THE JAIN VISION
“The fundamental aim of Jainism is to awaken human beings to the plight of their suffering and to help them achieve liberation from this suffering.”
(Koller p.24)
Emphasis is placed on self-reliance

Examples of individual success are found in those who have conquered suffering called *Jinas* (Conquerors) or *Tirthankaras* (Ford-Makers) who provide models for one to emulate.

Divine salvation is not expected or sought.

True understanding of the causes of suffering and forces which bind one to a suffering existence is essential.
Origins of Jainism

- History – unclear – began during period spanning 800-500 BCE
- The first Tirthankara is thought to be Rishabha
- The key Tirthankara of the present era is Mahavira (599-529 BCE) the 24th ford-maker, who was responsible for the transmission of the Jain 12 scriptures – Angas

- Rishabha & Mahavira
Karma is seen as the material embodiment of vicious and ignorant acts – it aggregates and obscures the soul (the Jiva) which is thought to be “pure luminosity”

The soul – Jiva - is pure bliss and pure energy – omniscient knowledge – every living thing has one and is essentially all equally divine

The body – Pudgala – (mass energy) is composed of karmic matter defiles this state – it is a constant state of creation and destruction and “is constituted by an infinite number of invisible and indivisible atoms…. ”

(Koller, p.26)
“There was once a man who, oppressed by his poverty left home and set out for another city. But after a few days he lost his way and found himself wandering in a dense forest. There, he saw a mad elephant angrily rushing toward him with upraised trunk. Immediately he ran to flee there appeared before him a terrible demoness with a sharp sword in her hand, in fear and trembling, he looked about him in all directions for a way of escape until he saw a great tree and ran towards it. But he could not climb its smooth hole, and afraid of death, hung himself into an old well nearby. As he fell he managed to catch hold of a clump of reeds growing from the wall, and clung to them desperately.

For below him he could see a mass of writhing snakes, enraged at the sound of his falling, and at the very bottom, identifiable from the hiss of its breath, a mighty black python with its mouth wide open to receive him. And even as he realized that his life could last only as long as the reeds held fast, he looked up and saw two mice, one black and one white, gnawing at the roots. Meanwhile, the elephant, enraged at not catching its victim, charged the tree and dislodged a honeycomb. It fell upon the man clinging so precariously. But even as the bees angrily stung his body, by chance a drop of honey fell on his brow, rolled down his face and reached his lips, to bring a moment’s sweetness. And he longed for yet more drops and so forgot the perils of his existence.” (Ninian Smart, jainworld.com)
Symbolic Interpretation:

- The man is the soul.
- His wandering in the forest is existence.
- The wild elephant is death.
- The demoness is old age.
- The tree is salvation, where there is no fear of death, but which no sensual man can attain.
- The well is human life.
- The snakes are passions.
- The python is hell.
- The clump of reeds is man’s allotted span.
- The black and white mice the dark and light halves of the month.
- The bees are diseases and troubles.
- The drops of honey are but trivial pleasures.
- How can a wise man want them, in the midst of such peril and hardship? (Ninian Smart, jainworld.com)
Karma is divided into eight major groups – four of which are destructive and four of which are non-destructive.

The worse is those karmic particles attracted to the jiva/soul by ignorant and hurtful actions.

“…all karmic bondage is earned by the actions producing it.” (Koller, p.28)

Karma produces effects and those effects which have not been completed upon one’s death will attach to another physical body until spent.
Liberation: Fourteen Stages of Purification

1: beginning
2: lingering vision – we first glimpse the soul but its effects quickly are forgotten
3: stronger faith but powerful doubt
4: genuine awakening – true and joyous glimpse of the soul
5: controlling the passions
6: moral discipline
7: self-restraint perfected
8: deeper enlightenment
9: advanced spiritual activity
10: complete self restraint with flickering greed
11: suppression of even the subtlest form of greed
12: complete self restraint with eliminated passions
13: omniscience with physical activity
14: moksha – liberation of the Jiva (occurs at the last instant before death)
Samyak jnana - Right Knowledge - there is a distinction between ordinary knowledge and true insight/omniscience

Reality is very complex and rich and has many sides: anekanta (p.31) and because reality is continually changing, ordinary knowledge, “based on perception, reason and the authority of others” (p.30) must always be relative to one’s perspective – thus all such claims are tentative. (see next slide – the Jain story of the five blind men)

Full knowledge is possible only when the limiting conditions are recognized and overcome.

