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**Health, Well-Being, and the Ascetic Ideal:
Modern Yoga in the Jain Terapanth**

by

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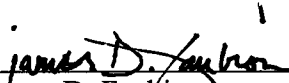
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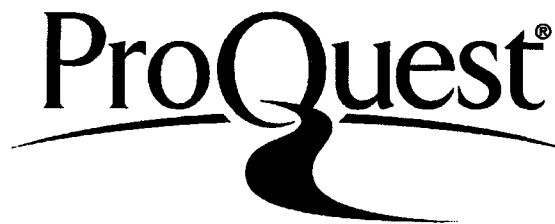
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ABSTRACT

Health, Well-Being, and the Ascetic Ideal: Modern Yoga in the Jain Terapanth

by

Andrea R. Jain

This dissertation evaluates *preksha dhyana*, a form of modern yoga introduced by the Jain Shvetambara Terapanth in 1975. Modern yoga emerged as a consequence of a complex encounter of Indian yogic gurus, American and British metaphysical thinkers, and modern ideas about science and health. I provide a brief history of the Terapanth from its eighteenth-century founder, Bikshu, to its current monastic guru, Mahaprajna, who constructed *preksha dhyana*. I evaluate the historical trajectory that led from the Terapanth's beginnings as a sect that maintained a world-rejecting ascetic ideal to its late twentieth-century introduction of *preksha dhyana*, which is popularly disseminated as a practice aimed at health and well-being. The practice and ideology of *preksha dhyana* is, however, context specific. In the Terapanthi monastic context, it functions as a metaphysical, mystical, and ascetic practice. In this way, it intersects with classical schools of yoga, which aim at ascetic purification and *release from the world*. In its popular dissemination by the *samanis*, female members of an intermediary Terapanthi monastic order, it functions as a physiotherapeutic practice. The *samanis* teach yoga to students in India, the United States, and Britain whose interests are primarily in yoga's physical and psychological benefits. In this way, it is a case study of modern yoga, which aims at the enhancement of the body and *life in the world*. I demonstrate how the *samanis* are mediators of their guru, Mahaprajna, and thus resolve ancient and contemporary tensions between ascetic and worldly values. I also demonstrate how Mahaprajna and the

samanis construct *preksha dhyana* as a form of modern yoga by appropriating scientific discourse and attributing physiological function to the yogic subtle body. I argue that *preksha dhyana* can be located at an intersection with late capitalist cultural processes as well as New Age spirituality insofar as its proponents participate in the transnational yoga market. Finally, I conclude with some thoughts on the successes and failures of the Terapanth in its attempt to globally disseminate *preksha dhyana*.

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Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Preface	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter One The Terapanth: A History	41
Chapter Two <i>Preksha</i> as Ascetic Ritual: Metaphysics and Mysticism in the Monastic Context	83
Chapter Three <i>Chakras</i> and Endocrine Glands: <i>Preksha</i> and the Appropriation of Science	119
Chapter Four Mediators of the Guru: The <i>Samani</i> Order and the Western Dissemination of <i>Preksha</i>	152
Chapter Five The Intersection of <i>Preksha</i> and Late Capitalism: Consumer Culture, Commodity Exchange, and the Sacred	188
Conclusion	226
Bibliography	249

Preface

Methodology

My first ethnographic encounter with the Jain Terapanth was quite literally face-to-face. I had just arrived in the town of Ladnun in the Marwar district of Rajasthan and was adjusting to its ascetic landscape. Ladnun is in the desert. It was the middle of the summer, and the temperature was well over a hundred degrees Fahrenheit. The sand was in my hair, clothes, and lungs, and I could even feel it crunch between my teeth. It was my first meeting with Mahaprajna, the *acharya* or “monastic leader” and guru of the Terapanth.¹ I entered a large room with almost nothing in it but five to six *munis*.² Mahaprajna sat on a short table that elevated him about a foot above his male disciples who surrounded him. The *acharya* was an elderly man, with a bald head and bare feet. He wore simple white robes and a *muhpatti* or “mouth covering.” After talking for a while about his view on what it means to be “Jain,” he turned to me and asked if I was a “Jain,” to which I replied, “No.” He then asked, “Why wouldn’t you want to be a Jain?” In his encounter with an American scholar of Jain traditions, Mahaprajna was more concerned with defining Jain identity in terms of a desire for “universal peace and health” rather than in terms of membership in a particular religio-social group committed to a shared ontology, soteriology, and history. Why would anyone not want “peace” and “health”?

Although such distinguishing categories as “Jain” and “Hindu” that we rely on today to talk about South Asia religions have been far more fluid and unstable throughout the history of religions in South Asia, it would be correct to state that the category of

¹ Ladnun, Rajasthan, July 1, 2006.

² “*Muni*” or “silent one” is the most common title ascribed to Terapanthi monastics.

“Jain” is at least useful for identifying those individuals over the past twenty-five hundred years or so who have shared a certain dualist ontological assessment of the world, which was tied to a particular understanding of history, and resulted in the construction of a particularly ascetic soteriology. Yet for Mahaprajna, I did not need to state my position on such matters in order to self-identify as “Jain.” Rather, I only had to commit myself to such goals as universal peace and health. I was surprised to hear this from someone who was a Jain ascetic himself and thus embodied the very ideal that results from a characteristically “Jain” worldview. And thus in this dissertation, I seek to understand how and why this position on the part of a Jain ascetic is possible. In order to do that, I have adopted an interdisciplinary approach, one that uses ethnographic, historical, and sociological methods.

With regard to my ethnography, I had to move beyond this face-to-face encounter with the *acharya* and his immediate community and move from place to place in a methodological approach that George Marcus terms “multi-sited ethnography.”³ With regard to the nature of ethnography, Marcus states, “ethnography is predicated upon attention to the everyday, an intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities and groups.”⁴ In order for my object of study to be ethnographically accounted for, I could not limit myself to a face-to-face encounter with a single site. Mahaprajna, after all, prescribes his path toward peace and health for all human beings and thus sends his female proselytizing disciples, the *samanis*, throughout the world to disseminate his rendition of Jain thought and practice. Mahaprajna ascribes value and sanctity to a yogic system he constructed called *preksha dhyana*, and the *samanis* disperse to numerous

³ George E. Marcus, “Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (October 1995): 95-117.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 99.

locations with the mission to disseminate that system. With *preksha dhyana* as its primary subject, this dissertation thus required an ethnography of multiple sites.

A multi-sited ethnography, as elegantly articulated by Marcus, “moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space.”⁵ Such a methodological approach, according to Marcus, is a response to empirical changes in the world that result in the shifting locations of cultural production.⁶ The empirical changes in the world that I engage in the present study have occurred since the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century and have involved processes of globalization, transnationalism, and late capitalism. In other words, this dissertation is concerned with a cultural object, *preksha dhyana*, that I argue is in part a product of such processes. The construction, dissemination, and practice of *preksha dhyana* are the key dimensions for connecting multiple sites.

I will not only evaluate *preksha dhyana*, but also the processes that produce it. Marcus argues that a certain assumption underlies the multi-sited ethnographic method: “Any ethnography of a cultural formation in the world system is also an ethnography of the system... it is the cultural formation, produced in several different locales, rather than the conditions of a particular set of subjects that is the object of study.”⁷ Thus, by means of my analysis of *preksha dhyana*, I hope to further understand the transnational socio-historical context within which it exists.

From Ladnun, I set out to follow *preksha dhyana* through a series of associations and relationships to Delhi, London, and Houston. I could have followed it farther, to

⁵ Ibid., 96.

⁶ Ibid., 97.

⁷ Ibid., 99.

other parts of the United States, Europe, and Asia, but I decided to limit my ethnography to four sites. After all, transnationalism defies the ability to locate any cultural object at one site or sites. And in the case of the Terapanth, we cannot locate it in four sites. However, as a practical move, this dissertation uses four sites as a way to structure an analysis that attempts to account for the construction, dissemination, and practice of *preksha dhyana*.⁸

My ethnographic account is informed by a hermeneutic analysis of Mahaprajna's written work on *preksha dhyana*. I rely on some Hindi language texts as well as some English language texts, which are the English-language renditions of Mahaprajna's texts produced by Mahaprajna's close male monastic disciples.⁹ When I rely on English language texts or excerpts, it is because I could not access such texts or excerpts in Hindi. Mahaprajna has written much on the topic of *preksha dhyana*, and his disciples consider him to be a great scholar and philosopher and emphasize the importance of his texts for understanding yoga. Devoted disciples read these texts, and the *samanis* have studied them intimately. Furthermore, direct access to Mahaprajna himself is quite limited. He is now over ninety years old and has hundreds of disciples requesting his time on a daily basis. I have thus relied on a critical interpretation of his literature as a key source for his thought on the topic of *preksha dhyana*.

This dissertation is not just an ethnographic and hermeneutic account of *preksha dhyana* but also a sociological analysis. Max Weber argues that religion is concerned

⁸ I have also gathered material on other sites at which *preksha* is constructed and practiced through email correspondences with proponents of *preksha*.

⁹ I call such texts "renditions" instead of "translations" because the "translators" have not attempted to provide literal translations of Mahaprajna's Hindi-language texts but often supplement the translated material with additional text.

with the salvation of individuals in terms of their relationship to the world.¹⁰ In other words, it is a balance between self-development or salvation and worldly or social contingency. It thus requires a compromise between ideal commitments and the world, hence the processes of routinization and institutionalization. Such a sociological perspective is necessary for understanding *preksha dhyana* as a product of a religious institution with ideal commitments and its encounters with particular socio-historical phenomena.

In addition to providing an ethnographic account and a sociological analysis, this dissertation is also historical. I provide a concise history of the Terapanth that compiles details strewn about in academic articles and textbooks on the Jain tradition, none of which alone provide a full and detailed history of the emergence, major events, and current state of the Terapanthi sect. By putting such sources together along with historical details collected during my field research, I concisely articulate a history that I believe is necessary for understanding recent innovations in the Terapanth and may also be useful for future scholars of the Terapanth.

Finally, with regard to my methods, the analysis in the current study is comparative. I evaluate *preksha dhyana* as a case study of both classical yoga and modern yoga. Furthermore, as argued by Marcus, multi-sited ethnography is “comparative... as a function of the fractured, discontinuous plane of movement and discovery among sites.”¹¹ Thus comparison as a method is vital to my analysis, which seeks to understand *preksha dhyana* in its multifarious forms and locations. As I will

¹⁰ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963. First published 1922), 207.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

demonstrate, the construction and practice of *preksha dhyana* are perpetually shifting as one moves from one context to another.

Coming to the Current Project

When I began my study of South Asian religious traditions, I was most interested in the shifting nature of religion in its multifarious orientations toward the human body. In other words, I was interested in the changes undergone by religious individuals and institutions with regard to their practical and metaphysical positions vis-à-vis the human body. In my encounters with different religio-somatic phenomena, I consistently found myself asking: How is this idea or practice indicative of adaptation to shifting socio-historical circumstances? I was particularly interested in these questions with regard to the historical and contemporary structure and social implications of ascetic religious orientations toward the body.

In 2006, I traveled to India and encountered numerous representatives of different Jain sects and traditions. More than by any other ethnographic encounter, I was fascinated by what I witnessed in the radically ascetic landscape of Ladnun. It was there, as described above, that I first met the *acharya* of the Terapanthi Jain sect, Mahaprajna. I could not grasp, and thus was set on a trajectory that would involve three and a half years of research, the contrast between the world-, society-, and body-negating ascetic ideology of the Terapanth and the active concern with universal peace, physical health, and psychological well-being of Mahaprajna and his female disciples, the *samanis*. In their propagation of *preksa dhyana*, I was sure that I was witnessing an act of adaptation to the contemporary socio-historical context where there exists a transnational yoga market in

which the demands and trends are for yogic systems aimed at immanent, not transcendent, goals. Furthermore, the appropriation of scientific discourse and certain yogic practices usually not present in Jain traditions seemed additional evidence of adaptation. And there was more. Classical Jain cultural symbols oriented around ascetic purification, such as fasting and vegetarianism, had been re-interpreted in bio-medical terminology.

Upon my return to Houston, I immediately set about exploring the Terapanthi center in my own city, Houston, Texas, where two *samanis* live and teach, and I found an even greater contrast between what I understood as the Jain ascetic ideal of the Terapanth and what the *samanis* were teaching there to members of the Jain diaspora. I realized quickly that the phenomena I witnessed amongst these Jain monastics were transnational in scope. Individuals in India and in the United States were undergoing shared cultural processes.

Thus I turned to sociological methods in order to understand how the symbols, practices, and ideas I encountered in the contemporary Terapanth relate to time, place, and socio-economic circumstances. How, if at all, are the Terapanthis invoking transnational cultural symbols? According to Weber, religion poses a particular problem: one must choose between society and the Self. One must work in response to worldly contingency. I came up with the following hypothesis: *preksha dhyana* is a Terapanthi attempt to resolve the tension between the ascetic disassociation from the body, society, and world, an ideal commitment characteristic of Jain soteriology, and the popular trends and demands of the transnational yoga market in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first

century. I set out to test this hypothesis by means of a rigorous analysis of the construction and dissemination of *preksha dhyana*.

Before embarking upon that analysis of the Terapanth and *preksha dhyana*, I would like to provide some self-reflexive thoughts on the unique circumstances of my encounter with my subject. Questions with regard to religious pluralism are salient for the current study, which evaluates pluralism in the context of globalization and transnationalism, but also for me personally. After all, I am a product of such pluralism in the United States in the late twentieth century. I am the daughter of a mother who grew up in a small blue-collar Baptist community in Illinois and an Indian father from Mumbai who was raised in a Jain Digambara family. Although my ethnic background did not determine my area of research, it did frequently come up in my ethnographic encounters simply as a consequence of my last name, which is “Jain.” My consistent attempt to assert myself as “Jain... but not Jain” in the sense of name but not religious self-identity stirred interesting responses from my subjects that relate directly to questions regarding religion as a negotiation between ideal commitments and social or worldly contingency.

When my subjects were aware of my name, I was always reminded that my Jain identity was not something they were willing to compromise on in terms of their ideal commitments to a Jain philosophy that maintains karmic explanations for one’s current state in the world. In other words, they were not willing to give up their karmic explanations of my Jain-ness. For them, I was not a product of the contemporary socio-historical context and its pluralizing processes. I was a Jain because my karma determined it be so. And my persistent attempts to assert my “Jain... but not Jain” identity

just amused them, that is, they were unwilling to grant me agency in identifying as either “Jain” or “not Jain.”

My identity vis-à-vis my subjects thus changed as they learned more about me and I struggled to assert my non-apologetic position toward Jain thought and practice. I found that, given my “Jain” status, my subjects often expected that I would differentiate, in their favor of course, the “true” Jain tradition from “false” corruptions. For Jain traditions have a long history, much like religious institutions generally, of battling over authenticity. My academic colleagues and friends, on the other hand, often looked to me to reduce my subjects’ concerns with yoga and health to *mere* socio-economic and cultural adaptations. Historically, scholars of Jain traditions have evaluated certain aspects of Jain ideology or practice as not characteristically Jain, but as “cosmetic” or simply “borrowings” from other religious traditions.

The changes I find in the Terapanth do not change the soteriology of classical Jain doctrine, but contribute to the stability of the Terapanthi tradition in its present-day socio-historical context. The Terapanth seeks to globally disseminate *preksha dhyana*, which I argue is a product of the sect’s encounter with global processes and the transnational exchange of ideas. To refer to such changes as “cosmetic” or “borrowings,” however, would undermine the metaphysical and existential meanings of *preksha dhyana* for the practitioners I engaged with in my study.

It is thus neither within my capacity nor within my interests to locate a true, authentic, or original Jain form. I align myself with John Cort who argues with regard to *bhakti*, that, “the legitimacy of Jain bhakti is not a subject that is open to scholarly debate

here.”¹² Likewise, the legitimacy of Jain yoga is not a subject of debate in the current dissertation. I will demonstrate that the Terapanth undergoes certain acts of adaptation and accommodation to its current socio-historical context. However, as convincingly argued by Weber, religion generally is a process of adaptation and accommodation to the contingencies of social life. I thus remain neutral and make no attempts to locate what is “authentic” or “cosmetic” in the contemporary Jain Terapanth. My interest and capacity as a scholar are rather to demonstrate the fact that Jain ideology and practice, like religion generally, is non-stable, ever-adaptive, and never monolithic. The Terapanth and *preksha dhyana* reveal much about cultural change, and it is in an attempt to understand that change that I embark upon this study.

¹² John E. Cort, “Bhakti in the Early Jain Tradition: Understanding Devotional Religion in South Asia,” *History of Religions* 42, no. 1 (August 2002): 60.

Introduction

Jains worship ascetics. But Jains also live in the world.
Lawrence A. Babb, *Absent Lord*

Religiosity is not a stable phenomenon; adaptability is imperative for the sake of survival and development. In the history of religions, the orthodox representatives of the traditions themselves often frame change as part of reformation, a return to origins rather than as appropriation or adaptation. The tradition maintains that the reformation introduces qualities lost at some point that are now being rediscovered.¹ Accordingly, the tradition considers itself in line with the eternal orthodoxy and sees itself as “purified” from heterodoxy, which corrupted the original teaching over time.² As a study on institutional innovations in the Jain Shvetambara Terapanth, this dissertation will address the transformations in religious ideology and practice as they continually adapt to new socio-historical contexts.³

In James Laidlaw’s *Riches and Renunciation* (1995), the author states: “In recent years the Shvetambar Terapanth has been promoting what it calls a revival of ancient Jain meditation, *preksha dhyana*. It will be interesting to see how successful this is.”⁴ This dissertation is an attempt to understand the socio-historical processes underlying the late twentieth-century construction and introduction of *preksha dhyana* (henceforth, *preksha*)

¹ Olle Qvarnstrom, “Stability and Adaptability: A Jain Strategy for Survival and Growth,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 41 (1998): 47.

² Ibid. Qvarnstrom discusses this process with regard to the Jain literary tradition in the medieval period of South Asian history. For a discussion of this topic as it applies to Hindu brahmanical religious systems in South Asia, see Patrick Olivelle, *The Asrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2004. First published 1993), 244-46.

³ There are two major Jain sects: Digambara and Shvetambara. Within each, there are several sub-sects, including a Digambara Terapanth and a Shvetambara Terapanth. In this dissertation, “Terapanth” refers to the Shvetambara Terapanth exclusively.

⁴ James Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation: Religion, Economy, and Society among the Jains* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 199.

as well as to evaluate the Terapanth's "success" as a transnational Jain movement with regard to the dissemination and practice of *preksha* as a form of modern yoga. But before we can adequately address the relevant questions, we must first begin with historically contextualizing the Terapanth's innovations. Thus this introduction will lay some historical foundations on the Jain tradition, the early history and development of yoga in South Asia, and modern yoga.

Purification and the Ascetic Ideal: Classical Jain Thought and Practice

The Jain tradition emerged as part of the north Indian ascetic culture along the Ganges basin that arose in the seventh century BCE.⁵ Scholars estimate that Vardhamana Mahavira, the Great Hero (*maha-vira*) and so-called founder of the Jain tradition, died around 425 BCE. Whereas scholars maintain that he is the historical founder of the tradition, Jain doctrine considers him the most recent of twenty-four *jinas* (literally, "conquerors," a reference to the liberated beings and great teachers of the tradition). These teachers are also called *tirthankaras* or "makers of the ford," a reference to the super knowledge or omniscience of the *tirthankaras* that functions as a "ford" from *samsara* or the cycle of rebirth to *moksha* or "release" from that cycle.

⁵ Throughout this dissertation, I will use the category of "ascetic," by which I mean the following: "A voluntary, sustained, and at least partially systematic program of self-discipline and self-denial in which immediate, sensual, or profane gratifications are renounced in order to attain a higher spiritual state or a more thorough absorption in the sacred." Walter O. Kaelber, "Asceticism," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, ed. Lindsay Jones (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 526. This definition implies the dichotomy that exists between "sacred" and "profane" according to the analysis of Emile Durkheim. Durkheim argues that the sacred is antagonistic to the profane. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. First published 1912), 236. He further argues that the distinction between the sacred and profane can only be defined by their heterogeneity. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 38. In the Jain tradition, this heterogeneity is most explicitly expressed in the duality of soul (sacred) and matter (profane).

Jains maintain that *samsara* is characterized by suffering caused by violence, which is a result of all action in the world. The world is real, and the soul (*jiva* or *atma*) is absolutely distinct from it. Thus Jains hold a dualist ontology. Although most Jains are lay people and thus will not pursue this goal to its fullest in *this* lifetime, the ultimate goal is to purify the soul from accumulated karma, a material substance that attaches to the soul as a consequence of violence and traps the soul in the cycle of rebirth.⁶ In other words, classical Jain thought maintains that karma is a material substance, but there is nonetheless an “association” between karma and the soul; the two can be described as *ekaksetravagaha* or “occupying the same locus.”⁷ In other words, karma occupies the same space as the soul.⁸ One rids the soul of karma and therefore purifies the soul by means of ascetic body work and consequently moves along the *moksha marga* or “path toward release” from the material world.

Jains are well known for maintaining an ascetic ideal whereby the human must “conquer” the body through processes of withdrawal, both *of* the senses and *from* society, in order to attain advanced spiritual states. Thus historically, Jain soteriology has required the renunciation and rejection of matter (*pudgala*) especially in the form of the human body. In Laidlaw’s words, “Here, the body becomes the target of a religiosity which conceives it as fundamentally alien – an ontologically distinct other, rather than a part of the self to be properly organized.”⁹ The material world has value only insofar as it can be renounced, and thus the body has value only insofar as it can be wiped from one’s sense of Self. In other words, the ascetic strives to attain *kevala* or “isolation” of the soul *from*

⁶ “*Jiva*” is the most common Jain term for “soul,” but Jains also use “*atma*.”

⁷ Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Jaina Path of Purification* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), 113.

⁸ See Kristi L. Wiley, “Colors of the Soul: By-Products of Activity or Passions?” *Philosophy East and West* 50, no. 3 (July 2000): 351.

⁹ Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation*, 238.

the body. *Kevala* can be understood in this literal sense, but it also refers to the state of the advanced spiritual adept who experiences a direct realization of the eternal “isolation” of the soul from the body and thus achieves enlightenment (*kevala-jnana* or “knowledge of isolation [of the soul from the body]”).¹⁰

One can only achieve such advancement along the spiritual path if one adopts *ahimsa* or “non-violence.” *Ahimsa* is the preeminent virtue in Jain thought and is directly linked to the body. In fact, *himsa* or “violence” is the result of *all* bodily action: breathing, menstruating, walking, eating, ejaculating, coughing, defecating, etc. Thus *ahimsa*, the negation of *himsa*, involves the cessation of bodily action. In other words, it involves a non-active non-violence. The virtue of *ahimsa* is tied to a particular evaluation of life as permeating the world in earth, water, air, and fire. And although the Jain tradition is characterized by a transcendent anthropology insofar as only from the human form can the soul achieve the ideal state of transcendence of the material world, ideally, one should avoid the destruction of all forms of life.

