book whose "Jains-as-Protestants argument" goes beyond Weber's own remarks (Babb 127).

This updated edition of *Jains in India and Abroad* deserves a place in the library of any scholar whose Jainological interests extend beyond philosophy and texts and into the circumstances of the Jains as a living community. The wealth of demographic information presented makes it a valuable reference work (despite the minor slips that are perhaps inevitable in a work bringing together so many data), and Jain's engagement with work on relevant topics by other scholars and extensive bibliography open avenues for further reading. It is to be hoped that junior scholars looking for research topics will take up some of the suggestions he lays out and expand the body of available literature that applies the tools of the social sciences to the Jain community.

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