Today this is thought to require having a proper knowledge of the Jain scriptures.

Some writers describe right knowledge as meaning having a pure soul; a soul that is free from attachment and desire... others say that a person who has right knowledge will naturally free themselves from attachment and desire, and so achieve peace of mind.
What is an elephant to a blind man?

- It may be a snake
- It may be a rope
- It may be a tree trunk
- It may be a fan
- It may be a wall
Samyak darshana - Deep Faith – a vision of reality – not blind faith in scriptures - more like “a flash of insight” (p.32) which allows one to overcome one’s limitations

Because of the relative nature of ordinary knowledge, one must have faith in the texts and in the examples set by the Tirthankaras that true knowledge/bliss/moksha is possible

This doesn't mean believing what you're told, but means seeing (hearing, feeling, etc.) things properly, and avoiding preconceptions and superstitions that get in the way of seeing clearly.

“Some books call samyak darshana ‘right perception.’ You can't achieve this unless you are determined to find the truth, and distinguish it from untruth.”

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/jainism/beliefs/threejewels.shtml)
**Samyak charitra** - Pure Conduct – brings a halt to the passions causing karmic bondage

This means living your life according to Jain ethical rules, to avoid doing harm to living things and freeing yourself from attachment and other impure attitudes and thoughts.

Jains believe that a person who has right faith and right knowledge will be motivated and able to achieve right conduct.

Many Jains believe that a person without right faith and right knowledge cannot achieve right conduct - so it's no use following scripture and ritual for the wrong reasons (e.g. so that other people will think you are a good person).

(see five primary virtues in next slide)
Five Vows of Jainism

The 5 primary virtues which constitute pure conduct:

- **Ahimsa**: Non-Hurting
- **Satyagraha**: Truthfastness
- **Asteya**: Non-stealing
- **Brahmacarya**: Sexual Purity
- **Aparigraha**: Non-grasping
The most fundamental value of Jainism is nonviolence, or *ahimsa*. This word is usually found on the Jain symbol of the open palm (which means "stop"). *Ahimsa* is the first of the vows taken by both Jain householders and monks. *Ahimsa* means harming no living being as well as protecting all living beings from harm.

While several religions practice nonviolence and peace as a fundamental principle, Jainism is unique in extending this principle to all *jivas* (living beings). For Jains, living beings include not only humans and animals, but everything one finds on earth. *Ahimsa* must therefore be extended not only to humans and animals, but also soil, sand, oceans, fires, insects, microbes and plants.

For this reason, most Jains are not just vegetarians but "fruitarians" - they eat only fruit, nuts and milk. These foods are acceptable because they are only the by-products of the living beings and not the living beings themselves. To pull up a carrot or chop a potato would be to do violence to a living being (actually several living beings, as root vegetables are seen as multi-organic and therefore multi-souled).

This unique concept of nonviolence also explains why some Jain monks and nuns wear masks over their mouths and noses or carry whisks with which they brush chairs before sitting. To inhale or squash even a microbe would constitute violence to a living thing, resulting in unwanted karma.
There are both laypersons and monks/nuns who practice Jainism. Monks and nuns undertake the ascetic life full-time.

In addition to keeping the five vows carefully, Jain monks and nuns observe other special practices that set them apart. They do not eat when it is dark or in front of a layperson, they do not accept food that is cooked for them, they do not wear shoes, they do not stay in one place for a prolonged period of time, they do not touch any person of the opposite sex, they wear simple white clothes or nothing at all (nuns always practice the former) and they do not create art or get involved in social matters.

Monks are expected to be homeless, shave their heads and beg for food. The vow of *ahimsā* requires them to be vegetarians. Also on this principle, some wear masks over their mouth and nose to avoid inadvertently harming insects or microbes by inhaling them.

To more completely demonstrate their non-attachment to material possessions, some sects eat out of their hands rather than own a bowl, and go naked rather than own even a simple white cloth. The latter group are referred to as *digambaras*, or "sky-clad." (The debate over whether one should wear nothing or a white cloth that resulted in a major schism in Jainism.)
The Jain Symbol:

World View - 14 Raj Lok

The four states the soul may live in:

Heaven
Human
Animal
Hell

Adobe of liberated soul (SIDDH LOK)

Right Faith
Right Conduct
Right Knowledge

The three paths to liberation

Brief explanation of Our Logo
('14 Raj Lok' - as it is called)

Non-Violence

परमश्लोकाः जीवानम् Mutual assistance of all beings