The adoption of such a non-violent orientation toward the world is necessary for the process of purification from karma and thus obligatory for one who seeks to progress along the path to release from the cycle of rebirth. Thus the Jain ideological construction of *ahimsa* results in an ethical system oriented around an ascetic process of purification. Paul Dundas articulates this point succinctly: “Although frequently represented as a philosophy centered around nonviolence and compassion, Jainism can be more accurately

¹⁰ The state of “*kevala-jnana*” is also called “*kaivalya-jnana*” in Hindu and Buddhist literature. The *kevalin* (one who has achieved *kevala*) is not yet free of the body, which is only achieved upon death when the soul attains *moksha* and is thus released from matter.

described as a discipline of the body rooted in a strong ascetic rationale aimed at inculcating moral transformation through corporeal control and modification.”¹¹

It is believed that Mahavira prescribed five vows to guarantee ascetic control of the body and eventual release of the soul from the cycle of rebirth. The so-called *mahavratas* or “Great Vows” are *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (telling the truth), *asteya* (restraint from stealing), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), and *aparigraha* (restraint from attachment). Because of the preeminent status of *ahimsa* in Jain ethics, the other four vows are considered to be extensions of or elaborations upon this one. Monastics must adopt the vows and implement them in every moment of their lives. However, whereas monastics take the vows literally, lay people fulfill the vows to the best of their abilities as social actors. Thus a lay person may have sex within the confines of marriage, drive a car and consequently destroy thousands (even millions) of life forms along the way, own a home and run a business, which necessitates some level of dishonesty in the most literal sense of the word, and so on, whereas a monastic will take care in every step so as not to crush the living beings below his feet, adopt strict celibacy and thus avoid even lustful thoughts, withhold from social and business interactions, and renounce all personal belongings. Lay people do implement the vows, however, by avoiding “unnecessary” harm caused by such acts as meat-eating, carelessly trampling in the grass (where an abundance of living beings dwell), or acting out in physical aggression toward animals and other human beings.

Thus the degree to which one adopts the vows and implements *ahimsa* occurs along a wide spectrum. On the ascetic end of that spectrum one finds *sallekhana* or

¹¹ Paul Dundas, “Sthulabhadra’s Lodgings: Sexual Restraint in Jainism,” in *Celibacy and Religious Traditions*, ed. Carl Olson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 181-182.

“scouring out the body.” *Sallekhana*, also called *samthara* or “death bed,” is a ritual death by fasting, and this is considered the ideal way to die in the Jain tradition. One voluntarily partakes in *sallekhana* by ritually decreasing one’s consumption of food and water while simultaneously focusing the mind on the soul and thus burning an immense amount of karma immediately prior to death. Whereas from a non-Jain point of view, this may seem like an extremely violent way to die, Jains insist that *sallekhana* is not violent, nor is it suicide, because it does not involve psychological weapons or passions, such as fear or depression, nor physical weapons, such as knives or guns. In fact, *sallekhana* is considered the least violent way to die because it requires the limitation of nearly all action. Today the adoption of *sallekhana* requires the approval of a monastic guru, and it is usually only adopted by lay or monastic Jains already advanced in age or terminally ill and thus considered relatively near to death.¹²

It is important to be familiar with this Jain practice before embarking upon this study of the Jain Terapanth because it functions as a model of what the Jain ascetic ideal involves, and that model has been significant to the Terapanth throughout its history and today. In fact, on November 22, 2009, a lay Terapanthi Jain, Bachraj Doshi, adopted the vow of *sallekhana*. The current Terapanthi *acharya*, Mahaprajna, offered his support and gave a public response saying that during the process Doshi should strive to realize the

¹² There are some, though rare, exceptions to this rule. In 1987, a Terapanthi *mumukshu* (“one who is desirous of emancipation”; refers to aspiring nuns who attend a special boarding school in Ladnun called the Parmarthik Shikshan Sanstha) claimed to be possessed by a *bhut* (malevolent spirit). She believed that the only way to escape the *bhut*’s torture was through ascetic practice. This eventually led to her adoption of *sallekhana* with the permission of her guru, Acharya Tulsi. During her fast, she was initiated as a Terapanthi *sadhvi* (nun). She then fasted unto death. She is celebrated by Terapanthi monastics and lay people as a symbol of the triumph of asceticism over materiality. For a detailed account, see Anne Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent: An Ethnography of a Jain Ascetic Community* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 132-136.

truth that the soul is separate from the body and dissolve all worldly attachments.¹³ This is just one case study that demonstrates the Terapanth's ideological commitment to the classical Jain ascetic ideal.

As will become increasingly evident throughout the current dissertation, despite the Jain ascetic ideology from which *sallekhana* emerges and in which it is supported, to evaluate Jain traditions exclusively from this perspective would ignore what Jain practice is often about: worldly contingencies, pursuits, and benefits. Jain ideology appears to prevent a normative ethics since it maintains an ascetic ideal that requires withdrawal and renunciation of the world, but for Jain lay women and men, Jain practice has always involved a normative ethics that, above all else, includes vegetarianism and religious giving (donations to Jain monastics or for the construction of Jain centers, such as temples or libraries). Jains do not only practice this ethics in private, but also do so publicly as an active part of a larger society.

Today Jains are especially known for providing financial support to hospitals and animal welfare organizations. A recent example of lay Jains transforming a Jain ascetic ethic into a normative social one can be witnessed in the Gujarati town of Palitana. There, at the location of a highly revered Jain temple complex, a group of lay Jains has established a large medical camp for twenty-five thousand people with disabilities. Reporting on the camp, BBC journalist Sanjoy Majumder says, "at the medical camp in Palitana town the spiritual becomes practical: doctors fit patients with artificial limbs and calipers. Some are given crutches and wheelchairs. People with hearing problems are

¹³ HereNow4You, "Daily Short Notes," November 11, 2009, <http://www.herenow4u.net/index.php?id=70668>.

given special aids and taught how to use them.”¹⁴ He quotes Asha Mehta of the Ratna Nidhi Charitable Trust, the organization responsible for establishing the camp: “Our Jain faith teaches us to reach out to the underprivileged.”¹⁵ It is evident that an ethics of purification, which underlies Jain ascetic ideology, is not the motivating factor for such philanthropic activity. Rather, it is *ahimsa* compassionately construed.

A significant cultural product of the lay Jain commitment to *ahimsa* toward animals can be found in the institution of animal hospitals (*pinjrapoles*) in India. The most famous of all such hospitals is the Birds’ Charity Hospital in New Delhi, devoted solely to caring for sick, injured, and dying birds. These birds are often mangled, paralyzed, or blinded and in a great deal of suffering. Such cultural products, like the medical camp mentioned above, are practical applications of the Jain vow of *ahimsa*.

However, like Jain vegetarianism, the institution of animal hospitals can be evaluated from a classical Jain ideological perspective more easily than the medical camps. From an ideological perspective, Jains are vegetarians because eating flesh is an act of violence. It is thus polluting since every act of violence leads to additional karma attaching to one’s soul. Eating meat prevents spiritual progress. Likewise, the institution of animal hospitals can be evaluated from this ideological perspective. When I first visited the Jain bird hospital in New Delhi, my own non-Jain disposition immediately triggered feelings of disapproval. I thought, “These animals need to be euthanized. If they were left in their natural environments, they would die, so why intervene only to keep them *alive* in their *suffering*?” The answer from the Jain ideological perspective is

¹⁴ Sanjoy Majumder, “Faith and Charity in Indian Temple Town,” *BBC News Gujarat*, January 9, 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8448290.stm.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

twofold.¹⁶ First, the individual responsible for inflicting death upon the bird would commit an act of violence, even if acting out of compassion, and would thus accumulate karma. Such an act, like eating meat, would be an obstacle to spiritual progress. Second, the animal's suffering itself is atonement for sins in previous lifetimes, and the suffering is necessary in order to burn that karma. Thus killing the animal would do it greater harm because it would have to be born again in a suffering body to continue the atonement process.

One may notice a pattern here: according to Jain ideology, *ahimsa* is concerned primarily with the cessation of all karma. In other words, *ahimsa* is primarily concerned not with action as compassionately motivated, but with the cessation of all karma or "action." One adopts *ahimsa* not only to preserve the integrity of the other (although that sentiment is also often present), but also to preserve one's own purity and ensure one's own spiritual progress. Despite this ideological reality, however, there is no doubt that even though lay Jains are concerned with spiritual progress along the *moksha marga*, they often perceive and discuss their acts of *ahimsa* as compassionately motivated.

Furthermore, much of what lay Jains do not just socially, but ritually, is concerned with worldly pursuits, such as health and wealth, and thus does not appear to be a part of the *moksha marga*. For this reason, John E. Cort sets about evaluating the relationship between what he terms "wellbeing" and the *moksha marga* in the Jain Shvetambara Murtipujak or "image worshiping" tradition, the largest sectarian division of Jains.¹⁷ Cort

¹⁶ Christopher Key Chapple, "Inherent Value without Nostalgia: Animals and the Jaina Tradition," in *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*, ed. Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 247.

¹⁷ John E. Cort, *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

recalls an experience at a festival consecrating a new Jain temple in a wealthy suburb of Ahmedabad, Gujarat:

Possessionless, world-renouncing mendicants rubbed shoulders with wealthy, world-affirming businessmen who had multinational interests. Absolute poverty and absolute wealth flowed together. At the center of all the attention was the main image of the temple, a carved marble statue of a Jina seated dispassionately in meditation, but which daily was elaborately ornamented to look like a king.¹⁸

Lawrence A. Babb also evaluates this phenomenon in the worship space of the Shvetambara Murtipujaks. He notes:

And yet here is the paradox. If we peel away the opulence and glitter from these occasions we discover that liberation is there, right at their heart. At the center of all the spending, the celebration, the display, the stir, is the figure of the Tirthankar. He represents everything that the celebration is apparently not, for he is, above all else, an ascetic. His asceticism, moreover, has gained him liberation from the world of flowing wealth of which the rite seems so much a part. Liberation and the asceticism that leads to liberation are thus finally the central values, despite the context of opulence. Wealth is not worshiped; wealth is *used* to worship the wealthless.¹⁹

The apparent tension between wealth and renunciation is common in the worship spaces of the Jain tradition. In fact, the more an object of devotion represents the ascetic ideal, the more worthy it is of worship and the more *punya* or “merit” one accumulates through the worship of it. *Punya* is a form of karma, but it is advantageous karma insofar as it results in worldly benefits such as wealth and health. Such karma is distinct from worldly disadvantageous karma, *papa*, which may result in ill health or poverty. Thus when the worshiper offers wealth to the wealthless, she receives merit, which then results in worldly benefits for the worshiper.

¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹ Lawrence A. Babb, *Absent Lord: Ascetics and Kings in a Jain Ritual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 25-26.

As aptly articulated by Babb throughout his text: “Jains worship ascetics. But Jains also live in the world.”²⁰ In an attempt to resolve the apparent tension between ascetic and worldly values, monastic members of the Murtipujak Jain tradition, who themselves embody the ascetic ideal and *moksha marga* ideology, instruct lay worshipers to perform worship (*puja*) of the *jinās* or other *siddhas* (liberated beings; the twenty-four *jinās* are the most revered of the Jain *siddhas*, but there are additional *siddhas* who are worshiped) from the correct ideological perspective, that is, without passion, attachment, or hope that worship will result in the attainment of worldly benefits. Cort notes, however, that the fact that lay Jains must continually be reminded to worship from such a soteriological as opposed to a worldly position indicates that worldly pursuits in the context of worship are common.²¹

From the soteriological perspective, there are two reasons the worshipper should ideally not worship the *siddhas* for worldly pursuits: first, Jain ideology maintains that one should not strive for worldly pursuits, but for detachment from the world; second, the *siddha* himself has achieved detachment and thus is now absent from the world, having achieved eternal release, and thus incapable of intervention in the world. Thus, when one worships the *siddhas*, one should be worshipping the (ascetic) qualities they represent, not the entities themselves. Thus the ascetic ideal is preminent, even though worship often involves the pursuit of worldly benefits. For this reason, Babb points out that the

²⁰ Ibid., 84.

²¹ Cort, *Jains in the World*, 63. Jains also worship gods and goddesses and can worship them for the sake of worldly benefits. In fact, one of the most frequently worshiped deities in the Jain tradition is Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. Such deities, however, are considered to occupy the material realm, unlike the *siddhas* who have attained release from that realm.

normative Jain interpretations of worship entail a mimesis of kingship and renunciation, worldly opulence and asceticism.²²

An additional complication in Jain worship is the fact that Jains do not just worship the *murtis* or “images” of the liberated *siddhas*; they also worship living ascetics. Cort points out the paradox that arises from this relationship: “The mendicants may define themselves as striving for liberation, but in the eyes of the laity it is precisely this striving for liberation that generates the meritorious karma that the laity can tap into for their own wellbeing by transacting with the mendicant.”²³ In Babb’s elaborate analysis of this phenomenon amongst the Shvetambara Murtipujak Jains, he suggests that the “central problem” is that “Jains worship ascetics” who represent “divine absence.”²⁴

Cort and Babb’s studies focus on the relationship between the *moksha-marga* or ascetic ideology and well-being or worldly pursuits in the late twentieth-century Shvetambara Murtipujak, yet both point out that such tensions are prevalent throughout Jain history and across Jain traditions. In the introduction to his text, Cort asserts:

In this book I investigate the interplay of the *moksa-marg* and the realm of wellbeing in the late twentieth century. I am not saying that this interplay has not existed in the past and, in fact, once one is attuned to the relationship one can see its analogues in some of the very earliest data on Jainism. But this relationship has taken very different forms in the past, and has often been geographically localized.²⁵

In this dissertation, I will evaluate this perpetual, yet qualitatively contextual Jain tension.

The context I am concerned with is that of the Jain Terapanth in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. I will demonstrate that the Terapanth is not an exception to

²² Babb, *Absent Lord*, 100. Throughout this dissertation, we will continue to evaluate the ways in which mimetic processes function to resolve the tension between worldly and non-worldly realms of value for the Jain Terapanth.

²³ Cort, *Jains in the World*, 117.

²⁴ Babb, *Absent Lord*.

²⁵ Cort, *Jains in the World*, 15.

the tension between the Jain ascetic ideal and worldly contingency, even though Terapanthis are non-image worshipping Jains and that, even within the Terapanth itself, the forms that this tension takes are context-specific. In fact, in many ways, the Terapanth is more subject to the tension between ascetic and worldly values for two reasons: first, their devotion is concentrated entirely on living ascetics, which necessitates the management of contrasting ideals on both sides of the devotional exchange; and thus second, living Terapanthi ascetics maintain some of the strictest rules with regard to ascetic practice found in the Jain tradition. I will evaluate how these facts have three major consequences for the late twentieth-century Terapanthi innovations: first, Mahaprajna is careful to construct *preksha* so that it functions in distinct ways for monastic and lay practitioners (in other words, its function is context-specific); second, much like the mimesis of worldly opulence and asceticism that occurs in Jain worship, in *preksha*, there occurs a mimesis of yogic metaphysics and bio-medical physiology (in other words, like the Murtipujak Jains who do not worship wealth but *use* wealth to worship the wealthless, in *preksha*, the body is *used* to achieve a state of bodylessness); and third, Mahaprajna relies on a new intermediary monastic order that functions to mediate between the monastic guru who represents the ascetic ideal and the masses who represent worldly values.

Before beginning those analyses, however, it is essential to first differentiate between two characteristically Jain ways of relating to the body along similar lines as the two reasons for worship among the Murtipujaks. These attitudes are different, but hard boundaries do not set them apart in the context of religious practice. Rather, the two coexist and overlap. I will discuss both views of the body in the context of the Terapanth

throughout this dissertation, but I will provide some initial definitions for the broader Jain tradition here. First, there is the view of the body described above. Such an ascetic ideal is concomitant with a particular dualist ontology within which the concern is not with *body maintenance*, but with the soul's *purification from the body*. Second, there is a concern with the body as a tool for worldly goals, namely health, wealth, or magical power (*siddhi*). This view of the body as a practical means to material enhancement is not new to Jain thought, nor to other ancient religious traditions in South Asia (especially tantra), but it occurs in the contemporary Terapanth in a particularly innovative way, which I will argue is intimately linked to the contemporary socio-historical context characterized by globalization, transnationalism, and late capitalism.

I will demonstrate the extent to which the contemporary Terapanth advocates both ways of relating to the body. In fact, the tradition is in a constant flux between the two insofar as it prescribes *preksha* for the sake of enhancing the body as a tool for worldly benefits as well as spiritual development, but remains committed to the wiping out of or dissociation from the body by means of ascetic body work for the sake of advanced progress along the *moksha-marga*. The body of this dissertation will concern itself with the intricacies of this phenomenon, but in this introduction, I want to continue to provide some sufficient historical and conceptual foundations for the major themes we will explore. Thus I now turn to yoga in South Asia and the historical role it has had amongst the Jains.

Yoga

Yoga is mentioned in Buddhist and Upanishadic texts beginning around five hundred BCE. The earliest systematization of yoga is Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* (circa 100 BCE to 500 CE), and it is this system that we call *raja yoga*.²⁶ *Raja yoga* is ideologically rooted in the Samkhya philosophical tradition, which proposes a dualist ontology based on an eternal distinction between *purusha* or "Self" and *prakriti* or "matter." There are, however, two important distinctions between *raja yoga* and Samkhya philosophy. First, *raja yoga* is theistic as opposed to Samkhya, which is atheistic. Second, in Samkhya philosophy, the only component to the path toward liberation is ever-increasing knowledge of the distinction between Self and non-Self, whereas *raja yoga* maintains that other techniques, such as discipline, physical exercises, and meditation, are necessary.

The goal of *raja yoga* is *kaivalya*, which refers to the "isolation" of the Self from matter and the concomitant release of the Self from *samsara*, the cycle of transmigration.

Sadhana or "practice" in *raja yoga* is composed of an "eight limbed" (*ashtanga*) path:

1. *Yama*: "restraint," comprising *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (telling the truth), *asteya* (restraint from stealing), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), and *aparigraha* (restraint from attachment)²⁷
2. *Niyama*: "discipline," comprising cleanliness, serenity, asceticism, study, and devotion
3. *Asana*: "seated position," comprising various yogic postures
4. *Pranayama*: "breath control," comprising control over the rhythm of respiration
5. *Pratyahara*: "sense withdrawal," comprising the withdrawal of sensory activity from external objects

²⁶ "*Raja*" means "royal." A systematic construction of yoga dates back twenty-five hundred years ago, however, images of people in seemingly yogic postures from the cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, Mohenjodaro and Harappa, date to circa 2500 BCE.

²⁷ Note that these constituents of *yama* are the same as the five *mahavrata*s or "great vows" instituted by Mahavira as part of the Jain monastic path. Different schools of thought represented in the ascetic culture of South Asia have often adopted such vows.

6. *Dharana*: “concentration”
7. *Dhyana*: “meditation”
8. *Samadhi*: “absorbed concentration,” comprising the final stage of *sadhana* whereby the object of consciousness is the Self; there thus exists a coincidence between the object of knowledge and knowledge of the object²⁸

Although meditation is the preeminent component of *sadhana*, numerous techniques, including physical and devotional ones, are prerequisites for successful meditation.

Devotion to Ishvara, the Lord, is one such prerequisite. Ishvara is considered to be an eternally liberated *purusha*, which means that he has never been trapped in *prakriti* and *samsara*. Upon receiving devotion, Ishvara has the capacity to reciprocate by enhancing the devotee’s development and advancement along the path to release.

In contrast to *raja yoga* with its emphasis on meditation, *hatha yoga* puts greater emphasis on the physical aspects of *sadhana*, particularly *pranayama* and *asana*. The Nath yogis first systematized *hatha yoga* in the ninth century CE. As a component of tantra, *hatha yoga* is based on a non-dualist ontology, and the goal is not release from the body, considered a constituent of matter in Samkhya philosophy, but release from the illusion of duality while in the body. In other words, one seeks the direct realization that there is no distinction between the *atman* (individual soul) and *brahman* (universal soul), nor between the Self and matter.

Hatha means “forceful suppression,” which points to the fact that the realization of non-duality requires rigorous physical practice. *Hatha yoga* is a metaphysical system based on an empirical process whereby one attains higher levels of mystical knowledge (*jnana*). Based on a belief in a metaphysical subtle body, *hatha yoga* has its own subtle

²⁸ This concise articulation of the eight limbs of *sadhana* in *raja yoga* was taken primarily from the following sources: Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 97; and Mircea Eliade, “Yoga,” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, Vol. 14. 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 9894.

anatomy, made up of *nadis* or “veins” and *chakras* or “centers” of concentrated *prana* or “breath.” There are numerous *chakras* and *nadis* throughout the body, but the emphasis is generally on seven *chakras* and three *nadis*. *Prana*, which is understood as a subtle energetic force, circulates throughout the body by means of the *nadis*, and the three that are most important in the practice of yoga are: *sushumna*, the main *nadi* that runs along the center of the spinal column; *ida*, which runs along the left of the spinal column; and *pingala*, which runs along the right of the spinal column. The first *chakra*, the *muladhara chakra*, is located at the base of the spinal column near the perineum. It is at this location that *shakti*, the feminine energy most often considered Shiva’s consort, rests in a concentrated form like a coiled serpent. She is called *kundalini*. By means of the “forceful suppression” of the senses, breath, erotic energy (and sometimes the actual sexual fluids themselves), and mental activity, accomplished through several techniques, including meditation, visualization, *pranayama*, and *asana*, one awakens *kundalini*.

The yogin seeks to slowly raise *kundalini* through the *sushumna*, the central *nadi*. Along the way, *kundalini* penetrates each of the seven *chakras* thus awakening the latent energy therein. The seven *chakras* most commonly receive the following names: *muladhara chakra* at the base of the spine, *svadhishtana chakra* at the genitals, *manipura chakra* at the navel, *anahata chakra* at the heart, *vishuddha chakra* at the throat, *ajna chakra* between the eyes, and finally *sahasrara padma chakra* at the top of the head. At the final stage, when she reaches the *sahasrara padma chakra* at the top of the head, *kundalini* unites with one’s male energy (usually identified as Shiva). Upon achieving this stage involving the internal union of subtle energies, the yogin enters an enlightened

state, *kaivalya* (“isolation”), defined in this context as the direct realization of the non-duality of Shiva and *shakti*, the Self and the body, and *atman* and *brahman*.

Often this process is referred to as *kundalini yoga*, and it takes on erotic symbolism. The copulation of Shiva and *shakti* represent the non-duality of reality itself, and it is erotic energy, sometimes believed to be located in the concentrated substance of semen itself, that is imagined as flowing from the bottom of the spine to the top of the spine where the erotic union between *kundalini* and Shiva occurs. This is especially the case in tantric traditions, where techniques of erotic visualization and/or ritual copulation are used for the sake of stimulating and then sublimating erotic energy toward higher states of knowledge, culminating in the realization of non-duality.

Jain Yoga

Throughout the Jain literary tradition, Jain thinkers refer to *yoga* and *dhyana* or “meditation,” but there are no systematic constructions of a Jain culture of meditation or yoga until the twentieth century with the introduction of *preksha*, the topic of this dissertation. The otherwise scarcity of Jain meditation and yoga practices relative to Hindu and Buddhist traditions has been explained by a number of possible variables, including the following: first, the Jain emphasis was traditionally on the adherence to a strict ethical standard that required the cessation of all action for the sake of *ahimsa* and the purification of the soul;²⁹ second, when meditation and yoga were mentioned, they were often under the rubric of ascetic vows and were thus lost in the massive lists of such

²⁹ See Paul Dundas, “The Jain Monk Jinapati Suri Gets the Better of a Nath Yogi,” in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton: NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 166-169; and Olle Qvarnstrom, “Jain Tantra: Divinatory and Meditative Practices in the Twelfth-Century *Yogasastra* of Hemacandra,” in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton: NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

vows adopted by Jain ascetics;³⁰ and third, there was a consensus that the advanced stages of the meditative path were only known by those familiar with the early scriptures (*purva*), which are now lost, and the omniscient *kevalins*, none of which exist in the current era of time.³¹

For most image-worshipping Jains, meditation is incorporated into a larger ritual and primarily consists of the recitation of *mantra*. The goal is to “contain and concentrate one’s thoughts” or, in other words, to control the mind and its fluctuating mental activity, which like the movements of the body are categorized as action and thus are against the vow of *ahimsa*.³² Hemachandra describes the advanced stages of meditation but maintains that he only knows of them from tradition and that present-day practitioners have no way of advancing to such states.³³ Furthermore, meditation was believed to require a special body that resulted from an exceptional karmic past. The *Tattvartha Sutra* states: “Fixing the attention of mind on some one object on the part of a person possessing a superior type of bone-structure – that is *dhyana*.”³⁴ Thus, by definition, meditation was not meant for everyone but for the few destined to achieve advanced stages along the path toward release from rebirth.

Although much of the work on Jain traditions has underplayed the place of Jain yoga and meditation and emphasized the strict Jain ascetic vows instead because of the reasons listed above that, probably in combination, prevented the development of a

³⁰ See Dundas, “Jain Monk.”

³¹ Dundas, *The Jains*, 167.

³² Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation*, 199.

³³ Hemacandra, *Yogasastra*, with *Svopajnavritti*, 3 vols., ed. Muni Jambuvijaya (Bombay: Jain Sahitya Vikas Mandal, 1977-1986), 11.4; cited by Dundas, *The Jains*, 167.

³⁴ Umasvati, *Tattvartha Sutra: That Which Is*, with the combined commentaries of Umasvati, Pujiyapada, and Siddhasenaguni, trans. Nathmal Tatia (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994), 9.27, 335. The *Tattvartha Sutra* is an authoritative text with regard to doctrine for both Shvetambaras and Digambaras. The author was Umasvati, and it was produced in the fourth or fifth century CE.

systematic culture of yoga (and thus meditation, since meditation is one part of yogic *sadhana*), there were some significant yogic traditions in Jain history. This may be surprising given the reasons listed above, especially the Jain focus on the ascetic vows, but yoga is certainly not opposed to asceticism, and yet the common assumption is that the Jain focus on one must exclude the other. It does not make sense to oppose yoga and asceticism, since yoga was an ascetic practice for classical South Asian traditions. While it does seem to be true that, until recently, Jains did not develop a “culture of true meditative contemplation,” as argued by Dundas, the assertion that it is traditionally an “adjunct to austerity” is misrepresentative of the place of yoga in South Asian traditions as a necessary part of the ascetic culture.³⁵

One clear indication of the presence of yoga in the Jain ascetic traditions is the six *avashyakas* or “obligatory actions,” which are daily prescriptions for Jain monastics and recommended for lay practitioners. They include: equanimity (*samayika*), praise to the twenty-four tirthankaras (*chaturvimshati-stava*), veneration of the teacher (*guru-vandana*), repentance (*pratikramana*), abandonment of the body (*kayotsarga*), and abandonment of attachments (*pratyakhyana*). Though yoga is not explicitly mentioned in this list, the obligatory duties require it. Equanimity, for instance, requires one to meditate in a standing motionless posture, usually for forty-eight minutes. In this state, one gives up all negative emotions and meditates upon non-violence toward all living beings. As argued by Dundas, “Strictly speaking, the entire ascetic life is regarded as an act of *samayika* so that its ritual performance is in fact merely a temporary actualisation of it.”³⁶ Furthermore, *kayotsarga* requires one to stand again in a motionless posture with

³⁵ Dundas, *The Jains*, 166-167.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 170.

one's legs spread slightly apart and one's arms hanging down the side of one's body. In this way, one imitates the standing posture in which many Jain *siddhas* achieved enlightenment. In *kayotsarga*, one abandons the body by means of concentration on that which is not the body.

It is clear that yoga is not contrary to Jain ascetic practices but intertwined with them. In fact, as argued by Nathmal Tatia, Jain meditation is not just compatible with asceticism, but is necessary for the Jain practice of austerities, such as fasting and bodily mortification.³⁷ Thus it is not surprising that, as the significance of yoga grew for Hindu and Buddhist traditions, they did so for Jain thinkers as well. Much of what we find in the work of Jains who explicitly incorporate yoga into their systems of thought and practice, such as Haribhadra, Subhachandra, Hemachandra, and Yashovijaya, is an incorporation of ideas and practices that were experiencing growing popularity in the early and late medieval periods.³⁸ Such thinkers often borrowed ideas from systems that were otherwise deemed heterodox, such as *raja yoga*, *hatha yoga*, and Buddhist meditative traditions, and exercised comparative analyses in their coverage of shared ideas and practices. For instance, Haribhadra, in an attempt to rationalize his appropriations from *raja yoga* and Buddhist meditation, went so far as to present a perennialist argument, maintaining that all meditative paths have the same aim, truth, and that the true *bodhisattva* is the Jain *tirthankara*.³⁹

³⁷ Nathmal Tatia, *Jaina Meditation – Citta-Samadhi: Jaina-Yoga* (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 1986), 1.

³⁸ See Christopher Key Chapple, "Haribhadra's Analysis of Patanjala and Kula Yoga in the Yogadrstisamuccaya," in *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, ed. John E. Cort (New York: SUNY Press, 1998); and Tatia, *Jaina Meditation*.

³⁹ Tatia, *Jaina Meditation*, xxxix. "*Bodhisattva*," literally "one who possesses the essence of enlightenment," is a Buddhist epithet ascribed to beings that are on the cusp of *nirvana* (the cessation of rebirth) but compassionately choose to remain in the cycle of rebirth to help other beings along the spiritual path.

Today, the Terapanth is characterized by a systematic culture of yoga, but the current *acharya*, Mahaprajna, maintains that this is not new to Jain traditions. Tatia, a Terapanthi scholar, performs his own comparative analysis and points out that much of what is found in the yoga of Hindu and Buddhist traditions was present in early Jain traditions. Tatia compares Jain traditions to Buddhist and Hindu ones by pointing out certain shared characteristics, such as the fact that they all warned of the temptation of supernatural powers (*siddhis*) that may be attained through yoga.⁴⁰ He also illustrates how *anupreksha* (contemplation) is common to all three especially insofar as they each require contemplation on the impurity of the material body. Buddhists prescribed *ashubhabhavana*, meditation on the impurity of the body, Patanjali defines *avidya* as resulting from the mistaken attribution of purity to the impure, and Jains refer to *ashubhatvanupreksha*, the perception of the interior world of passions and the interior of the body as disgusting and stressing the need for detachment and renunciation of both.⁴¹ Tatia quotes the Jain text, the *Vishuddhimagga*, on an image for ascetic practitioners to meditate upon:

If of this body inside were outside,
We'd grasp a stick to keep off crows and dogs.⁴²

Thus yogic techniques are characteristic of South Asian religious practice, and the Jain tradition is not an exception. However, although Mahaprajna is right to assert that such techniques do appear to be present in early Jain traditions, I will demonstrate in the present dissertation that the systematic culture of yoga that he established in the late

⁴⁰ Tatia, *Jaina Meditation*, xxii.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁴² *Ibid.*, xxxiii.

twentieth century is characterized by a number of new features and qualities that have more in common with modern yoga than with classical schools of yoga.

Tantra in Jain Textual Traditions

Like *raja yoga* and *hatha yoga*, tantric thought and practice played minor roles in Jain traditions relative to Hindu and Buddhist ones. A reason in addition to those listed above for them having less influence on Jain thought is that Jains maintained a dualist metaphysics that was opposed to the non-dualist metaphysics dominant in tantra.⁴³

Nevertheless, several scholars have addressed the extent to which Jains adopted aspects of Hindu tantra in the medieval period by regarding it as a system of different means (*sadhana*) for attaining *bhukti* (mundane objectives) rather than as part of the *moksha-marga*.⁴⁴

Christopher Key Chapple evaluates Haribhadra, an important medieval period Jain thinker and his “cosmopolitan” interest in tantric yoga.⁴⁵ Chapple argues that Haribhadra places yogic techniques in an “orthodox Jain framework” in an attempt to expand his audience.⁴⁶ Chapple demonstrates how Haribhadra both criticizes the Kula yoga tradition for its antinomian practices but also appropriates certain of its tantric elements into his own form of Jain yoga in an attempt to “co-opt” its lure.⁴⁷ Chapple explains:

... [Haribhadra] emphasizes the path of purity as the only true yogic means to liberation. However, he attempts this in a subtle fashion. Rather than setting forth

⁴³ See Dundas, “Jain Monk”; and Qvarnstrom, “Jain Tantra.”

⁴⁴ Qvarnstrom, “Stability and Adaptability,” 37.

⁴⁵ Chapple, “Haribhadra’s Analysis,” 15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 26. Such antinomian practices on the part of the Kula tradition included ritual copulation and the ingestion of non-vegetarian foods.

the particular (and stringent) aspects of Jain purification practice, Haribhadra cloaks the Jain [fourteen stages of spiritual purification] system in the combined guise of Patanjali's Astanga Yoga and a Tantric Asta Matrka system. Some of the names he employs are well known as Hindu goddesses or yoginis; others are close approximations. Through this device, and by introducing the text with a thinly veiled reference to the threefold emphasis on Desire, Study, and Practice in Tantric traditions, Haribhadra attempts to demonstrate that the heterodox movements offer nothing other than what already exists in the practice of his form of Jain Yoga.⁴⁸

Cort also demonstrates how Jains incorporated tantric rituals during the medieval period. In particular, Cort argues, “[Jains used *vidyas*], multi-word invocations that are presided over by female deities and are learnt by initiation and practicing the prescribed *sadhana*... in Jainism as well as in Hinduism [*mantras* and *vidyas*] are generally synonymous in their meanings as spells.”⁴⁹ Such *vidyas* were used for the sake of worldly benefits, not for progress along the *moksha-moksha*.⁵⁰ Likewise, Dundas and Cort demonstrate how Shaiva transferences to Jain thought occurred during the medieval period, particularly in the development of a Jain *mantra shastra* and the attendant rituals for the sake of gaining magical powers.⁵¹

Whereas Hindu and Buddhist schools incorporated tantric practices into their soteriologies, Jain schools only incorporated tantra as a secondary tradition aimed at improving one's existence in the world rather than serving to release one from the world.⁵² In other words, what we do not find in Jain tantra is a tantric path to *moksha*.⁵³ Rather, the Jain ascetic path remains the path to *moksha*, although the ways in which

⁴⁸ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁹ John E. Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions” (*Numen* 34, no. 2 (1987): 237.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 238.

⁵¹ John E. Cort, “Worship of Bell-Ears the Great Hero, a Jain Tantric Deity,” in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton: NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 417; Paul Dundas, “Becoming Gautama,” in *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, ed. John E. Cort (New York: SUNY Press), 1998; and Dundas, “Jain Monk,” 232.

⁵² Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess,” 238-9; and Cort, “Worship of Bell-Ears,” 417.

⁵³ Cort, “Worship of Bell-Ears,” 417.

Jains have incorporated aspects of tantra demonstrate that Jain traditions have maintained a concern not just with liberation *from* the world, but also with how to be successful *in* the world.⁵⁴

According to the scholars discussed above, the innovations during the medieval period did not threaten Jain doctrinal stability.⁵⁵ In other words, they did not change the construction of the *moksha-marga*, which requires the adept to gradually increase austerities and thus disassociate and eventually attain release from the body. Instead, such practical innovations were for the sake of “co-opting” tantra’s popularity in order to adapt to the cultural climate, appease the laity, and attract converts.⁵⁶

Those in the Terapanth argue that, even though the medieval thinkers incorporated yogic ideas and practices from Buddhist and Hindu traditions, a uniquely Jain system of yoga goes back to Mahavira himself. They point to the fact that early texts on the biography of Mahavira describe him doing yogic postures, namely, *kayotsarga* or meditating in the standing position.⁵⁷ Mahaprajna often appeals to this part of Mahavira’s biography as evidence that yoga has always been a central part of Jain practice, and the monastic teachers of the Terapanth consistently maintain that such practice is not opposed to asceticism but is the greatest form of asceticism, because it requires utter detachment and equanimity.⁵⁸

There is no doubt that Jain monks and nuns have always practiced yogic techniques, even if such techniques were not shown the same amount of attention and systematicization as they were in many Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Such techniques

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Qvarnstrom, “Stability and Adaptability,” 37.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁷ Tatia, *Jaina Meditation*, xvii.

⁵⁸ Ibid., xvii-xviii; also, repeated personal communications with Terapanthi *munis* and *sadhvis*.

are characteristic of South Asian religious practice in general and cannot be identified as belonging to particular traditions as opposed to others. Yoga is characteristic of Jain thought and practice and is meant to enable and enhance the monastic's ability to perform and sustain austerities. The scholarly consensus, however, is that Jain traditions never systematized yoga and never created a culture oriented and structured primarily around its techniques, that is, until the late twentieth century and the introduction of a form of modern yoga, *preksha dhyana*, by the Terapanth.

Modern Yoga

The systematic construction and practice of yoga in South Asia date back to over twenty-five hundred years ago. This was an elite spiritual practice that functioned as part of the path to release from the cycle of rebirth. By the end of the first millennium CE, yoga was widespread in South Asia as an ascetic practice prescribed in Hindu, Buddhist, and (as I described above) Jain textual traditions. Following the twelfth century Muslim incursions into South Asia and the establishment of Islam as a South Asian religion, Sufi traditions appropriated yoga into their mystical thought and practice. Thus, throughout its history in South Asia, yoga was a system of techniques culturally South Asian but not belonging to any particular religious tradition. In the history of yoga leading up to the nineteenth century, rather than identify it with one particular tradition, it is more accurate to identify it as characteristic of the doctrinally diverse ascetic culture of South Asia. Following the nineteenth century, however, yoga was constructed and reconstructed within and beyond South Asia and became a transnational system of body maintenance in popular culture.

Today, millions of people in India, Europe, and the United States, irrespective of commitment to a particular orthodox or orthoprax tradition, regularly practice what I will refer to in this dissertation as “modern yoga.” At present in the city of Houston, Texas alone there are over thirty studios devoted to offering yoga classes while fitness centers and even Christian churches throughout the city offer yoga classes alongside other “exercise” classes. Although some prescribe yoga for its spiritual benefits, such yoga studios and fitness centers emphasize the value of yoga as a physical practice for the enhancement of the body.

As demonstrated above, scholars have produced a significant amount of valuable work on the classical and medieval history of Jain yoga in South Asia. On the topic of modern Jain yoga, however, there is no in-depth published scholarship at present, and this is one of the many reasons the current dissertation addresses that very phenomenon. Yet there is valuable literature on the topic of modern yoga more broadly defined, and because Jain modern yoga can be identified as a case study of this phenomenon, we need to evaluate that literature here. One can only come to understand Jain modern yoga if one can contextualize it in the nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first century transnational flow of modern yoga broadly construed as a product of encounter and discourse between Indian gurus and their disciples who sought to disseminate yoga outside of India, European and American metaphysical thinkers seeking answers from yoga to questions regarding both spiritual and physical enhancement, and modern ideas about science and health.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ My understanding of the history and development of modern yoga primarily depends on the material and analyses from four important texts: Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind & Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Joseph S. Alter, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body between Science and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004);

At the onset of British colonialism in India, many Hindus rejected physical yoga, associated with *hatha yoga* and tantra, as a legitimate aspect of Hindu religiosity in response to the colonialist and orientalist condemnation of tantra. Since *hatha yoga* places more emphasis on physical practice (*asana* and *pranayama*), much of the interest was directed at meditative techniques as emphasized in *raja yoga*. A similar hostility toward physical yoga could be found amongst Americans interested in Indian religious traditions. In the mid to late nineteenth century, American Theosophists and Transcendentalists expressed an interest in yoga, but as a meditative practice as opposed to a physical one.⁶⁰ Transcendentalists, such as Emerson and Thoreau, encountered yoga by reading Indian literature, particularly the *Bhagavad Gita*, and their interests were primarily in evaluating the ethical systems prescribed in the Indian textual tradition. The Theosophical Society had such a profound interest in yoga that they arranged for the publication of a translated version of the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali (circa second century BCE), the earliest systematic text on yoga. Catherine Albanese demonstrates, for instance, that Helena Blavatsky showed a depth of respect for the ascetic yogis of India, but still considered *hatha yoga* to be an inferior form of practice:

Even pranayama, or control of the breath, belonged, for Blavatsky, to the ‘lower Yoga.’ ‘The *Hatha* so called,’ she warned, ‘was and still is discountenanced by the Arhats. It is injurious to the health and alone can never develop into Raj Yoga.’⁶¹

Another Theosophist, William Judge, in his commentary on the *Yoga Sutra* emphatically distinguished *hatha yoga* from *raja yoga* and warned of the dangers of the

Elizabeth de Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism* (New York: Continuum, 2004); and Sarah Strauss, *Positioning Yoga: Balancing Acts Across Cultures* (New York: Berg, 2005).

⁶⁰ Albanese, *Republic*, 345.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 351. In 1875, Helena Blavatsky co-founded the theosophical society, an spiritually syncretic organization that has attempted to blend ancient Indian religious thought with science and Western metaphysical thought.

physical practices involved in *hatha yoga*, which he believed were “not spiritual.”⁶²

Hatha yoga was associated with both radical asceticism and tantric promiscuity.

Albanese states, “What appealed to a late-nineteenth-century Anglo-American about the *Yoga Sutra*, we can guess, was the moral inscription that the text – and Judge’s presentation of it – wrote over yogic practice.”⁶³ Thus American interests in yoga privileged its ethical and meditative components over its physical ones.⁶⁴

In line with such a rejection of *hatha yoga* and valorization of *raja yoga*, the famous Hindu figure, Vivekananda, sought to introduce yoga to “the West” primarily in the form of his interpretation of Patanjali’s *raja yoga*. His first visit to the West came in 1893 with his famous speech to the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Chicago, which initiated his lecture tours throughout the United States.⁶⁵ Instead of *hatha yoga*, Vivekananda emphasized what he deemed to be the compatibility of science and the *raja yoga* of Patanjali. Vivekananda drew from ancient classical yoga and reshaped its categories in a life-affirming spirituality that was practical for and accessible to the general public. He also read the dualist *raja yoga* through an *advaita* or “non-dualist” lens. Vivekananda did give attention to *pranayama*, *asana*, and even *kundalini*, and thus Elizabeth de Michelis credits him as the “creator” of modern yoga, and yet as pointed out by Albanese, the shift toward an increasing concern with physical practice, what de

⁶² Albanese, *Republic*, 352.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ In contrast to such an appeal to Indian ascetic traditions for their ethical systems, some scholars have argued that such ascetic systems actually lack an ethics, socially construed, because of their emphasis on non-action and social withdrawal. See Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and its Development*, trans. Charles E. B. Russell (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith), 1977. For more on the ethics, or non-ethics, of Indian asceticism, see Andrea R. Jain and Jeffrey J. Kripal, “Quietism and Karma: Non-Action as Non-Ethics in Jain Asceticism,” Symposium: Apology for Quietism, Part 2, *Common Knowledge* 15, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 197-207; and Jeffrey J. Kripal, “Debating the Mystical as the Ethical: An Indological Map,” in *Crossing Boundaries: Essays on the Ethical Status of Mysticism*, ed. G. William Barnard and Jeffrey J. Kripal (New York: Seven Bridges Press/Chatham House, 2002).

⁶⁵ Another proselytizing guru who would embrace this means of disseminating yoga to “the West” was Paramahansa Yogananda in the 1920s.

Michelis calls “Modern Postural Yoga,” was gradual.⁶⁶ Although Vivekananda accepted certain of the physical techniques of yoga, his emphasis was on meditation and a psychologized yoga rather than physical practice.⁶⁷ Vivekananda, according to de Michelis, produced a spirituality aligned with the later “New Age religion,” the category within which many contemporary scholars place modern yoga.⁶⁸ The qualities characteristic of this overlap include an affirmative view of life itself and a concern with demonstrating the scientific basis of spiritual thought and practice.⁶⁹

With the passage of time and many shifts in the consciousness of Indian, European, and American elites vis-à-vis yoga, a popular demand for yogic physical techniques emerged, which resulted in the emergence of new forms of modern yoga. Beginning in the 1920s, Krishnamacharya taught a form of physical yoga under the patronage of Maharaja Krishnarajendra Wodeyar IV of Mysore. He had numerous students, many of which, including B.K.S. Iyengar, carried on their guru’s lineage by continuing to train students in physical yoga. Commenting on Krishnamacharya’s yogic system, N.E. Sjömen states, “In the case of the yoga asana tradition we can see that it is a dynamic tradition that has drawn on many sources – traditional yoga texts, indigenous exercises, western gymnastics, therapeutics, and even perhaps the military training

⁶⁶ Albanese, *Republic*, 357. De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 149-180.

⁶⁷ Albanese, *Republic*, 357.

⁶⁸ De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 125, 149. Albanese points out that De Michelis ignores here the earlier history of American metaphysical religion and its tendency to reinvent both religious discourse and practice. In this way, Vivekananda was not doing anything new in the American religious landscape by redefining yoga to meet the needs of American metaphysical religion. Albanese, *Republic*, 354-355.

⁶⁹ De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 97-108, 49, 47. Vivekananda was also involved with the Hindu reformist institution, the Brahmo Samaj, which attempted to bring to light the so-called scientific bases of Hindu thought.

exercises of a foreign dominating power.”⁷⁰ Thus in India, a form of modern yoga emerged as a product of encounter between British and Indian systems of body maintenance.

Science also played an important role in the construction of modern yoga in India. Joseph S. Alter, in *Yoga in Modern India*, argues that yogic adepts in India have appropriated the discourse of science. Alter argues that as a result of this process, “Yoga was modernized, medicalized, and transformed into a system of physical culture.”⁷¹ He describes the attempts by Kuvalayananda beginning in the 1920s to scientifically demonstrate the physical benefits of yoga. At his Kaivalyadhama Yoga Ashram in Lonavala (in the state of Maharashtra, near the city of Pune), Kuvalayananda along with visiting scientists from the United States, performed laboratory experiments on the potential benefits of the physical techniques of yoga.

Another important figure in the modernization of yoga in India was Shivananda. In *Positioning Yoga*, Sarah Strauss traces the spread of Shivananda’s yoga in India, the United States, and Europe. Beginning in the 1920s, Shivananda established The Divine Life Society in Rishikesh and published several texts on yoga in English. Students from all over the world, including Mircea Eliade, studied with him. Strauss’ study is an important one for understanding the history of modern yoga primarily because, as Strauss points out, many gurus who contributed to the popularization of modern yoga were trained at the Divine Life Society, including the following: Chidananda, who was the

⁷⁰ N.E. Sjomon, *The Yoga Tradition of the Mysore Palace*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1999), 60. By “military training exercises of a foreign dominating power,” Sjomon is referencing the use of ropes by the British military in India. Ropes came to be used in Krishnamacharya’s yogic system.

⁷¹ Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*, 10. For a study on the appropriation of scientific discourse in Buddhism, see Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Buddhism and Science: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

guru to L. Folan, known for popularizing physical yoga on American television in the 1970s; Vishnudevananda who opened yoga centers in India, Canada, the Bahamas, and the United States; Satchidananda who founded Integral Yoga; Satyananda who founded the Bihar School of Yoga; and Chinmayananda who co-founded the nationalist organization, Vishva Hindu Parishad.⁷² With regard to modern yoga and Indian nationalism, Alter points out that Indian nationalists often turned to medicalized forms of physical yoga as a way to promote “muscular Hinduism,” a masculinized ideology incorporating issues of health, strength, and vital energy.⁷³ Yoga in this context functioned as a means to bodily rigor, which symbolized the power of Indian men in resistance to colonial powers.

While modern yoga was developing in India, American and British individuals also partook in the construction of new forms of modern yoga. An American by the name of William Walker Atkinson began writing books on yoga in 1902, many of which were written under a pseudonym, Yogi Ramacharaka, which was meant to give the impression that the author was ethnically Indian. The books by Ramacharaka focus largely on the healing and physical enhancement of the body by means of *hatha yoga* techniques. He held tight to the idea that the enhancement of the Self requires the enhancement of the body.⁷⁴ Thus body maintenance and exercises were considered a means to spiritual development. Albanese argues that this shift toward *hatha yoga* and a more focused

⁷² See Strauss, *Positioning Yoga*.

⁷³ Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*, 146. Alter deals with Hindu nationalism and yoga at length in Joseph S. Alter, “Celibacy, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Gender into Nationalism in North India,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (February 1994): 45-66.

⁷⁴ Albanese, *Republic*, 360.

concern with the body reflects the populist trends at the time in the United States, where “a new moral crusade was championing bodily vigor.”⁷⁵

But the picture was not as simple as this gradual progression toward an increase in interest in physical yoga as a so-called “scientific” practice that functioned as a means to physical enhancement. Additional individuals and their interests in *hatha yoga* complicated this picture. One of them was Pierre Bernard, an American who turned to *hatha yoga* for an analysis of the body “as aesthetic and pleasurable.”⁷⁶ Bernard was involved with a Syrian-Indian and yogi by the name of Sylvais Hamati, who taught yoga in Lincoln, Nebraska and was a major influence on Bernard. In 1905, Bernard went to New York City to found a “Tantrik” order. He opened a college in which he and his wife, Blanche de Vries, taught *hatha yoga* as well as esoteric tantra. He attracted a number of wealthy elite clients and, by 1924, established a colony in Nyack, New York where he kept a library filled with both Sanskrit materials and scientific texts. His movement continued to grow, and he eventually opened several tantric centers.

Another important figure in this trajectory was Sir John Woodroffe (1865-1936), a British High Court Judge in Calcutta.⁷⁷ Woodroffe studied tantric texts, probably translated by his Bengali friend and pundit by the name of Atul Behari Ghosh, and possibly participated in esoteric tantric rituals. Under the pen-name of Arthur Avalon, which may have functioned to represent the figures of both Woodroffe and Ghosh, a text on *hatha yoga*, tantra, and *kundalini yoga* was published. That text, *The Serpent Power*,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 361.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 363.

⁷⁷ For a detailed biographical study of Sir John Woodroffe, see Kathleen Taylor, *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra and Bengal: 'An Indian Soul in a European Body?'* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

became a major English language source on such topics in North America and Europe.

As argued by Jeffrey J. Kripal:

... Woodroffe and Ghosh's impact on Jungian psychology, Western understandings of Tantric yoga, and on the whole human potential and New Age language of the *kundalini* and the *cakra* system has been immense. Indeed, there are probably few previous texts... that were more influential on the practice, art and metaphysical assumptions of the counterculture than Arthur Avalon's *The Serpent Power*.⁷⁸

Thus we turn to the British and American counterculture. The gradually increasing interest in *hatha yoga* for the sake of physical enhancement escalated in the 1960s and 1970s. It was not *despite* of but *because* of its associations with tantra that such interest took a new and more dramatic turn as a result of the countercultural movements in Britain and the United States, which called for a religiosity radically distinct from or “counter” to that of the so-called puritanical religion of their parents’ generation.⁷⁹ Consequently, Americans and Europeans interested in Indian traditions often placed *hatha yoga* at the center of religious practice, but it remained a cleansed form of yoga, free of those aspects, particularly (im)purity issues, that simply would not sell in those contexts. Thus the emphasis was not on ascetic purification (as is found in classical schools of yoga in India) but on physical practice for the sake of physical enhancement. Although by the early 1950s, the United States and Europe had witnessed the opening of *hatha yoga* studios in California and Germany, the 1960s witnessed an explosive growth in popularity and the opening of numerous *hatha yoga* studios throughout the United States and Europe.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Jeffrey J. Kripal, “Remembering Ourselves: On Some Countercultural Echoes of Contemporary Tantric Studies,” *Religions of South Asia* 1, no. 1 (2007): 20.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Christopher Key Chapple, “Modern Yoga,” *Religious Studies Review* 34, no. 2 (June 2008): 71-72. See also, Strauss, *Positioning Yoga*, 41-51.

Late twentieth-century developments in modern yoga were not limited to the American and European contexts. Alter points out that, in India, scientific studies on yoga at Kuvalayananda's Kaivalyadhama Yoga Ashram continued through the 1970s and 1980s and ranged from evaluating yogic techniques in relation to oxygen intake, asthma, diabetes, cancer, and emotional disorders.⁸¹ Important questions in these analyses were with regard to metaphysical concepts, such as *chakras* and *prana*, in addition to physiological ones, such as neurobiology and oxygen.⁸² Thus Alter argues:

Yoga was not simply modernized by Kuvalayananda; Yoga was analyzed in such a way that it has come to harmonize with the modernity manifest in science to create an alternative. And to a large extent it is this harmonic hybridity that has enabled Yoga to colonize the West, so to speak. And not just in the phenomenal scope of its appeal and scale of worldwide practice, but by providing scientific answers to questions that science does not ask.⁸³

Kuvalayananda was not alone in his endeavors. Alter discusses the work of K.N. Udupa who wrote a book in 1980, *Stress and Its Management by Yoga*. Udupa engages in a process of mimesis whereby yogic metaphysics are discussed in terms of modern biochemistry in order to explain the effects of yoga on the physical body. Udupa's experiments included forcefully inverting rats by placing them in test tubes in order to mimic yogic *asanas* (such as the hand stand) and then measuring the chemical effects in their bodies!⁸⁴

Modern yoga was thus constructed and reconstructed as well as disseminated. Gurus from India, such as disciples of Shivananda, including Satchidananda, Vishnudevananda, and Iyengar, quickly responded to the popular demand for yoga within and beyond India and sought to popularize their own *hatha yoga* systems that focused

⁸¹ Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*, 94-100.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 107.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 65-69.

less on distant disembodied transcendent goals and more on immanent physical practice: bodily postures (*asana*) and breathing exercises (*pranayama*). Most significant among them was Iyengar, who published his *Light on Yoga* in 1966. This text took on a canonical status in the emerging culture of modern yoga.⁸⁵ Where these new forms of modern yoga were consistent with Vivekananda's earlier popularization of yoga was insofar as they aimed to make yoga compatible with a modern scientific worldview.

De Michelis develops a typology of schools of modern yoga in order to provide structure for understanding its history and development. She points out that, after Vivekananda's construction of yoga in his famous text, *Raja Yoga*, modern yoga developed out of "Modern Psychosomatic Yoga," yoga concerned with "body-mind-spirit training."⁸⁶ De Michelis traces the development of modern yoga through three stages: popularization (1950s to mid-1970s); consolidation (mid-1970s to late 1980s); and acculturation (late 1980s to date).⁸⁷

Focusing on English-speaking milieus beginning in the 1950s, de Michelis splits modern yoga into two types: Modern Postural Yoga, which stresses physical exercises, particularly *asana* and *pranayama*; and Modern Meditational Yoga, which stresses concentration and meditation.⁸⁸ De Michelis points out that Iyengar yoga is a "relatively pure" example of Modern Postural Yoga, whereas early Transcendental Meditation is a "relatively pure" example of Modern Meditational Yoga.⁸⁹ Both types of modern yoga, according to de Michelis, express little concern for religious and philosophical

⁸⁵ For a study on Iyengar's yoga and its influence on the development of modern yoga, see de Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 194-274.

⁸⁶ De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 187.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 190-194.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 188.

understandings and interpretations of yogic ideology and practice, and instead they often stress that such aspects of yoga depend on individual experience rather than doctrinal deliberation.⁹⁰

De Michelis adds that an additional type, “Modern Denominational Yoga,” applies to certain schools of modern yoga as far back as the 1960s. Such schools of yoga do express concern for religious and philosophical doctrine and are often characterized by the following qualities: allegiance to some guru figure; strict organizational structure; more demands on members; not primarily concerned with yoga; and exclusivist attitudes toward other religious systems.⁹¹ Relatively “pure” examples of Modern Denominational Yoga include later (post-1976) Transcendental Meditation and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.⁹² Such schools, according to de Michelis, have not had much influence in the formation of “mainstream” forms of modern yoga.⁹³

Of course, de Michelis acknowledges that such types do not maintain solid boundaries and often overlap. She also asserts that Indian schools of modern yoga, which are only active in India and through non-English languages, do not fit into these types.⁹⁴ However, de Michelis argues that Indian schools of modern yoga that do rely on the English language for the dissemination of their yogic teachings and have centers outside of India can be located within these types.⁹⁵

Modern Postural Yoga, according to de Michelis, has been the most widespread or “mainstream” of all the types of yoga, particularly in the form of Iyengar Yoga. Citing

⁹⁰ Ibid., 187-188.

⁹¹ Ibid., 189.

⁹² Ibid., 188.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Arnold van Gennep on rites of passage, de Michelis argues that the Modern Postural Yoga class functions as a “healing ritual of secular religion.”⁹⁶ Also citing Victor Turner, she further argues that the yoga class itself is a liminal space: “Spatially, practitioners remove themselves from the hustle and bustle of everyday life to attend the yoga class in a designated ‘neutral’ (and ideally somewhat secluded) place.”⁹⁷ At that place, the practitioner undergoes both physical and psychological transformations and healing before being reintroduced to “everyday life.”⁹⁸ As argued by Sarah Strauss, these new forms of yoga were no longer sets of religious ideologies and ascetic practices belonging to an elite group of South Asian specialists aiming toward release *from the world*, but a transnational socially critical ideology and practice aiming toward “freedom to achieve personal well-being” *in the world*.⁹⁹

De Michelis’ study on the history of modern yoga is an important one, but its focus on Modern Postural Yoga outside of India provides little with regard to answers to questions regarding how to categorize the Terapanth’s unique form of modern yoga, *preksha*, since it straddles all of de Michelis’ “types.” This dissertation adopts *preksha*, a form of yoga produced and practiced in India but disseminated in “English speaking milieus” as its subject, in order to evaluate the transnational nature of modern yoga and its adaptive capacity and thus context specificity. In other words, *preksha* cannot be located in any one type because its practice and function shift depending on its context. By arguing for one type of practice as a means to another, Mahaprajna locates *preksha* in

⁹⁶ Ibid., 252. For van Gennep on rites of passage, see Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965. First published 1908).

⁹⁷ De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 252. For Turner on liminality, see Victor Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction Press, 2008. First published 1969).

⁹⁸ De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 252-257.

⁹⁹ Strauss, *Positioning Yoga*, 22.

a unique but important space that tells us much about the adaptive strategies of religious systems in the context of globalization and transnationalism. Throughout this dissertation, I will invoke de Michelis' "types" with regard to categorizing *preksha* in different ways depending on different contexts, and I hope to demonstrate that *preksha*, as a case study of modern yoga, is context-specific.

I have now reviewed the necessary historical material for embarking upon an analysis of the introduction and development of Jain modern yoga in the form of *preksha*. It has become clear that a complex encounter of ancient Indian yogic thought and practice, American and British thinkers interested in yoga, and modern ideas about science and health produced modern yoga. Because modern yoga generally and *preksha* specifically trace their histories to India, I will begin there in Chapter One, where I will provide a brief history of the Terapanth, beginning with its eighteenth-century founder, Bikshu, and up to its current *acharya*, Mahaprajna. I will evaluate the historical trajectory that led from the Terapanth's beginnings as an especially body-, society-, and world-negating Jain sect to its late twentieth-century introduction of a form of modern yoga that is life-affirming and aimed toward health and well-being in the world. Chapter Two will evaluate the metaphysics underlying *preksha* and how, in the monastic context, it functions as part of the ascetic practice of the individual who seeks to make progress along the *moksha-marga*. I will demonstrate that, in this context, *preksha* functions as a case study of classical yoga in South Asia. Chapter Three will evaluate the appropriation of modern scientific discourse by Mahaprajna and his disciples, the *samanis*, as a means to somaticize yogic practice by attributing physiological function to the subtle body of the yogi. I will then move on to the dissemination of *preksha* by the *samanis* in Chapter

Four and will evaluate the ways in which the *samanis* function as mediators of the guru who resolve important ancient and contemporary tensions between ascetic and worldly values. I will also evaluate how the *samanis* teach *preksha* as a physical practice to their lay students whose interest in yoga is not for the sake of immediate progress along the *moksha-marga* but for its physical benefits. In this context, *preksha* is a case study of modern yoga. Chapter Five will provide a theoretical analysis of *preksha* as a product of late capitalism and its global and transnational dimensions. I will evaluate *preksha* insofar as it participates in the transnational yoga market. Finally, I will conclude with some questions and thoughts with regard to the challenges to the Jain Terapanth in its quest toward the global dissemination of *preksha*.

Chapter One

The Terapanth: A History

Suppose a cat is chasing a rat. Is it *ahimsa* to save the rat? No, it is not *ahimsa* to hurt one and protect the other. If the cat is starved and the rat is saved, this only shifts the misfortune.

Acharya Bikshu

The preeminent virtue of the Jain tradition, *ahimsa* or “non-violence,” is not about compassionate concern for living beings, but is about the purification of the soul in its quest toward release from the body. This position was that of Bikshu (1726-1803), the founder and first *acharya* or “monastic leader” of the Jain Terapanth in Rajasthan, India. Bikshu was an eighteenth century Shvetambara reformer who argued that the Jain monastic institution had moved away from the original teachings of Mahavira. His position would eventually lead to the introduction of a new Jain sect, the Shvetambara Terapanth. Because this dissertation evaluates the late twentieth century innovations of the Terapanth, it is essential that I outline the socio-historical development of the sect. This chapter will thus evaluate the emergence of the Terapanth as a reform movement, the major events in its history leading up to the present day, and the ways in which the sect has negotiated and renegotiated the worldly contingencies of community and society and the spiritual concerns of the *moksha marga*.

Bikshu: The Reformer

Biskhu was born into a Shvetambara Jain family of the Bisa Osval merchant caste in the harsh desert region of Marvar in Rajasthan. At a young age, he noticed what he considered a lack of authenticity and lax behavior as opposed to sincere spiritual rigor on

the part of Jain monastics. Drawn to a spiritual life and in an attempt to find genuinely spiritual monastics, he became a disciple of Raghunath, an *acharya* of the Sthanakvasi sect of Shvetambara Jains.¹ Slowly, Bikshu withdrew from normal social life in order to eventually take initiation as a Jain *muni*.²

Joining an order of monks required permission from one's parents, and Bikshu's father had previously died, so his initiation required his mother's permission. According to legend, his mother claimed to have dreamt of a lion when Bikshu was in her womb and, having interpreted the dream as having temporal meaning, argued that this was an auspicious sign that he would be famous, and thus she could not allow him to leave society for the monastic path.³ In response, Bikshu's guru, Raghunath, replied that as a monk Bikshu would roam undaunted and thus victorious like a lion. Convinced then by this religious interpretation, Bikshu's mother gave her permission, and Bikshu was initiated in 1751.

After eight years of living as a monk and studying the Jain *sutras* (scriptural texts), Bikshu became increasingly adamant that Jain monastics did not maintain the rigorous ascetic path as outlined in the texts. He was particularly troubled by the fact that monastics were living in *sthanaks* or houses constructed specifically for them; that they were developing long-term relationships with specific lay families that were preparing food especially for them; and that their overall behavior was lax. In response to Bikshu's concerns, Raghunath is claimed to have argued that this was a consequence of the current age, in line with the Jain conception of time as gradually degenerating and the current age

¹ Chhogmal Choprha, *A Short History of the Terapanthi Sect of the Swetamber Jains and its Tenets*, 4th ed. (Calcutta: Sri Jain Swetamber Terapanthi Sabha, n.d.), 3.

² “*Muni*” or “silent one” and *sadhvi* or “good one” are the titles most often attributed to Terapanthi male and female monastics, respectively.

³ Choprha, *Short History*, 4.

as characterized by increased difficulty on the part of living beings to follow the ascetic path.

The Jain model of time is cyclical. Time is conceptualized as a turning wheel divided into spokes or ages, which occur in an eternal series of downward and upward turns. A downward turn (*avasarpini*) is divided into six spokes or ages. The first three ages are believed to make up a predominantly happy (*sushama*) period characterized by the preponderance of the Jain doctrine. There is, however, a gradual degeneration. In the third and fourth ages, unhappiness (*dushama*) is also present, but there is not a predominance of happiness or unhappiness; it is in this period that *moksha* is possible. That period is followed by the fifth and predominantly unhappy age, the Kali yuga, which is believed to have begun less than three years after Mahavira's death. *Moksha* is no longer possible. In the sixth and last age, the Jain doctrine is completely lost. This ultimate degeneration brings about the commencement of the *utsarpini* within which the six ages occur again but in reverse order. Raghunath explained to Bikshu that in the current Kali yuga an individual capable of maintaining correct ascetic behavior for just one hour would become a *kevalin*. In response to his guru, Bikshu asserted that he could sit holding his breath for that long!⁴

Bikshu was thus unsatisfied with his guru's response and, after hearing complaints by lay people about what they too considered to be the illegitimate and lax behavior on the part of the Sthanakvasi monastics who expected alms from them, he and a few other monks left the order in 1759. Bikshu's movement came to be called the "Terapanth." There are different meanings attributed to the name "Terapanth" based on

⁴ Jayacharya, *Bikshu Drishtant* (Jain Vishva Bharati: Ladnun, 1987); cited by Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 256.

the dual meaning of “*tera*” in Rajasthani and a legend as to how this title came to be attributed to Bikshu’s *panth* or “path.” In Rajasthani, “*tera*” means both “your” and “thirteen.” According to some accounts, “Terapanth” was first applied to Bikshu’s movement because he had thirteen monastic and thirteen lay followers. A poet, upon hearing about this symmetry, is believed to have composed a poem naming the group the Terapanth, “the path of the thirteen.” Bikshu is believed to have responded with the assertion that any person who followed the thirteen Jain rules, which included the five *mahavratas* (Great Vows) of Mahavira, the five *samitis* (Rules of Conduct), and the three *gupties*, was a “Terapanthi” or follower of *Tera* or “your” (a reference to Mahavira) *panth* or “path.”⁵ In 1760, having adopted “Terapanth” as the name for his new order, Bikshu officially re-initiated himself and his fellow monks as Jain monastics into the Terapanthi order.

Bikshu’s new order abandoned the use of *sthanaks*. Bikshu further argued that authentic ascetic behavior included wearing the *muhpatti* or “mouth covering,” which is a small piece of clothe (or today, plastic) worn over the mouth that, much like a surgical mask, remains attached to the face by means of strings that are wrapped around the ears. This device is worn for the sake of preventing the undesired breathing in and consequent destruction of tiny living beings believed to live in the air. Such destruction, though committed against such small living beings, is considered to be *himsa* and thus must be avoided.⁶ This is in line with Bikshu’s commitment to the earliest *sutras*, the *agamas*

⁵ The five rules of conduct are *iryā samiti* (care in walking), *bhasha samiti* (control of speech), *eshana samiti* (careful observation of food and drink), *adan bhandmat nikshewana samiti* (care in putting down or picking up objects), *parithawania samiti* (care in the disposal of unused water, urine, or other excretions). The three controls are over the activities of mind, body, and speech. A *muni* or *sadhvi* adopts these vows in order to stop the influx of karma as well as advance one’s knowledge of the soul.

⁶ Although all Jain monastic traditions strive to avoid violence against all forms of life, most do not wear the *muhpatti*.

(Jain Shvetambara scriptural canon), as doctrinally authoritative. The *agamas* are believed to have been composed by Mahavira's closest disciples, the *ganadharas*, and to encapsulate the eternal orthodoxy of Jain doctrine. The *agamas* consider the destruction of all life, whether single-sensed or six-sensed, to result in the accumulation of karma. In line with such a meticulous avoidance of *himsa*, Bikshu emphasized the central role of fasting in authentic Jain practice. Although all Jain monastic orders maintained the spiritual necessity and benefits of fasting, Bikshu's order emphasized it even more than other Jain traditions.

Bikshu, like his Sthanakvasi predecessors, rejected image worship, which was and continues to be otherwise common amongst Shvetambara traditions.⁷ Despite this similarity to the Sthanakvasis, the new Terapanthi order rejected the lineage of the Sthanakvasis and many other important Shvetambara teachers and the texts attributed to them. Instead, they claimed to rely exclusively on the Jain *agamas* for doctrinal authority.⁸

Human authority in the Terapanth came to be located in a single figure. Bikshu argued that the total monastic authority of a single *acharya* was a necessary part of the reformation process in order to prevent schisms or laxity in the behavior of *munis* and *sadhvis* (nuns). This was in contrast to other Shvetambara monastic traditions in which there are multiple *acharyas* who function as senior members of the monastic community rather than leaders in which authority is entirely concentrated. Generally, each traveling

⁷ Image worship, according to James Laidlaw, was probably always controversial in Shvetambara traditions, and there has consistently been opposition to the worship of images, which can be traced as far back as the fifteenth century with the Gujarati lay man, Lonka Shah, who claimed that he discovered in ancient Jain texts that image worship was illegitimate. Lonka Shah then founded a new sect, the Lonka Gacch, from which the Sthanakvasis descended. James Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation: Religion, Economy, and Society among the Jains* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 48-49.

⁸ Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 256.

group of Jain monastics acts autonomously of the *acharyas*, and instead individuals function under the guidance of their particular gurus.

Bikshu's decision to concentrate authority in the figure of the *acharya* resulted in the concentration of charisma in that figure. Beginning with Bikshu, Max Weber's definition of charisma can be aptly applied to the role of the Terapanthi *acharya*:

The term 'charisma' will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader.⁹

Bikshu's personal charismatic qualities enabled him to initiate and lead a reform movement that opposed the established order in the name of returning to what was considered a pristine original tradition set forth by Mahavira. This is consistent with Weber's argument regarding the charismatic figure insofar as he "repudiates the past" and is thus a "revolutionary force."¹⁰ Bikshu is believed to have led a reform movement to return the Jain tradition to the original teachings of Mahavira, and like Mahavira, Bikshu and every Terapanthi *acharya* to follow him are treated within the tradition as "superhuman" in terms of having miraculous abilities and exemplary bodies capable of sustaining harsh austerities. The Terapanthi *acharyas*, beginning with Bikshu, have been treated as the living being most advanced in spiritual knowledge and are thus set apart as

⁹ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. and with an introduction by Talcott Parsons, trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1964. First published 1947), 358-359.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 362.

embodiments of the sacred from all other living beings.¹¹ All of these qualities result from what is considered their advanced stage along the path of purification from karma.

The concentration of human authority and charisma in the figure of the Terapanthi *acharya* had significant consequences for the historical development of the order. By locating authority in the institution of the *acharya*, Bikshu guaranteed the routinization of charisma whereby the transfer of charisma would occur through a non-hereditary lineage, from *acharya* to *yuvacharya* or “successor to the *acharya*.”¹² By the “routinization” of charisma, I mean the concentration of human authority in a single office resulting in the depersonalization of charisma or the production of a charisma of office, independent of the individual qualities held by the person in that office.¹³ However, the history of the Terapanth indicates that personal charisma is important for increasing the authority and influence of certain *acharyas*. In other words, the “office” of the *acharya* was a charismatic one, but personal charisma functioned to increase devotion to the *acharya*. That personal charisma and the attribution of sanctity to them by their disciples also enabled certain *acharyas* to introduce new reforms (as did Bikshu) that radically changed the Terapanthi organization.¹⁴ With regard to non-routinized charisma, Weber argues, “Charismatic authority is thus specifically outside the realm of everyday routine and the profane sphere.”¹⁵ In the context of Terapanthi history, charisma was never entirely routinized in the office of *acharya* because the *acharyas* and their prescriptions remained

¹¹ I use the “sacred” here in Durkheim’s sense as that which is set apart from the profane. We will elaborate upon this sanctity of the *acharya* in the Terapanth below as well as in Chapter Four.

¹² The concept of the “routinization of charisma” is taken from Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 363-373.

¹³ Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 364.

¹⁴ This especially applies to Jayacharya, Tulsi, and Mahaprajna, all of whom will be discussed below.

¹⁵ Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 361. In a footnote, the editor adds: “Weber used the antithesis of *Charisma* and *Alltag* in two senses. On the one hand, of the extraordinary and temporary as opposed to the everyday and routine; on the other hand, the sacred as opposed to the profane.” In both ways, the antithesis applies to the current subject.

outside of the “profane sphere” and were in fact deemed sacred by their disciples. The dichotomy between sacred and profane is taken from Emile Durkheim’s classic sociological analysis of religion, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. At the end of his first chapter, Durkheim asserts the following:

We have arrived, then, at the following definition: *a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions – beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church.*¹⁶

For the Terapanth, the *acharya* remains a “sacred thing.” This is largely because of the fact that the way in which the current *acharya* chooses his successor is based on personal qualities, which thus enables the *acharya* to choose someone with personal charisma, although certain *acharyas* in the history of the Terapanth demonstrated significantly higher levels of personal charisma than others. As we will see, such personal charisma on the part of the *acharya* means that his disciples treat him as an embodiment of the sacred.

Furthermore, routinization is not complete because authority is preeminently invested in the ascetic doctrine, which prevents the compromise of ideal goals in service to the community organized under the hierocratic authority of the charismatic leader that otherwise occurs with the complete routinization of charisma.¹⁷ In this way, Bikshu’s reform movement to return the Jain tradition to its commitment to the ascetic ideal was never overturned by organizational changes that followed it. Terapanthi monastics remain what Weber terms *weltablehnende* or “world-rejecting” ascetics insofar as their asceticism requires the negation of the body, society, and the world as a whole for the

¹⁶ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. First published 1912), 46.

¹⁷ Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 364.

sake of releasing the soul from the cycle of rebirth.¹⁸ As we will see throughout this chapter and the rest of this dissertation, the *acharya* himself is always subject to the world-rejecting ascetic doctrine. In other words, a world-rejecting asceticism has remained necessary for the soteriological path. In circumstances in which this came under doubt in the history of the Terapanth, however, the result was the abandonment of the order by those with such doubts, although they have always made up a small minority.

The ascetic doctrine was central to Bikshu's reform movement, which called for a return to origins and a cleansing of heterodox corruptions. Bikshu claimed that his order returned Jain thought to Mahavira's dualist ontology, which has its logical end in a religiosity that considers true spiritual practice to involve the reduction and eventual elimination of all physical and social action, since the Jain *agamas* define all action as inherently violent. In Paul Dundas' words: "Bikshu's message is that of the very oldest Jain scriptures: it is not the duty of the true monk to rescue other creatures but rather firstly to concern himself with his own spiritual development. The purpose of non-violence is purification of the soul."¹⁹ Thus the reform movement featured a "conservative, scripture-based interpretation of Jain ethics," which to this day Jains not affiliated with the Shvetambara Terapanth often resist.²⁰

It is common for non-Terapanthi Shvetambara monastics to encourage and support lay acts motivated by *daya* or "mercy," such as paying butchers not to slaughter animals on a particular Jain holy day or offering *dana* or "charity" to the poor. The

¹⁸ Weber compared "world-rejecting" asceticism to *innerweltliche* or "inner-worldly" asceticism, which refers to those who live an ascetic life but from within society. See Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963. First published 1922), 166-183.

¹⁹ Dundas, *The Jains*, 258.

²⁰ Anne Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent: An Ethnography of a Jain Ascetic Community* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 24.

Terapanthi position, however, is that such actions are not truly Jain in character.

Oftentimes, non-Terapanthis argue that this is a position against non-violence itself. In response to such an argument, Bikshu is believed to have used the following example to make a case for a non-active non-violent orientation toward the world:

Suppose a cat is chasing a rat. Is it *ahimsa* to save the rat? No, it is not *ahimsa* to hurt one and protect the other. If the cat is starved and the rat is saved, this only shifts the misfortune.²¹

Emic interpretations of this story add that if you saved the rat, you would then be responsible for all future violence committed by that rat, which would then result in the accumulation of karma to your soul.²²

Thus Bikshu prescribed rigorous asceticism and emphasized *ahimsa* for the sake of purification of the soul as the *sine qua non* of the Jain tradition. A foundational doctrine was a radical distinction between two realms of value: the *laukika* or “worldly” and the *lokottara* or “spiritual.” The *laukika* consists of any action directed toward earning merit, such as feeding a beggar or saving an animal from slaughter. Such merit may result in material benefits on the part of the actor. In contrast, the *lokottara* includes what is considered *true* spiritual behavior oriented around *ahimsa* and the purification of the soul from karma, such as fasting or celibacy.

Thus the Terapanth demanded a literal reading of the earliest Jain scriptures for the interpretation of Jain ethics, defined in terms of a non-active non-violence and an ascetic soteriology. Beginning in the second century CE with the post-*agamic* text, the *Tattvarthasutra* of Umasvati, Jain scriptures had accepted meritorious action based on

²¹ Quoted in Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation*, 164. Laidlaw also points out that this story may have originally been from a Sthanakvasi caricature of Bikshu’s position but was so successful for demonstrative purposes that Jains from all sects adopted it and then gave it their own interpretations.

²² Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation*, 164.

intention as part of the spiritual path. Bikshu called for a return to the position of the earlier Shvetambara scriptures, which maintain that the only true religious action is to teach the path of purification and has nothing to do with intention.²³ For this reason, the only appropriate relationship between monastic and lay individuals, according to Bikshu, was one of instruction, whereby the *sadhvi* or *muni* instructed the lay woman or man on how to further purify her or his soul.²⁴

An ascetic soteriology was not new to the Jain tradition and, in fact, as discussed in the Introduction, the ascetic ideal and the path of purification were central to Jain thought throughout its history. For those within the monastic community, all behavior should be within the *lokottara* realm insofar as it is oriented around the avoidance of violence by means of ascetic withdrawal. The Jain monastic is ideally never concerned with *laukika* or “worldly” gains but only with spiritual ones. However, for the Terapanth, in contrast to the Shvetambara Murtipujaka and Sthanakavasi sects, even for lay people, true spiritual behavior does not include charitable acts done out of mercy, which only produce worldly gains by means of the accumulation of merit.²⁵ In the words of John Cort on the Shvetambara Murtipujaka tradition:

The *moksa-marg* ideology and the value of wellbeing are held in an unresolved tension because of the multivocality of the symbols by which the two are expressed. According to the *moksa-marg* ideology, an individual has to make a

²³ The Shvetambara *agamas* do not distinguish between violence to multi-sensed beings and violence to one-sensed beings. All action results in violence and thus the accumulation of karma. Thus, as argued by W.J. Johnson with regard to these earliest Jain *sutras*, “The possibility of some kind of meritorious activity scarcely arises; it is only by restraint from action that one can hope to improve one's condition.” W.J. Johnson, *Harmless Souls: Karmic Bondage and Religious Change in Early Jainism with Special Reference to Umasvati and Kundakunda* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1995), 26.

²⁴ As will become evident, this position on the part of the Terapanth resulted in very narrow possibilities for interactions between monastics and lay people.

²⁵ Peter Flugel, “Spiritual Accounting: The Role of the Kalyanaka Patra in the Religious Economy of the Terapanth Svetambara Jain Ascetics,” in *Jainism and Early Buddhism in the Indian Cultural Context: Festschrift in Honour of P.S. Jaini*, ed. Olle Qvarnstrom (Fremont, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 2003), 168.

choice between wellbeing and the *moksa-marg*. In practice, the two are held in tension, and people act and live on the assumption that one can have it both ways: following practices of the *moksa-marg* brings wellbeing, and pursuit of wellbeing (within certain boundaries) advances one at least a small way along the *moksa-marg*.²⁶

Bikshu made an explicit attempt to resolve this tension, which he considered indicative of illegitimate Jain practice, by strictly delineating between acts of asceticism and merit earning acts of charity. As for lay people, the only type of action that could benefit the karmic state of their soul was either ascetic practice or *supatra dana*, the gift of food to a monastic.²⁷ *Supatra dana* is within the *lokottara* because it is an act of renunciation itself (on the part of the gift-giver, the lay woman or man) that affirms the ascetic ideal (embodied by the gift-recipient, the monastic). Ascetic practice, for Bikshu, was spiritual practice.

In an attempt to formalize his system of Jain ethics, from 1772 to 1794, Bikshu set forth a constitution for the Terapanth consisting of a detailed *maryada*, fixed rules of conduct, for the monastics.²⁸ Such rules were based on the radical distinction between worldly benefits and spiritual benefits. Fully initiated *munis* and *sadhvis* were not to

²⁶ John E. Cort, *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 200.

²⁷ Today, since Terapanthis are forbidden from acting for the sake of non-violence through charity, their religious practice is enacted through the giving of food to monastics or the donation of money directly to the international organization for the Terapanth, Jain Vishva Bharati.

²⁸ The four *acharyas* following Bikshu continued to develop the *maryada*. Jayacharya, the fourth *acharya*, produced a condensed version of the rules. *Munis* and *sadhvis* of the Terapanthi order read the *maryada* every day and sign it as an act of commitment to the rules. An annual festival, the *Maryada Mahotsava*, was established by Jayacharya and occurs every year whereby the Terapanthi community gathers to celebrate the completion of the rules by Bikshu. All *munis* and *sadhvis* as well as many from the lay community gather at the place of the *acharya* and officially express their commitment to him as their leader. The *acharya* uses this time to separate the *munis* and *sadhvis* into small groups (*singhars*), and decides where each group will travel for the next year and where they will spend the *chaturmas* (the four-month monsoon season during which monastics settle in one place). The *chaturmas* is a four-month period between mid-July and mid-November. Because of the immense amount of rain, insects thrive during this time, and it would be impossible to travel continuously by foot without stepping on any. Thus, in order to prevent *himsa* or “violence” of such large proportions, renunciators (Jain and non-Jain) stop traveling during this period and stay in one place in close contact with a particular lay community. It is during this period that lay disciples have the most contact with monastic members and, under their guidance, engage in their own ascetic rituals, such as fasting.

participate in any way in social, political or legal matters, which were considered “worldly” affairs. The monastics could not have anything to say about or to do with “worldly benefits.”²⁹ Insofar as they abandoned the world and all social obligations, the Terapanthi monastics functioned as world-rejecting ascetics. Spiritual purification required withdrawal from the world of social and physical action.

The Terapanth struggled to survive initially because of its rigorous ascetic rules, which resulted in seven of the original thirteen *munis* leaving the order. Furthermore, certain lay people who remained devoted to Ragunath’s Sthanakvasi order were hostile toward the Terapanth. Because monastic wanderers depend on lay people for alms throughout the year and for lodging during the *chaturmas*, this was an essential relationship for the survival of any monastic order.³⁰ Yet many lay people rejected their legitimacy as Jain *munis*. As a result, Bikshu and his fellow *munis* are said to have spent their first *chaturmas* as an independent order in a cave as opposed to the residences usually provided by lay people as temporary homes to monastics during the monsoon season.

Nevertheless Bikshu’s order survived, and he and his fellow monastics traveled throughout Marwar and Mevar in Rajasthan for forty-four years teaching a message of reform. Dundas describes Bikshu as “preaching his radical interpretation of Mahavira’s doctrine with an almost evangelical fervour.”³¹ Such active proselytization seems contrary to Bikshu’s principle of non-action. Yet because Bikshu directed lay people *only* with regard to the purification of the soul and not worldly pursuits, this proselytizing campaign was within the scope of his teachings on what was acceptable action for a Jain *muni* or *sadhvi*. In other words, it was within the *lokottara* realm of values. In the case of

²⁹ Chopra, *Short History*, 24.

³⁰ For a description of the *chaturmas*, see note 28.

³¹ Dundas, *The Jains*, 258.

the Terapanth, the principle of non-action actually legitimizes proselytizing insofar as the only true spiritual act directed toward someone else is to change that individual's violent (or active) disposition. Thus beginning with the earliest Terapanthis, what it meant to be on the spiritual path was to either withdraw from action or to convince others to withdraw from action. As we will see below, the importance of proselytization became increasingly profound over the history of the Terapanth. As a consequence of Bikshu and his disciples' persistent attempts to bring others within the fold of their reform movement, the order slowly grew into a four-fold community of *munis*, *sadhvis*, laymen, and laywomen. And by the time of Bikshu's death in 1803, he had initiated forty-nine *munis* and fifty-six *sadhvis*.³²

Jayacharya: The Hierocratic Authority

Following Bikshu's death, the institution of a single *acharya* continued. However, by 1852, the Terapanthi monastic community had been divided into smaller *singharas* or "groups" led by *agranis* or "senior male and female monastics" who functioned nearly entirely independent of the *acharya*. According to Peter Flugel, the fourth *acharya*, Acharya Jitmal (most commonly known as Jayacharya) (1803-1821), undertook a process to re-concentrate authority in the *acharya*. Flugel explains:

With the permission of the *acharya*, the *agranis* recruited their own disciples and also privately owned religious manuscripts. Both personal disciples and certain material objects are regarded as inalienable 'possessions' by Jain mendicants. Jayacharya skillfully exploited this shared characteristic by shifting attention away from his prime objective of re-establishing central control over all members of the *sangha* to the issue of common access to monastic property.³³

³² Chopra, *Short History*, 6.

³³ Flugel, "Spiritual Accounting," 171. "*Sangha*" refers to the monastic community.

Basically, *munis* could own very few texts based on canonical rules on how much property a monastic could possess and the fact that they had to carry all of their possessions from place to place. Consequently, they primarily depended on their lay followers' libraries or the libraries of other Jain sects.³⁴ By the time Jayacharya became *acharya* in 1852, the almost total lack of shared Terapanthi literary property in addition to an influx of *sadhvis* who were not properly organized and thus functioned outside of the *acharya's* control had led to such a lack of structure that it threatened the community's stability.³⁵ This threat to stability was the very reason Bikshu had insisted on the central authority of a single *acharya*. Jayacharya took it upon himself to resolve the situation.

Jayacharya blamed the lack of structure within the monastic community primarily on the ownership of private property by individual *munis*. He thus set about establishing communal ownership of all manuscripts under the central control of the *acharya*. Jayacharya also set about increasing the number of manuscripts communally owned by the order for the sake of Terapanthi monastic education. This agenda led him to order all monastics to copy the manuscripts from the libraries of other Jain sects.³⁶ In order to motivate the monastic community to embark upon such a task, Jayacharya offered both spiritual and material incentives.³⁷ Basically, for each *shloka* (thirty-two syllables), a monastic would be compensated with one point called a *gatha* that could be exchanged for material rewards within the monastic community, and this was considered a monastic

³⁴ Flugel, "Spiritual Accounting," 171.

³⁵ Ibid., 171-172.

³⁶ Ibid., 172.

³⁷ Ibid.

artha pranali or “economic system.”³⁸ Copying manuscripts automatically brought about spiritual rewards because such writing itself was considered a legitimate religious practice for the enhancement of concentration (*dhyana*), asceticism (*tapas*), and knowledge (*jnana*).³⁹ However, participation in services for the sake of material incentives was problematic since Bikshu had argued that monastics should never act for the sake of worldly gain or merit. Such acts would propel them into the *laukika* or realm of worldly values. In an attempt to prevent this problem, Jayacharya defined such acts as service to the monastic community and thus religious, not worldly, in nature.⁴⁰

He further guaranteed that everyone would partake in the monastic economic system by implementing a minimum requirement of service. At first, he required a certain amount of intellectual service by *munis* (such as copying manuscripts) and manual service by *sadhvis* (such as making begging-bowls and monastic robes). But as time moved on and the Terapanth grew in numbers, work became more complex, so that everything from caring for an elderly *muni* or *sadhvi* to carrying group baggage earned *gathas*.⁴¹ Eventually, according to Flugel:

The *gathas* acquired the role of a medium of exchange and effectively functioned as a kind of money because almost all obligatory works and services were evaluated in terms of *gathas* and, additionally, work could be avoided by means of an exchange of *gathas* and one could acquire personal services or possessions by means of the exchange of *gathas*.⁴²

Although the rate of exchange fluctuated, the *acharya* fixed the value of communal work and, because transactions between monastics were not allowed according to the standards set forth by Bikshu, all transactions had to occur through the mediation of the *acharya*

³⁸ Ibid. The literal translation of “*gatha*” is “verse.”

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 173-175.

⁴² Ibid., 176.

who systematically organized and kept track of all transactions by means of *kalyanaka patras* or “merit books.”⁴³

Unsurprisingly, such innovations were not free from controversy. Certain monastics abandoned Jayacharya and the Terapanthi order as a result of the economic system, which they considered contrary to Bhiksu’s rejection of any act done for merit instead of the purification of the individual soul from karma, even though Jayacharya defined acts done for the sake of *gathas* as religious in nature since they were in service to the monastic community.⁴⁴ Flugel argues that the system introduced by Jayacharya demonstrates that in Jain monasticism, “[Community service] poses doctrinal problems similar to *dana* in the sphere of the laity, since it involves not only self-restraint but also material benefits.”⁴⁵ Thus, as discussed in the Introduction with regard to the tension amongst Jain laity between spiritual acts for the sake of purification and worldly acts for the sake of merit, a similar tension exists for the monastics, that between acts for the sake of purification and those for the sake of communal service. That tension was made explicit in Jayacharya’s innovations.

This phenomenon reflects Weber’s argument that monastic asceticism oriented around the purification of the soul eventually transforms into a monastic asceticism oriented around a “hierocratic organization:”

In its pure form charismatic authority has a character specifically foreign to everyday routine structures. The social relationships directly involved are strictly personal, based on the validity and practice of charismatic personal qualities. If this is not to remain a purely transitory phenomenon, but to take on the character

⁴³ Ibid., 177.

⁴⁴ There remains in the Jain Terapanth a tendency on the part of monastics to defend Jayacharya’s innovations as legitimate acts of “changing with the times.” The *niyojika* (chief *samani*), Samani Madhur Pragma, once told me: “... time has changed a lot... our fourth *acharya* did a lot of work on management, in my view, according to the times.” Personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 22, 2009. This explanation of Terapanthi innovations occurs throughout Terapanthi history. See note 82 and note 88.

⁴⁵ Flugel, “Spiritual Accounting,” 171.

of a permanent relationship forming a stable community of disciples or a band of followers or a party organization or any sort of political or hierocratic organization, it is necessary for the character of charismatic authority to become radically changed. Indeed, in its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of originating. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both.⁴⁶

This process is the routinization of charisma. However, as mentioned above, the routinization of charisma in the history of the Terapanth is not complete. Evaluating Jayacharya's efforts as movements toward the rationalization of charisma, Flugel asserts:

However, although the monastic economy of the Terapanth is in the process of transformation, it is not yet systematically rationalised, because service as an atonement is not fully recognised as a functional equivalent of *tapas*. Severe violations of the fundamental ascetic rules still have to be expiated by compulsory fasting... the *kalyanaka patra* may, therefore, better be viewed as a preliminary, task-specific synthesis of incongruous classificatory and procedural patterns. In paraphrasing P.S. Jaini one might say, in conclusion, that the Terapanth *acharyas* attempted to raise service to a new status which incorporated both auspiciousness and supramundane purity. In this new scheme, anything which is defined by the *acharya* as auspicious is considered to be pure: activities which are productive of salvation. However, as far as the atonements are concerned, monastic life is still divided into two incompatible spheres of action, asceticism and community work. Only the future can show to what extent Jitmal and Tulsi managed to turn the Jain ideal of world-renunciation but also into a motivating factor for world-transformation.⁴⁷

Thus the path toward the rationalization of charisma in a particular office and the concomitant routinization of charisma through the transformation from a world-rejecting asceticism to asceticism orientated around service to the hierocratic authority (a form of inner-worldly asceticism) is apparent at this stage in Terapanthi history but not complete.

⁴⁶ Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 363-364.

⁴⁷ Flugel, *Spiritual Accounting*, 198. See also Padmanabh S. Jaini, "The Pure and the Auspicious in the Jaina Tradition," in *Purity and Auspiciousness in Indian Society*, ed. John Braisted Carman and Frederique Apffel-Marglin (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 84-93. Flugel cites Weber, who argues, "Eventually, asceticism is completely re-interpreted into a means not primarily of attaining individual salvation in one's own way, but of preparing the monk for work on behalf of the hierocratic authority... Buttressed by its own charisma, such innerworldly asceticism always remained dubious to ecclesiastical authority, which relied solely on office charisma. But the advantages prevailed." Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, trans. Johannes Winckelmann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. First published 1964), 1167.

Spiritual practice comes to include service to a community organized under a hierocratic authority, but ascetic practice is still preeminent for atonement and thus for the purification of the soul.⁴⁸ In other words, a world-rejecting asceticism is still necessary for the soteriological path. Jayacharya (and one of his successors, Tulsi, the ninth *acharya*) recognized community service as a form of atonement, but ascetic withdrawal from the body, society, and the world (primarily in the form of fasts) and community service were not equivalent.⁴⁹ Rather, ascetic denial continued to be required for violations of monastic ascetic rules even though a deduction of *gathas* occurs as a result of violations of organizational rules.⁵⁰

In addition to systematizing community organization for the sake of concentrating authority and charisma in the institution of the *acharya*, Jayacharya also took many steps to consolidate Jain Terapanthi identity.⁵¹ He collected all the multifarious anecdotes about Bikshu's life and introduced sacred days celebrating Bikshu's bestowal of the *maryada*, Bikshu's death, and the accession of the *acharya*. Jayacharya also implemented monastic organizational reforms by introducing the office of *sadhvi pramucka*, the chief *sadhvi*, subordinate, of course, to the *acharya*. This occurred in 1853. He also divided the Terapanthi *sadhvis*, who made up double the number of *munis* in the monastic community, into groups of four or five individuals who would travel together.⁵² Furthermore, in 1857, Jayacharya opened a hospice in the town of Ladnun in Rajasthan for elderly *munis* and *sadhvis*. That hospice continues to function today as a permanent abode for elderly or ill *munis* and *sadhvis* who must retire from monastic travel.

⁴⁸ Flugel, "Spiritual Accounting," 185.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁵¹ Dundas, *The Jains*, 260.

⁵² For more on the gender asymmetry of the Terapanthi monastic community, see Chapter Four.

Kalu Ram: The Conversationalist

The Terapanth underwent a long period without major changes until the twentieth century. This was a period of increased engagement and oftentimes first encounters between European and American scholars and Indian spiritual adepts, and the Jain Terapanth was no exception. The eighth Terapanthi *acharya*, Kalu Ram (1876-1936), engaged in conversations with scholars from Europe and the United States, including Hermann Jacobi, who visited him in 1914, and Charles W. Gilkey, who visited him in 1925.⁵³ Such encounters stimulated action on the part of Terapanthi lay people to publicize information about their order. Thus the Shri Jain Shvetambara Terapanthi Mahasabha (JSTM) of Calcutta, a lay Jain Terapanthi organization, published English language books on the Terapanth. The JSTM was founded in 1913 with the mission to function as a central organization of the Terapanthi lay community. Because Calcutta was the capital of British India and functioned as a center of trade and business, it became an important place for lay Marvari Jains who flocked there in search of entrepreneurial opportunities (as a reminder to the reader, Bikshu was from the Marvar region of Rajasthan as were and are many Terapanthi monastics and lay followers).⁵⁴ For these reasons, Calcutta was an important location for lay women and men during the British Raj, and thus lay Terapanthi Jains established JSTM there. It consequently functioned as an influential organization. The JSTM books discussed the conversations between the Terapanthi representatives, including the *acharya*, and figures from the United States and

⁵³ Chopra, *Short History*, 10. Hermann Jacobi was a renowned German Indologist and the first to edit and translate many Jain manuscripts, including those incorporated in Max Muller's *Sacred Books of the East*, into German and English. Charles W. Gilkey was an American scholar who served as Dean of the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel of the University of Chicago as well as Associate Dean of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago.

⁵⁴ Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation*, 93.

Europe and provided important information on Jain teachings, the history of the Terapanth, and arguments for the value of the Jain religion. In this way, lay Terapanthi Jains sought to educate English-speaking Indians and foreigners on the Terapanth who were otherwise unfamiliar with the sect.

Based on speeches and letters preserved from the visits of Europeans and Americans to Terapanthi centers in India, it appears that visitors expressed an enormous amount of gratitude toward their Terapanthi hosts but assessed the extent of their austerities as radically foreign to American and European dispositions at that time. The letters clearly indicate dialogue between European and American individuals with interests in Indian religions and the *acharyas* themselves, in these cases Kalu Ram and the ninth *acharya*, Tulsi, whom we will discuss in more detail below. The issue of the compatibility (or lack thereof) of the Terapanth and modernity is repeatedly mentioned. Clearly, there exists a tension between the desire on the part of Terapanthis to claim that their rendition of the Jain religion is universally accessible and the rigorous asceticism required for spiritual progress that those in the “modern world” were expected to reject. One Terapanthi lay man of high social status, Chhogmal Choprha, states: “In this present materialistic world to try to convince people about the necessity of striving for *Mukti* may sound inopportune.”⁵⁵ In one letter by Jacobi, his description of the Terapanth reveals his shock at the order’s ascetic orientation:

They try to let the conduct of life of the monks exactly agree with the precepts of the canonic scriptures and expect from them unswerving observance. In fact, I am told that Yatis belonging to this community died on their wanderings because they could not get water which the monks were allowed to drink according to their precepts although there was no scarcity of water. It is strange that the Terapanthis do not consider it to be their duty or even only a good work to save a being threatened by danger to its life; for, one must allow to let the Karma have its

⁵⁵ Choprha, *Short History*, 52. “*Mukti*” or “release” is another term for *moksha*.

course. The most peculiar in this sect, which was so far almost completely unknown to us, is that there is a very strict spiritual regimentation among them.⁵⁶

It is readily apparent that Jacobi was shocked not only by the strict ascetic rules, but also by what I described above as the tension between a commitment to rigorous asceticism along with the concomitant ethic of non-interference and the formal organization and “regimentation” of the monastic order under a hierocratic authority. Nonetheless, the fact that Kalu Ram and other Jain representatives participated “in the world” by conversing with scholarly members of the international community indicates a new direction for the Jain Terapanth that would reach far beyond these initial face-to-face encounters.

Tulsi: The Social Activist

The intellectual contact and engagement with non-Indian scholars aside, the Terapanth continued without any serious innovations until those of the ninth *acharya*, Tulsi (1914-1997). In 1936, while Kalu Ram lay on his deathbed, he initiated Tulsi, then only twenty-two years old, as his successor.⁵⁷ Tulsi became the *acharya* upon his guru’s death.

Tulsi was responsible for numerous innovations on the part of the Jain Terapanth. Such innovations began with an expansion of Kalu Ram’s move to increase conversation with international representatives. Furthermore, Tulsi initiated a campaign for global peace in response to what he deemed to be a denigrating world plagued by modernity.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Quoted in Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Jainism: An Indian Religion of Salvation*, trans. Shridhar B. Shrotri (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999. First published 1925), 391-392. “Yati” is the title given throughout Jain history to a class of quasi-monastics who did not follow all of the strict rules of the fully-initiated monastics. In this quote, I am certain that Jacobi uses “Yati” in reference to the fully-initiated *munis*.

⁵⁷ Tulsi had entered into the monastic community at the young age of eleven and at the time of his initiation as *acharya*, became the youngest ever to inherit this position.

⁵⁸ There is a certain irony in the fact that in response to the perceived problems of modernity, Terapanthi members appropriated certain characteristically modern adaptive strategies for the promotion of what they consider the universal benefits of Jain teachings. I will discuss such adaptive strategies below.

In 1943, while World War II was raging on, the World Congress of Faiths, an inter-religious organization in London for the promotion of fellowship between different religions, produced a “Three-Faith Declaration on World Peace” prepared by representatives of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. In 1944, they invited Tulsi to provide a Jain response to the “Declaration.” By that time, Tulsi had become concerned about the dreadful state of international affairs and thus took advantage of this opportunity to increase his social engagement.⁵⁹ He responded to the Declaration with “A Message of Peace to a World full of Unrest.”⁶⁰

In his “Message of Peace,” Tulsi responded to what he considered the “universal unrest” caused primarily by “the great destructive war” but also by what he perceived to be the contemporary rise in moral problems in the world due to processes of industrialization, urbanization, and materialism, all of which he associated with modernity.⁶¹ He spoke in non-sectarian terms, referring to Mahavira’s teaching on non-violence as a “World Religion.”⁶² Tulsi also spoke of what he perceived to be the threat of science, which he argues is not *inherently* bad but *potentially* so when applied for the benefit of some living beings at the expense of others, thus causing a threat to world peace.⁶³ This was in reference to the technologically advanced weaponry used in World War II.

Putting a twist on the ascetic doctrine of Bikshu, which understands true spiritual practice to involve an ethics of non-interference, or a non-active non-violence, that leads

⁵⁹ Tulsi, “A Message of Peace to a World full of Unrest,” prepared from his sermon on June 9, 1945 at Sardarshahar, Bikaner State, India (Calcutta: Surana Printing Works, 1945), 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3-20.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

to the purification of the soul from karma, Tulsi defines “real peace” as a state of “happiness, contentment or gladness whereby there is a peculiar vibration in the Soul or awakening thereof leading to consciousness about the real character of the Soul.”⁶⁴ In this way, he invokes the language of “peace” in reference to the hoped for state of world affairs while constructing that ecumenical message with Jain dualist categories oriented around purification. He defines permanent peace as experienced only by the purified soul and argues that peace in the world, though impermanent, can ultimately lead to permanent peace if brought about through proper means. Thus he orients the quest for immediate peace *in* the world around the quest for the ultimate goal in the Jain tradition: release *from* the world.

In fact, he argues that the proper means for immediate peace are the same as those for permanent release, including the adoption of the Jain Five Great Vows and *samyaktva* or “right faith,” which involves awareness of the reality of the material world as inherently violent and the distinctiveness of the soul from matter. This, of course, is a doctrinally specific view of the means to world peace, since it requires both Jain practice and ideology. Tulsi is not blind to this fact and, in order to apply his message further, proposes “Nine Rules,” which he suggests are useful for all living beings and are to be followed in the case that one feels it is “difficult” to follow the Jain vows and adopt *samyaktva*.⁶⁵ By proposing the “Nine Rules,” Tulsi also avoids responding directly to the principles proposed for world peace by the Three-Faiths Declaration, which he deems to be oriented primarily around “worldly activities” and would thus be inappropriate for a Terapanthi monastic to condone. Rather, in line with Bikshu’s assertion that monastics

⁶⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 17.

should only advise lay people with regard to how to further their progress along the spiritual path, Tulsi provides his own principles as follows:

- (1) Follow the principle of non-violence toward all living beings.
- (2) Make an effort to lessen anger, pride, deceitfulness, and discontent in all human beings.
- (3) Stress the development of the “Inner-self” in education rather than material or worldly benefits.
- (4) Make justice, equity, and good conduct the basis for government and not exploitation or selfish motives.
- (5) Discontinue scientific work for the sake of material gains, especially for purposes of war.
- (6) Preach “universal fraternity instead of national solidarity.”
- (7) End the hoarding of goods and usurpation of others’ goods.
- (8) Develop principles of justice, impartiality and humanity for the sake of ending oppression “against the weak, the depressed or the coloured or other particular castes or communities.”
- (9) Avoid the propagation of religion or principle by means of violence and give religious freedom to every individual.⁶⁶

He ends, however, with the assertion that the Nine Rules are meant to increase “the spirit of Renunciation and World Peace,” juxtaposing worldly and renunciatory values under a single fold.⁶⁷ In this way, Tulsi creatively attempts to resolve the Jain tension between worldly and ascetic pursuits.

We find in Tulsi’s “A Message of Peace to a World full of Unrest” hints of a Terapanthi movement that would evolve into an entirely new orientation toward the world. Tulsi sought to establish increased engagement with social actors. And all this occurred despite the Terapanthi position that monastic members should not engage in social action but should withdraw from society, what Tulsi himself referred to as “vomit.”⁶⁸ In fact, in line with Bikshu’s strict distinction between worldly acts of mercy

⁶⁶ Ibid., 17-19. This is not an exact quote but my own concise summarization of Tulsi’s “Nine Rules.”

⁶⁷ Tulsi, “Message of Peace,” 20.

⁶⁸ Valley, *Guardians of the Transcendent*, 39.

and spiritual acts of asceticism, Tulsi once gave the following explication on *daya* or “mercy”:

Mercy can only be done when the opponent’s heart is changed. When we save someone by force, or by some wrong means, or by tempting, then we do not consider it spiritual (*adhyatmik*) mercy. It can be from a worldly point of view (*laukik drishtikon*), but not from the spiritual. Suppose we save a rat by beating the cat who is chasing him, that is not pure *daya*. Suppose some person is killing some creature and we give him money, that is not pure *daya*. Until the heart of the killer is changed, it cannot be considered pure *daya*. Changing a violent man to a non-violent man – that is *daya*.⁶⁹

Thus, again, the Terapanthi resistance to worldly participation ironically legitimizes worldly participation, but only of a very particular variety. In line with Bikshu’s rules for monastic participation in the world, directing another living being toward or along the path of purification is the only true spiritual action.

Thus, in order to negotiate spiritual and social commitments, his worldly engagement took upon itself a proselytizing orientation aimed at the spiritual enhancement of those he engaged with. That orientation became formally organized on March 2, 1949, when Tulsi founded the Anuvrat or “Lesser Vows” movement, dedicated to “taking Jainism beyond the Jains.”⁷⁰ The Anuvrat movement involves the taking of Lesser Vows by all lay people, Jain and non-Jain, which are qualified versions of the Five Great Vows: *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (telling the truth), *asteya* (restraint from stealing), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), and *aparigraha* (restraint from attachment). In line with the traditional prescription of these vows, monastics take the vows literally, but lay people fulfill the vows to the best of their abilities as social actors. This outreach movement drastically shifted the public face of the Terapanth from its status as an

⁶⁹ Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation*, 164.

⁷⁰ This is a common expression in the present-day Terapanthi Jain community to refer to the aim of the Anuvrat movement.

especially strict body-, society, and world-denying ascetic oriented Jain sect to what resembled a non-sectarian social movement. According to the Terapanthi monastic, Sadhvi Vishruta Vibha, Tulsi's innovations were in direct response to what was perceived as the contemporary rise in moral problems in the world.⁷¹

Much of Tulsi's innovations came at a critical time in Indian history. In 1947, India officially achieved independence from Britain, and the next year was spent writing a constitution for the Republic of India. Tulsi argued that Indian independence depended on the development of "national character" and thus implemented the Anuvrat Movement for the sake of India's moral development. According to Vishruta Vibha, a precept of the Anuvrat Movement was that *dharma* or religious duty should be concerned with solving present-day problems of violence.⁷² The movement aimed to produce a non-violent socio-political world, beginning with India, and was immediately associated with the social activism of nationalist Mahatma Gandhi. It was thus conceived of as a nationalist movement. But the Anuvrat movement also saw, as part of its mission, to take what it considered universal Jain teachings beyond India, into "the Western world" itself. The Terapanth maintained that the Anuvrat movement was "non-religious" insofar as it was non-sectarian and available for the self-improvement of all living beings from all different religious orientations.⁷³ The adoption of this so-called non-sectarian proselytizing agenda was the beginning of what would lead to additional Terpanthi innovations.

⁷¹ Vishruta Vibha, *An Introduction to Terapanth* (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 2007), 29-30.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷³ Monastic members of the Terapanth consistently maintain that the Anuvrat movement is not a religious movement but a "way of life" for the benefit of all living beings, and argue that it is oriented around a particular ethical code that is universally applicable to people of all religious traditions.

Those innovations were first introduced in Tulsi's birthplace, a town called Ladnun in the Nagaur district of Rajasthan, which was already an important center for the Terapanth. It was during Tulsi's acharyaship that Ladnun became the Terapanth's official headquarters. When one of Tulsi's wealthy disciples donated sixty acres of land in Ladnun to establish a Jain learning center, Tulsi responded in 1970 with the establishment of the Jain Vishva Bharati organization (literally, "All-India Jain" organization; henceforth, JVB), a global organization for disseminating Terapanthi Jain spiritual teachings and practices while committing to adapting the Jain tradition to changes in the modern world.

After Tulsi's death on June 23, 1997, JVB continued to grow. It eventually became the "first Jain university", and over the years came to offer degrees in fields such as "Non-violence," "Jainology," "Prakrit," and "Social Work."⁷⁴ The Terapanthi monastic community has a strong presence there. The *munis* have living quarters on the campus, and the *sadhvis* have living quarters a few blocks down the street from the campus. In addition to JVB, Tulsi also supported the formation of a lay association, the Akhil Bharatiya Terapanth Mahasabha, which provides organizational structure for the Terapanthi lay community.⁷⁵

It was also at this first JVB center in Ladnun that one of Tulsi's closest disciples, a *muni* by the name of Muni Nathmal, played a vital role in what was, after more than two decades of immersion in the Anuvrat Movement, the next major Terapanthi innovation: the introduction of a Jain form of yoga. Indian nationalists often turned to yoga not as much as a tool for attaining release from the world as practiced in its ancient

⁷⁴ The JVB center in Ladnun eventually became the JVB Institute that offered degrees in 1991 and was renamed JVB University in 2006. See Jain Vishva Bharati University, <http://www.jvbi.ac.in>.

⁷⁵ Dundas, *The Jains*, 260-261.

and classical contexts, but as what was perceived to be a scientific tool for “re-forming the physical body” of each individual seeking to reclaim India as a moral nation that should be free from Western colonialism.⁷⁶ This movement occurred within the growing market for modern yoga. Thus, unsurprisingly given its nationalist associations, the Terapanth entered the modern yoga market when Tulsi gave permission to his disciple, Nathmal, to take leave from his regular monastic duties in order to study ancient Jain scriptures in search of a “lost” form of Jain yoga (as discussed in the Introduction, in classical Jain thought and practice, yoga does not have a systematic role, especially relative to Hindu and Buddhist traditions). Tulsi believed that a uniquely Jain systematic form of yoga had been central to the practice of Mahavira but was gradually lost, and he wanted Nathmal to “rediscover” this system by means of close research on ancient Jain literature as well as “personal experimentation.”⁷⁷

Nathmal thus studied these ancient texts and experimented with yoga. In 1975, he introduced *preksha dhyana*, literally, “concentration of perception,” but most often translated by the tradition itself as “insight meditation and yoga.”⁷⁸ He presented *preksha* as a universal yogic system grounded in science. This innovation was in line with three social trends that Rajasthanis would have been familiar with in the 1970s: first, the popularity of Satya Narayan Goenka’s *vipassana* (a “universal” form of Buddhist meditation) within and beyond India; second, the turn by Indian nationalists to yoga as a

⁷⁶ Sarah Strauss, *Positioning Yoga: Balancing Acts Across Cultures* (New York: Berg, 2005), 7. See also, Joseph S. Alter, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body between Science and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); and Joseph S. Alter, “Celibacy, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Gender into Nationalism in North India,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (February 1994): 45-66.

⁷⁷ Mahaprajna (Muni Nathmal), repeated personal communications, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 2006 and June 2009.

⁷⁸ Members of the Terapanth most often translate the full title of *preksha dhyana* as “*preksha* meditation,” but since the category of “yoga” includes “*dhyana*” or “meditation,” and *preksha* involves more than just the meditative components of yoga, I use “yoga” in the current dissertation.

tool for “re-forming the physical body” in the battle to reclaim India from colonialism;⁷⁹ and third, the global embrace of yoga as a pop culture practice for health and well-being, especially in India, the United States, and Europe. Tulsi and Nathmal had also directly engaged with Theosophists from the United States and Britain on metaphysical topics concerning both “Western” and “Eastern” spiritual traditions. As mentioned in the Introduction, Theosophists were interested in yoga and its implications for their own syncretic spirituality.⁸⁰ Thus, even though the introduction of *preksha* was a radical innovation for the Terapanth, it was consistent with many cultural trends at the time and thus did not stand out to the larger Rajasthani culture as a particularly radical move on the part of the sect. Tulsi honored Nathmal for his discoveries by giving him a new name, “Mahaprajna” or “Great Insight.”

Preksha became required practice for all *munis* and *sadhvis* within the Terapanth and was prescribed for all lay followers of the Anuvrat program for self-improvement. This requirement led to an additional innovation on the part of the Terapanth, since representatives were needed to teach *preksha* to Jain and non-Jain people throughout India and the world, and especially to those Jains living in diaspora communities abroad. There was a steady demand from abroad, especially from Hindu and Jain communities in the United States and Europe, for “authentic” yoga. Thus, beginning in 1980, Tulsi introduced a new order of monastics called the *samana* order. The first initiation of semi-monastics in 1980 included six *samanis* (female *samanas*). Today, there are one hundred and three *samanis*. Four *samans* (male *samanas*) were initiated in 1986, but none have

⁷⁹ Strauss, *Positioning Yoga*, 7.

⁸⁰ Mahaprajna (Muni Nathmal) told me that he and Tulsi visited the Theosophical Society in Madras, Tamil Nadu around 1968. He mentioned that they were “especially impressed” with the Theosophical Society’s work on “aura and astral bodies.” Mahaprajna (Muni Nathmal), personal communication, Rajasthan, Ladnun, June 28, 2009.

been initiated since then. I will discuss this gender asymmetry in Chapter Four. The *samanas* are appointed by the *acharya* and granted permission to travel abroad by means of mechanical transportation and to communicate by means of mechanical communication in order to bring about the transnational dissemination of *preksha*.⁸¹ Such allowances were major shifts from the traditional prohibitions of monastics from using such devices for travel or communication since they were considered to be violent and worldly in nature.

By introducing a new “intermediary” order charged with the dissemination of *preksha*, Tulsi was able to maintain the traditional ascetic rules for fully initiated monastics. Although maintaining the hierocratic order and the consequent concentration of authority in the figure of the *acharya*, Tulsi remained committed to the strict rules of social withdrawal and non-action for the fully initiated monastics and thus maintained the prioritization of ascetic practice above all else as necessary for the *moksha marga*. Nevertheless, his introduction of such an order was a response to social trends and demands, and present-day Terapanthis frequently describe Tulsi’s innovations as “moving with the times.”⁸²

This response to the transnational popularization of yogic insights and practices was distinct compared to other South Asian gurus, who sought to disseminate their spirituality outside of India in the late twentieth-century on their own instead of introducing a separate and distinct order of traveling monastics.⁸³ But for the Terapanth,

⁸¹ “*Samana*” is derived from the Sanskrit word, “*shramana*,” which means “striver” and is used as an epithet for world-renouncers in India. It is used in the sense of one who “strives” for release from the cycle of rebirth.

⁸² Repeated personal communications with Terapanthi monastics and lay people. See note 44 and note 88.

⁸³ Examples from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s include A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada of ISKON, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and his Transcendental Meditation Movement, and even a Jain monk of the

the introduction of a new intermediary order between fully-initiated monastics and the laity was radical enough, especially considering that their sect was founded on the rejection of the “worldly” as inherent to the spiritual path of the fully initiated monastic.

Because they could now travel far distances and thus required more flexibility with regard to monastic rules, the traditional prohibitions applied to members of the monastic community with regard to *bhiksha* (collecting alms) and *panchami* (using the toilet) were lifted.⁸⁴ Fully initiated *munis* and *sadhvis* must pay meticulous attention to how and where they collect alms and use the toilet in order to avoid the violence usually associated with such processes. For instance, they must only accept food that has *not* been prepared specifically for them but is offered from the food already prepared by a layperson for his or her family so that the loss of life that occurs in the preparation of the food is not directly tied to the *muni* or *sadhvi*. Like other Shvetambara monastics, a Terapanthi *muni* or *sadhvi* must never allow lay people to see them eat lest they stir hunger and thus motivate others to cook or eat for themselves. The Terapanth takes this rule even further for the *acharya*, who cannot be seen eating by anyone, not even his fellow *munis*. Furthermore, the fully-initiated monastic must use the toilet outside, in a clean place, free of any life forms, and, after urination or defecation, must bury the excrement in order to avoid attracting living beings to that place. These steps are for the sake of avoiding the reproduction and concomitant destruction of living beings that

Sthanakvasi sect, Shri Sushil Kumar, who synthesized Jain ideas with yoga practice and who came to the United States, and established a temple and retreat center. For more on Kumar, see Chapter Four.

⁸⁴ For a study on the canonical rules (*dharmā*) and customary rules (*maryada*) in contemporary *saman/samani* life, see Peter Flugel, “The Codes of Conduct of the Terapanth Saman Order,” *South Asia Research* 23, no. 1 (May 2003): 7-53.

would come to live, reproduce, and die where the urination or defecation took place, whether already present or attracted to that place by the excrement itself.⁸⁵

Such rules may seem arbitrary, but Terapanthi *sadhvis* and *munis* spend an enormous amount of time each day fulfilling these ritual obligations in order to maintain a life almost entirely free of violence. In fact, these requirements take up much of the day of *munis* and *sadhvis* and require them to remain in very limited environments where fulfilling such obligations is possible. In contrast, the *samanis* are allowed to use modern toilets and to eat food prepared specifically for them and in the presence of the laity. In line with the new ability to use mechanical forms of travel, the *samanis* use mechanical forms of communication as well, such as the telephone and even the Internet. This flexibility with regard to everyday ritual obligations allows the *samanis* to move from place to place and spend more time with the laity. After all, even for fully-initiated Jain monastics living in India, it is difficult to maintain all ascetic obligations. For instance, a Terapanthi *sadhvi* speaking on the difficulties involved in the collection of *biksha* in areas of India where there are few lay Jains said:

We don't take onions, and we always tell people that they shouldn't too; but so long as it has been prepared separately, we will take food from people who do normally eat onions. Of course, we can't take from Scheduled Castes or from Muslims. In villages, we take from Rajputs, Jats, Gujars. These people are Kshatriyas, so they are pure (*shuddh*). Some of them come and take a vow not to take non-vegetarian food any more, and we prefer to go and take from them... In the cities there are always Jains, so we never need to take from anyone else.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Under a psychoanalytic lens, such ascetic rituals may appear to be "obsessive" and linked to a particular psychological state rather than just a desire to follow the rules of monastic conduct for the sake of avoiding violence to various life forms. For a theory of asceticism from this perspective, see Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, "The Psychology of the Ascetic." *Journal of Asian Studies* 35, no. 4 (1976): 611-625.

⁸⁶ Personal communication between Terapanthi *sadhvi* and James Laidlaw, quoted in Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation*, 113. Jain monastics and many members of the Jain laity do not eat root vegetables, such as onions, because they are pulled from the ground, an act that they consider violent and the cause of destruction to the organisms living in the dirt surrounding the vegetable.

Given such difficulty in maintaining the ascetic rules, for the sake of the *samanis*' increased engagement and flexibility with the laity, the *acharya* had to qualify the rules for them. Such qualified regulations mark the *samanis* as an intermediary order, but they also mark them as a preliminary order. The possibility of later becoming a fully initiated *sadhvi* with the *acharya*'s permission remains and is considered ideal, but many express contentment with their current status, though they maintain that they will honor the *acharya*'s wishes should they ever require them to take full initiation.⁸⁷

Like Bikshu, Tulsi saw his innovations as consistent with the teachings of Mahavira. He acknowledged that they “changed with the times” but maintained that such changes are consistent with Mahavira’s instructions to preach Jain doctrine to all living beings.⁸⁸ Again, we find here an emphasis on prosyletization as a part of true spiritual practice. He thus saw these shifts as both adaptation *and* reformation.

Such innovations in response to the perceived problems of modernity outlined above had important consequences for the relationship between lay followers and the monastic community. Anne Vallely points out that “power in the monastic order translates into power in lay society” so that one’s relationships with ascetics are useful for legitimizing a certain community, family, or business.⁸⁹ Because Tulsi was especially powerful as a result of his personal charisma (in addition to the charisma institutionalized in the office of *acharya*) and popular innovations, local politicians found it useful to publicly endorse the Anuvrat movement for the sake of increasing their own popular support. Business leaders also made large donations to the order, which they believed

⁸⁷ Repeated personal communications with *samanis*.

⁸⁸ Contemporary *sadhvis*, *munis*, and *samanis* consistently describe Tulsi’s innovations (as well as those of Jayacharya and Mahaprajna) as “changing with the times.” See note 44 and note 82.

⁸⁹ Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent*, 148.

resulted in an increase in both merit and popularity. And the support was not unidirectional. The monastic order depends on the generosity of lay people to support religious projects such as the construction of buildings at the JVB center in Ladnun, which has consistently grown as a result of lay funds. Furthermore, the Terapanth supported the establishment of trust funds into which large donations went for the sake of financially supporting the Anuvrat movement and JVB, and such funds were largely under Tulsi's control.

Unsurprisingly, the apparent overlaps between the *laukika* and the *lokottara* that resulted from such mutually beneficial relationships between monastics and lay elites led to controversy. Criticism came from both lay and monastic members of the Terapanth who believed that the Terapanthi commitment to the ascetic ideal was no longer being honored. One former Terapanthi *muni* writes:

During the eight years I had been a monk I was always with my guru (Tulasi). He treated me as his son and I treated him as my father. People thought that I was being groomed as his successor. But I was beginning to feel overpowered by him. His answers no longer satisfied me. Ever since his decision to modernize the order, I felt he was traveling in two boats at the same time – denouncing the world and also seeking its recognition.⁹⁰

And in fact, such controversy over Tulsi's innovations resulted in a group of Terapanthi *munis* and *sadhvis* leaving the order in 1981. They named their order the Naya or "New" Terapanth. Kenneth Oldfield describes the controversy:

According to press reports, the schism had been simmering for about five years, but only became public knowledge in October 1981 when a number of monks and nuns submitted their 'muh-patras' (letters of resignation). Matters reached a head when Tulasi nominated his 'yubacharya' (his successor) at a public function in 1977. Apparently in 1972 Tulasi had agreed that he would nominate Muni Rupchand as his yubacharya but at a public function for the formal naming in

⁹⁰ Kenneth Oldfield, *Jainism Today: A Study of the Jain Community in a Rajasthani Village in 1982* (M.A. thesis, University of Lancaster, 1982), 88; quoted in Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent*, 149. "Tulasi" is another spelling of "Tulsi."

1977 Tulasi nominated Muni Nathmal, a monk closely involved with Anuvrata and a biographer of Acharya Bhiksu. Muni Rupchand and his supporters have complained of favouritism and claim that the reason for the sudden switch rests in Rupchand's refusal to pay court to a rich business friend of Tulasi in Calcutta. A supporter of the 'Nav' Terapanth (New Terapanth – the name given to the breakaway group) claims that 'The rich sravakas (laymen) have a stake in getting a pliable yubacharya because he can ensure influential contracts for them...'⁹¹

Thus, for at least some Terapanthis, Tulsi's personal charisma combined with his charisma of office was not enough to guarantee devotion. He also had to demonstrate to them his commitment to the ascetic doctrine. Insofar as he failed to do this, he lost their devotion. On the other hand, because of his personal charisma and popular innovations, he also gained devotees. In fact, he gained far more than he lost, and thus he moved forward with the innovations.

Tulsi refused to answer to his critics except for in one interview published in a Jaipur daily newspaper in which Tulsi said that the money donated by his lay followers was for the benefit of humanity and his detractors should "move with the times."⁹²

Vallely points out that current monastic members of the Terapanth maintain that the schism occurred because of *man* or "egoism" on the part of the detractors and not because of Tulsi's worldly involvement.⁹³ This is an important point since it indicates the resistance on the part of current Terapanthi monastics to interpret Tulsi's innovations as shifting the sect toward a worldly orientation, toward the very "vomit" he supposedly despised. Oldfield provides the following interpretation of Tulsi's actions:

In his attempt to present Jainism to a wider audience and make it more relevant to the needs of India today, as he sees it, Tulasi has found himself, inevitably, compromising with the world of big business and politics, a world which some of his laity and his mendicants consider he renounced when becoming a monk. Yet schisms of this nature can be interpreted as reflecting the liveliness and

⁹¹ Oldfield, *Jainism Today*, 86-87; quoted in Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent*, 150.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent*, 151.

healthiness of the tradition and can be seen as pointing to the fact that the faith continues to be a vital force in Indian society today.⁹⁴

This tension is yet another manifestation of the type of tension described above whereby the orientation of the monastic order, which was theoretically ascetic and aimed at the release of the soul from the world, became increasingly communal in practice, involving the routinization of charisma, organization around a hierocratic authority, and communal service. At this stage of the Terapanth's socio-historical development, the tension came to include the argument over whether or not a global campaign to deliver Jain ideology and practice to the world was a legitimate aim for a Jain monastic order, since that campaign necessitated social relationships.

Mahaprajna: The Philosopher-Yogi

Following Tulsi's death, Mahaprajna was initiated as the tenth *acharya* of the Terapanth in 1994 and continues in that role to the present day. He also continues his guru's global campaign to deliver Jain ideology and practice to the world. He does this primarily through the popular dissemination of *preksha*. Those within the Terapanth consider Mahaprajna to be both a philosopher and a yogic adept.

In contrast to the Terapanthi body-, society- and world- denying ascetic ideal, *preksha*, in its popular dissemination, is a system of diet and exercise believed to promote physical health and psychological well-being. Spiritual practice is not exclusively about ascetic body maintenance and withdrawal from the world, but involves a medicalized yoga similar to forms of modern yoga that were popularized in India, the United States, and Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. Such systems focused less on distant disembodied

⁹⁴ Oldfield, *Jainism Today*, 91; quoted in Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent*, 151.

spiritual goals and more on physical practice: *asana* and *pranayama*. Furthermore, Mahaprajna's construction of *preksha* demonstrates the phenomenon whereby modern yoga, by appropriating the physiological discourse of modern science, somaticizes a metaphysical practice that was classically oriented around manipulating the subtle body.⁹⁵ In other words, yoga becomes a means to manipulate the physical body in ways that enhance health as defined by modern medicine.

In Mahaprajna's explication of *preksha*, one witnesses two themes. First, in his explications for the advanced spiritual practitioner in the monastic context, he appropriates metaphysical conceptions from *hatha yoga* with regard to the manipulation of the subtle body for the sake of furthering the process of purification and increasing knowledge of the soul. In this way, he constructs *preksha* as part of the ascetic path of the monastic who seeks release from the world. Second, in the popular dissemination of *preksha*, he joins the movement in which numerous Indian gurus have transformed yoga from an ascetic spiritual practice to a global system for physical health and psychological well-being. As mentioned in the Introduction, a characteristic of the modern yoga movement is the introduction of yoga as a means to health, stress reduction, and well-being *in* life, as opposed to the classic notion of yoga as a means to *kaivalya*, "isolation" *from* life, characterized as suffering. In this way, *preksha* is less directly related to the spiritual path and more about the enhancement of the body.

Mahaprajna argues that *preksha* is "scientific," and yet he maintains that it has ancient Jain origins. In line with these two assertions, *preksha* functions for two distinct audiences in very different ways. For the monastic individual seeking purification, *preksha* is a means to furthering the process toward release *from the world*. In its popular

⁹⁵ For work on this phenomenon in modern yoga in India, see Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*.

dissemination, *preksha* is a way to enhance life *in the world*. In this way, *preksha* serves to provide both ascetic benefits to those concerned with purification and worldly benefits to those concerned with health, well-being, and the enhancement of the body; it is thus context-specific.

Today the *samanis* travel all over the world in order to disseminate *preksha*. They have established four major JVB centers outside of India in the following locations: London, Britain; Houston, Texas; Iselin, New Jersey; and Orlando, Florida.⁹⁶ Such efforts toward the dissemination of Jain ideas and practices by means of *preksha* are intentionally philanthropic. The *samanis* do not offer donations in material or monetary form for the welfare of others but donations in the form of *preksha*, which is considered far superior to money or material goods with regard to delivering well-being. Mahaprajna and his disciples, the *samanis*, maintain that *preksha* is a means to peace within humankind and between humans and the rest of the world of living beings. This agenda represents a shift from the focus on withdrawal from the world and non-action on the part of the Terapanthi monastics but maintains the proselytizing orientation of the tradition that can be traced back to Bikshu himself who argued that the only acceptable action on the part of monastics is to teach others how to purify the soul. Insofar as Mahaprajna and the *samanis* consider *preksha* to be a means toward spiritual development (more on this below), even if this is not always the motivation of the practitioner, their disseminating endeavors are in line with Bikshu's monastic standards.

Although their orientation toward the world is philanthropic, there is no doubt: *the samanias are ascetics*. But they are ascetic philanthropists. Because those within the

⁹⁶ The *samanis* opened centers in these locations because they featured Jain diaspora communities willing to provide the financial support necessary for the establishment of JVB centers and for meeting the basic needs of the *samanis* living and working there. For more on this topic, see Chapter Four.

Terapanth, including Mahaprajna himself, see “the West” as especially characterized by corruption and materialism, the *samanis* focus on delivering *preksha* to the world as a gift of peace and a solution to what are considered “modern” problems.⁹⁷ Mahaprajna and the *samanis* consistently attribute the world’s conflicts and the existence of widespread illness and stress to the context of modernity that they believe is overrun by greed and materialism. In their proselytizing endeavors, they prescribe *preksha* as the universal solution.

The *samanis* function under the authority of the *acharya*, and their proselytizing endeavors are considered to be in service to him, their guru. Thus the *samanis* function within a hierocratic authoritative system. They serve the *acharya* by participating in the world through the dissemination of *preksha*. By serving him in this way, they make it possible for the *acharya* and the rest of the fully-initiated monastic community to maintain their commitment to the *lokottara*, withdrawal from the world, from society, and from the body. In other words, in order to prevent the *munis* and *sadhvis* from compromising their pursuit of the ascetic ideal, the *samanis* function as intermediaries between the *acharya* and the masses.

The *samanis*’ intermediary status has important consequences for the Terapanth. As argued above, the shift from a world-rejecting asceticism to the routinization of charisma in the hierocratic institution of authority and the consequent participation in the world through communal service is not complete. The *samanis* further guarantee that this shift is not complete. The Terapanth functions as a Jain sect that maintains a world-rejecting ascetic ideal aimed at release from the world while sustaining a monastic

⁹⁷ For a concise articulation of this position, see “Our Activities,” Jain Vishva Bharati, London, <http://www.jvblondon.org/aboutus-activities.htm>.

community that participates (through the intermediary role of the *samanis*) in worldly affairs. The *samanis* participate in what Weber calls *innerweltliche* or “inner-worldly” asceticism, whereby one participates in asceticism without abandoning the world.⁹⁸

Describing inner-worldly asceticism as distinct from world-rejecting asceticism, Weber says:

On the other hand, the unique concentration of human behavior on activities leading to salvation may require the participation within the world (or more precisely: within the institutions of the world but in opposition to them) of the religious individual’s idiosyncratically sacred religious mood and his qualifications as the elect instrument of god. This is ‘inner-worldly asceticism’ (*inner-weltliche Askese*).⁹⁹

The *samanis* work in the world as “instruments” of their guru whose divinity I will discuss in Chapter Four. They fulfill their religious duty insofar as they disseminate Jain teachings. This is in line with Bikshu’s teachings that the only truly spiritual action is to teach others how to advance along the spiritual path. This ability on the part of the *samanis* to be ascetics within society is made possible by the dual function of *preksha* as both a body-enhancing practice and a body-purifying practice. *Preksha* is both of the world and thus profane as well as transcendent of the world and thus sacred.

In this regard, *preksha* has an intermediary status as well insofar as it functions to increase worldly benefits, such as physical health, but those benefits are considered means to advancement along the *moksha-marga*. Although in its popular dissemination, the *samanis* teach *preksha* to students with worldly goals (as will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five), the *samanis* consider such worldly goals to be material means

⁹⁸ Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, 166-183. Weber compared “inner-worldly” asceticism to *weltablehnende askese* or “world-rejecting” asceticism, which refers to those ascetics who renounce the world by abandoning society and social obligations. The fully-initiated *munis* and *sadhvis* of the Terapanth are ascetics of this “other-worldly” sort.

⁹⁹ Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, 166.

to non-material ends. Thus, by teaching *preksha*, the *samanis* are teaching their students how to advance along the spiritual path, even if that is not the primary motivation of the students themselves. As mentioned in the Introduction, in the performance of *preksha*, body maintenance becomes a means to disassociation from the body; in other words, the body is *used* to achieve a state of bodylessness (similarly, in the image-worshipping rituals of the Murtipujak Jains described in the Introduction, Jains do not worship wealth but *use* wealth to worship the wealthless). The following chapters seek to further understand the ways in which Mahaprajna and the *samanis* construct and teach *preksha* in ways that make this possible.

Chapter Two

***Preksha* as Ascetic Ritual: Metaphysics and Mysticism in the Monastic Context**

The important benefit of relaxation is – awareness of wisdom. When wisdom awakens, equanimity of the soul naturally descends. Gain-loss, pleasure-pain, criticism-adulation, life-death – a capacity develops to put harmony in place of these dualities.

Mahaprajna, *Preksha Dhyana: Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 102.

In Chapter One, I suggested that even though *preksha* is prescribed for all people who seek physical enhancement and an overall improved life, for the Terapanthi monastic practitioner, *preksha* functions as a means of disassociation from the body and release from life. In other words, it is a process whereby one renounces the *laukika*, the realm of worldly values, and embraces the *lokottara*, the realm of spiritual values. In this way, *preksha* is prescribed for the monastic member of the Terapanth as part of their ascetic regimen. Mahaprajna provides a metaphysical construction of *preksha* as well as a specific ritual structure by means of which *preksha* is believed to result in purification from karma and the perception of the soul (*jiva* or *atma*). This chapter will thus evaluate how *preksha* overtly functions as part of the ascetic path of purification for the Terapanthi monastic who seeks advanced progress along the *moksha-marga*.

As part of my evaluation of *preksha* as an ascetic practice, I will also analyze the culmination of *preksha* in the perception of the soul as a mystical experience. The term “mystical experience” is notorious for its multifarious definitions and applications. My use of “mystical experience” depends on Robert S. Ellwood’s definition:

Mystical experience is experience in a religious context that is immediately or subsequently interpreted by the experiencer as a direct, unmediated encounter with ultimate divine reality. This experience engenders a deep sense of unity and

suggests that during the experience the experiencer was living on a level of being other than the ordinary.¹

As I will demonstrate below, the metaphysical, experiential, non-ordinary (or liminal), and unitive dimensions of mystical experience according to this definition aptly apply to the perception of the soul in the *preksha* ritual.

In his literary work on *preksha*, Mahaprajna moves back and forth rather abruptly from a dualist ontology calling for the practitioner to disassociate from the physical body to a quasi non-dualist ontology and affirmation of the body as a vital tool for spiritual advancement. In many ways, *preksha* resembles *raja yoga*, since its ultimate goal is transcendence of the body. Like *raja yoga*, *preksha* is rooted in a dualist metaphysics and has as its goal the isolation of the Self from matter. Furthermore, like *raja yoga*, emphasis for the monastic practitioner is on meditation rather than physical practice. Yet, insofar as it uses the body as a spiritual device and asserts correspondences between the state of the soul, the subtle body, and the physical body, *preksha* bears a strong resemblance to *hatha yoga*, the principle component of tantric schools and their concomitant non-dualist ontologies. *Hatha yoga* utilizes the body as the locus of mystical experience, emphasizes the acquisition of *siddhis* or supernatural powers, and involves a struggle against mortality itself. Like *hatha yoga*, *preksha* is prescribed for the manipulation of subtle energies within the body in order to bring about metaphysical “transmutations.”²

In the subsequent chapters, I will evaluate the extent to which *preksha* functions primarily as a physical practice outside of the monastic context. We will explore the ways in which, in its popular dissemination, *preksha* affirms social life, bodily health, and

¹ Robert S. Ellwood, *Mysticism and Religion*, 2nd ed. (Chappaqua, New York: Seven Bridges Press, 1999), 39.

² I use the category of “transmutation” here because this is the preferred category of Mahaprajna and his disciples. The Hindi term is *rupantaran*.

psychological well-being and thus functions as a case study of modern yoga. But first, in the present chapter, we will evaluate the construction and practice of *preksha* by the ascetic practitioner who seeks to transcend the *laukika*. In this monastic context, *preksha* is a case study of classical yoga, both in the forms of *raja yoga* and *hatha yoga*, in that it demands restraint and discipline for the sake of increased control over desire and eventual release from the world. In his evaluation of yoga, Mircea Eliade characterized such a yogic approach as a “rejection of life.”³ Insofar as *preksha* functions to release the monastic from conventional life and propel her into mystical states whereby she directly perceives the true Self, this school of yoga is an ascetic practice.

Asceticism and Yoga

In 1975, Mahaprajna introduced *preksha* and prescribed it for all people, including monastics. Since the monastic community is limited to the pursuit of goals within the *lokottara* and can, in other words, only pursue the purification of the soul, the monastic system immediately enfolded yoga within the purification process. Traditionally important Jain ascetic practices, such as fasting and celibacy, did not get replaced by *preksha* in the life of the *muni* or *sadhvi*, rather *preksha* was added to the list of ascetic techniques by means of which a monastic should purify the soul from karma.⁴

³ Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Princeton University, 1990. First published 1958), 362.

⁴ Peter Flugel notes that fasts were slowly replaced by study and meditation as the preferred atonement, but the official reason for this was that monastics who fasted were too weak to work. In other words, the ascetic morality is replaced by a modern work ethic. Peter Flugel, “Spiritual Accounting: The Role of the Kalyanaka Patra in the Religious Economy of the Terapanth Svetambara Jain Ascetics,” in *Jainism and Early Buddhism in the Indian Cultural Context: Festschrift in Honour of P.S. Jaini*, ed. Olle Qvarnstrom (Fremont, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 2003), 193. Although I agree that the replacement of fasting with meditation may have served at times to enable the *muni* or *sadhvi* to participate in communal service and, for this reason, it is preferred, fasting certainly continues to play an important role in Terapanthi monastic

This is in line with the developments and trends in yoga's history in South Asia prior to the nineteenth century. As asserted in the Introduction, yoga has classically been an ascetic practice. It requires rigorous discipline and restraint with regard to the mind and body. In other words, the yogi must reject profane gratifications for the sake of attaining that which is sacred. The yogi seeks release from the normative processes of social participation and in fact, yoga requires isolation from society. Yogic practice includes celibacy, fasting, physical postures, and the renunciation of material attachments and possessions. In his classic text, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, Eliade concisely articulates the contrast between the state of the ascetic-yogi and the "profane human condition":

The archaism of Yoga is confirmed once again by its initiatory structure. We have called attention to the yogic symbolism of death and rebirth – death to the profane human condition, rebirth to a transcendent modality. The yogin undertakes to 'reverse' normal behavior completely. He subjects himself to a petrified immobility of body (*asana*), rhythmical breathing and arrest of breath (*pranayama*), fixation of the psychomental flux (*ekagrata*), immobility of thought, the 'arrest' and even the 'return' of semen. On every level of human experience, he does the *opposite* of what life demands that he do. Now, the symbolism of the 'opposite' indicates both the post-mortem condition and the condition of divinity... The 'reversal' of normal behavior sets the yogin outside of life. But he does not stop halfway – death is followed by an initiatory rebirth. The yogin makes for himself a 'new body,' just as the neophyte in archaic societies is thought to obtain a new body through initiation.⁵

(and lay) practice. For that reason, I will evaluate *preksha* as an addition to the ascetic regimen of the monastic rather than a replacement.

⁵ Eliade, *Yoga*, 361-362. Eliade does not cite Arnold van Gennep's conception of the threefold structure of rites of passage, but it is clear that he relies on van Gennep's theory in his discussion of yoga as an initiatory death to the world. Elsewhere, Eliade further articulates the yogi's location outside of society: "The worldly person lives in society, marries, establishes a family; Yoga prescribes solitude and chastity. In opposition to continual movement, the yogin practiced (sic) *asana*; in opposition to agitated, unrhythmical, uncontrolled respiration, the yogin practices *pranayama*; to the chaotic flux of psychomental life, the yogin replies by 'fixing thought on a single point'; and so on. The goal of all these practices always remains the same – to react against normal, secular, and even human inclinations." Mircea Eliade, "Yoga," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edition, vol. 14, ed. by Lindsay Jones (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 9896.

In its classical context, yoga is thus not intended for the normative social actor, but for the renouncer who seeks *moksha* or “release” from the world, whether release is defined in dualist (release from matter) or non-dualist (release from illusion) terms. Thus we can locate *preksha* along a long historical trajectory of yoga as part of the systematic techniques of the ascetic culture in South Asia, and *preksha* has a place along this trajectory.

The Metaphysics of *Preksha*

As elaborated upon in the Introduction and in Chapter One, Jains, including the Terapanth, hold a dualist ontology, which equates truth with the realization of the Self as pure soul and thus radically distinct from matter (*pudgala*), and an ascetic soteriology that requires disassociation from the body. Consequently, one transcends the body in the realization of the Self. Although Mahaprajna maintains a classical Jain ontology, he complicates that system by incorporating a concept of a subtle body and the prescription of yogic practices believed to further purify the Self on its path toward release from matter by means of the manipulation of subtle energy. In line with a Jain dualist ontology, the subtle body is a constituent of matter, yet its manipulation is believed to enhance the perception of the soul.

Mahaprajna provides a classic description, resembling that of *hatha yoga*, of the structure of the subtle body, which features the subtle flow of *prana* throughout the body by means of *nadis*. Mahaprajna sometimes uses the yogic category of *chakra* to refer to each center of concentrated subtle energy in the body, but more often uses his own term,

chaitanya kendra (henceforth *kendra*), which his disciples translate as “psychic center.”⁶ He assigns different titles to each *kendra* than those most commonly assigned to the *chakras* in *hatha yoga*. Although such terms can sometimes differ between *hatha yoga* and *preksha*, it is clear when their referents align based on their locations in the body.⁷ Furthermore, in contrast to the primary seven *chakras* of most *hatha yoga* systems, *preksha* has thirteen primary *kendras*: *shakti kendra*, located at the bottom of the spinal column; *svasthya kendra*, located at the genitals; *taijasa kendra*, located at the navel; *ananda kendra*, located at the heart; *vishuddhi kendra*, located at the throat; *brahma kendra*, located at the tip of the tongue; *prana kendra*, located at the tip of the nose; *chakshusha kendra*, located at the eyes; *apramada kendra*, located at the ears; *darshana kendra*, located between the two eyes; *jyoti kendra*, located at the center of the forehead; *shanti kendra*, located at the front of the top of the head; and *jnana kendra*, located at the top of the head.⁸

Mahaprajna’s choice of “*chaitanya kendra*” instead of “*chakra*” as the term for the centers of subtle energy indicates his psychologization of yoga. In fact, he associates *prana* with *chaitanya* or “consciousness.” Although classical Jain thought defines *chaitanya* as a quality of the soul, and Mahaprajna maintains that consciousness can reflect pure knowledge untainted by the material world, he also argues that the vibrations of the karmic and subtle bodies pollute consciousness, which results in *chitta* or “mind” that then functions as a constituent of subtle energy.⁹ Mahaprajna further associates

⁶ A literal translation of “*chaitanya kendra*” is “center of consciousness.”

⁷ Samani Vishubh Pragy confirmed this. Personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 24, 2009.

⁸ Mahaprajna, *Prekshadhyana: Caitanya Kendra Preksha, Jivan-Vijnan Granthmala* [Science of Living Series] 8 (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 2003), 23.

⁹ Mahaprajna, *Prekshadhyana: Siddhanta aur prayoga* (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 2009 [original publication date unknown]), trans. Muni Mahendra Kumar and Jethalal S. Zaveri as *Preksa*

subtle energy with breath and thus the necessary sustenance for life itself. I will elaborate upon Mahaprajna's understanding of the physiological function of subtle energy in Chapter Three.

Because subtle energy corresponds between three realms (the spiritual, the subtle, and the physical), it functions as a metaphysical yet intermediary substance. In this way, Mahaprajna fluctuates between a non-dual construction of the yogic body and the radical dualist ontology of classical Jain thought. Mahaprajna's system is a quasi-non-dual one, since a constituent of the soul, consciousness, functions as a constituent of the subtle body, which is material. Whereas classical Jain thought maintains that soul and matter occupy the same space but remain eternally distinct so that even karma does not attach to the soul but simply comes to occupy its space, Mahaprajna's system is one in which the boundary between matter and soul is somewhat permeable insofar as consciousness functions in both domains.

Mahaprajna argues that consciousness in the form of *chitta* is concentrated in different parts of the subtle body. The type of movement of consciousness in the body reflects one's psychological state and determines one's status along the path to advanced spiritual progress. Mahaprajna provides a way of categorizing different people based on "the field of movement of consciousness."¹⁰ A person whose consciousness is active around or below the navel is an *ichha purusha*, meaning "one possessed by preponderant desire." A person whose consciousness moves between the navel and the nostrils is a *prana purusha*, "one possessed by preponderant subtle energy." Finally, a person whose consciousness moves between and above the eyebrows is a *prajana purusha*, meaning

Dhyana: Theory and Practice, ed. Muni Mahendra Kumar (Jain Vishva Bharati: Ladnun, Rajasthan, 2004), 18.

¹⁰ Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, trans. R.K. Seth (New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers, 2006), 3.

“one possessed by preponderant wisdom.” Because the movement of consciousness in one’s subtle body affects one’s psychological disposition, the yogic manipulation of consciousness functions as a psychotherapeutic practice for the sake of the transmutation of the practitioner’s psychological disposition.

In line with his psychologization of yogic practice, Mahaprajna compares himself to the well known Indian sage, Ramana Maharishi, who prescribed asking oneself the following question as the best way to spiritual progress: “Who am I?” Mahaprajna says that the more important question is: “In what part of the body do I usually reside?”¹¹ In Mahaprajna’s system, one must first perceive in which parts of the body one’s consciousness is fixated before one can resolve to improve the state of one’s soul by adjusting the flow and directionality of consciousness in order to suppress harmful desires and emotions. In other words, the transmutation of the subtle body brings about transmutations in the personality, which result in an improved state of the soul. This is possible when one is no longer subject to negative emotions and thus puts a stop to the effects of previously accumulated karma as well as the accumulation of new karma.

The preliminary goal of *preksha* is to redirect consciousness away from the lower *kendras* and toward the higher ones in the heart, throat, nose, tip of the tongue, forehead, and top of the head. By means of redirecting consciousness, one blocks the deleterious effects of the *karma-sharira* or “karma-body.” This karma-body is made up of the accumulated effects of past actions. Karma in the Jain tradition is considered material. It is made up of a fine substance that, as mentioned above, comes to occupy the same space as the soul. Karma can cause the practitioner to be overcome by desire or what are considered to be violent emotions, such as hate and anger. By transcending such a

¹¹ Ibid., 13.

psychological state, the perception of the true Self becomes possible. By means of *preksha*, one is believed to become increasingly capable of perceiving the Self, beneath the layers of physical and subtle bodies. In other words, there is believed to be an increase in mystical perception. Mahaprajna describes the stages through which one moves: one perceives the physical body and its physiological processes, one then perceives the subtle body and comes to differentiate it from the physical body, then one perceives the soul and differentiates it from the physical and the subtle bodies.¹² It is consciousness that moves deeper and deeper within the body toward the soul and in the process becomes increasingly free from karmic effects.

In the preliminary stages whereby *preksha* increases conscious perception of the physical and subtle bodies, it is believed that the results can be parapsychological. In other words, *preksha* results in the development of abilities beyond normal human ones, what in *hatha yoga* are called *siddhis*.¹³ Such abilities begin with the perception of subtle processes within the body. One begins with normal bodily perception by means of the body's senses. Gradually, however, the practitioner becomes increasingly capable of perceiving what is happening on the cellular level of the body, the functions of the body's nervous and endocrine systems, and the transmission of electric impulses from one nerve to another in all parts of the body.¹⁴ Such abilities indicate "higher levels of

¹² Mahaprajna, *Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 100. For the rendition of this point in the English language version of the text, see Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 103-104.

¹³ In his Hindi-language texts, Mahaprajna also refers to such abilities as *siddhis*. For example, *siddhi ho sakta hai* or "[A yogic practitioner] is able to develop *siddhis*." Mahaprajna, *Preksha Dhyana: Perception of Body*, Science of Living Series 5, trans. Muni Mahendra Kumar and Jethalal S. Zaveri (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 2003), 31.

¹⁴ Mahaprajna, *Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 100-102. For the rendition of this point in the English language version of the text, see Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 105-106.

consciousness” in which one “opens the gates of ESP (extra-sensory perception).”¹⁵ Such parapsychological abilities are believed to be possible because one is increasingly disassociating from the body and thus becoming less and less subject to normal bodily limitations and demands.

Although Mahaprajna invokes several ways of talking about the parapsychological abilities attained by means of *preksha*, the most noteworthy term he uses is *avadhijnana* or “limited knowledge.”¹⁶ It is “limited” insofar as it is not yet omniscient, but it surpasses normal levels of knowledge. In the English-language translations, Mahaprajna’s disciples use “clairvoyance.” “Clairvoyance” results from a combination of the French roots, “clair” or “clear” and “voir” or “to see.” Thus its literal meaning is “clear seeing,” but it is most often used in reference to perception beyond normal sensory abilities. *Avadhijnana* is an important term in classical Jain literature. Like “clairvoyance,” it refers to a state of consciousness characterized by supernormal knowledge. This is a preliminary stage on the path to *kevalajnana* or “isolated knowledge,” meaning knowledge isolated from all karma and thus all-encompassing. In other words, the person who experiences *kevalajnana* is omniscient. In contrast, the person who experiences *avadhijnana* is on her way to becoming omniscient. As described by Padmanabh S. Jaini, in addition to other qualities, this state is often associated with the *jinas* before they achieve *kevalajnana*:

Certain fantastic attributes are popularly held to characterize the Jina-to-be. He is born with a special body, its frame having an adamantine (*vajra*) quality; such a body is considered necessary if he is to withstand the terrible rigors of meditation

¹⁵ Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 106. This particular wording is only in the English rendition of *Siddhanta aur Prayoga* produced by Mahaprajna’s close disciples, Muni Mahendra Kumar and Jethalal S. Zaveri.

¹⁶ Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner harmony*, 30; see also, Mahaprajna, *Apna darshanah: Apna vimb* (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 2002), 125-127.

intense enough to bring salvation in the present life. As a psychic corollary to this physical aspect, he possesses supermundane cognition – *avadhijnana* – by means of which he may perceive objects and events at enormous distances. Similarly, a fixed and rather stylized set of supernatural occurrences is said to mark his career.¹⁷

The state of *avadhijnana* is important for evaluating *preksha* because, according to Mahaprajna, mention of it in ancient Jain literature is evidence that Jain yoga can be found in that literature. He argues that all mention of clairvoyance throughout the Jain literary tradition by definition implies the existence and function of “psychic centers,” the *chaitanya kendras*.¹⁸ His logic is as follows: if living beings achieved *avidhijnana*, then they must have been participating in the techniques of *preksha* since those techniques are necessary for attaining clairvoyant abilities. In this way, Mahaprajna participates in a discourse of origin, an attempt to locate *preksha* in “original” Jain thought and practice, and his monastic and lay disciples reiterate their guru’s assertion that *preksha* is original to the Jain tradition. We will return to this issue in Chapter Three.

Mahaprajna argues that, because the purpose of *preksha* is increased perception, to achieve advanced progress one must “render the body transparent.”¹⁹ Basically, the practitioner of *preksha* is believed to attain *avadhijnana* insofar as she can perceive the soul deep within her body. The path toward the perception of the Self goes below the superficial levels of sensory contact and eventually the subtle body, until one perceives the Self as pure soul. In this final state of *preksha*, one can discern between that which is material (non-Self) and that which is soul (Self). Describing this state, Mahaprajna asserts, “*Atma aur pudgala ka spasht bhed use sakhat ho jata hai*” or “One is capable of

¹⁷ Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Jaina Path of Purification* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), 3.

¹⁸ Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, 30.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

knowing the distinction between that belonging to matter and the Self.”²⁰ Or, as translated into English by his disciple, “Here is SELF and there lies the body. This is wisdom.”²¹ Thus, according to Mahaprajna, whereas living beings habitually identify the non-Self as the Self, practitioners of *preksha* are capable of reaching higher levels of knowledge by means of transcending the body. In this way, *preksha* closely resembles *raja yoga* insofar as both schools emphasize that the goal of yoga is to be able to discriminate between Self and non-Self or soul (*atma*) and matter (*pudgala*).²²

Mahaprajna emphasizes the experiential basis of such profound levels of knowledge. In other words, he maintains an empirical epistemology. Mahaprajna asserts that, even during his research in the 1970s whereby he searched for a “lost” form of Jain yoga and eventually “rediscovered” *preksha*, he relied more on his own “personal experimentation and experience” than on studying ancient scriptures or scientific texts.²³

The practitioner of *preksha* seeks to experience truth, the Self as pure soul, independent of matter. And yet the body is an important part of *sadhana* or “practice.” Awareness of correspondences between the physical and subtle bodies is an important step toward the perception of the soul. One seeks to balance the flow of subtle energy throughout the body and thus move that energy from one part of the subtle body to another, and this has effects in both the subtle and physical bodies. Likewise, the manipulation of the physical body functions to manipulate the subtle body. For instance, it is believed that concentration on a particular physical body part increases the flow of consciousness in that part. Furthermore, *preksha* involves the transmutation of one type

²⁰ Mahaprajna, *Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 102.

²¹ Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 107.

²² In Samkhya philosophy, which is the underlying ideology of *raja yoga*, “*prakriti*” means “matter” and “*purusha*” means “soul.”

²³ Mahaprajna, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 28, 2009.

of energy into another. This is most evident in the practice of *antaryatra* or the “internal trip” whereby the practitioner transforms erotic energy located in the lowest *kendras* by moving it into the higher *kendras*. Consequently, one progresses to more advanced stages of *sadhana* in which one is characterized by increased purity and awareness of the Self as well as decreased sexual desire. In other words, the practitioner transforms erotic energy into pure consciousness. Thus proponents of *preksha* stray from classical Jain thought insofar as they evaluate and prescribe the use of the physical and subtle bodies as material means to non-material ends, and they prescribe a strict ritual structure by means of which the practitioner should strive to accomplish such goals.

Preksha: The Ritual Process

In order to understand the material and metaphysical components of *preksha*, we must evaluate its primary stages: *kayotsarga* (abandonment of the body), *antaryatra* (internal trip), *shvas preksha* (perception of breath), *sharira preksha* (perception of body), *chaitanya kendra preksha* (perception of psychic centers), *leshya dhyana* (perception of psychic color), and *anupreksha* (contemplation).²⁴ Regular participation in the gradual progression through such stages is necessary for the practitioner who seeks to purify the Self from karma. However, *preksha* does not take this form in the classes on *preksha* offered by the *samanis* at the JVB centers, which we will discuss in Chapter Four. Rather, this is the form in which *preksha* is prescribed and practiced in the Terapanthi monastic

²⁴ For information on the specific steps involved in *preksha's* ritual process, I rely primarily on interviews with Samani Vishubh Prajna in Ladhun, Rajasthan from June 22, 2009 to June 29, 2009. Samani Vishubh Prajna's peers consider her an expert on the underlying spiritual, subtle, and physiological processes involved in *preksha*. My meetings with her were arranged by the *niyojika* (chief *samani*), Samani Madhur Prajna who recommended I speak to Samani Vishubh Prajna on the topic of all things regarding *preksha*.

contexts, that is, those contexts in which individuals initiated into the monastic order do *sadhana*.

By means of an analysis of its stages, it becomes evident that *preksha* is a means for perceiving what is believed to be the true Self, pure soul, which lies buried within layers upon layers of the physical body and the subtle body. *Preksha* makes digging through such layers possible. This is why it is often referred to as “insight” meditation. It is useful to keep this goal in mind as we evaluate the different stages of *preksha*. It is evident that throughout the process, the goal is for one’s perception to become increasingly precise as one’s consciousness reaches greater and greater depths. In Mahaprajna’s explication of *preksha*, he prescribes physical and meditative techniques believed to result in an increased ability to manipulate subtle energies, which leads to incremental increases in perception. The physical and subtle techniques outlined below are means that lead to the eventual transcendence of the subtle and the physical in the mystical perception of pure soul.

Preparatory Steps: Asana, Mudra, and Mantra

Before the practitioner begins the formal stages of *preksha*, she must go through certain preparatory steps without which it is believed that she could not do *preksha* effectively. The first step is the adoption of an appropriate *asana* or physical posture. In contrast to the beginner-yogi who may adopt a sitting *asana*, ideally, the practitioner adopts a standing one. She stands with straight posture but without tension. The feet should be slightly apart, almost parallel to the shoulders. The practitioner lets her arms hang down at her sides, close to the body but without touching it. She must also adopt a particular

mudra, a position of the hands, with palms open and facing the body, and fingers straight and facing down.

Mantra, a sacred recitation, is another preparatory step. *Mantra* is considered potent both mystically, in that it stimulates the vibration of auspicious subtle energies, and practically, in that it enhances concentration and meditation. The vibration of the *mantra* brings about a state of relaxation whereby the practitioner's attention shifts from external objects to internal ones. Focus, in other words, is turned inwards. The *mantra* also protects the practitioner from externally produced subtle vibrations that threaten the auspicious state within which one meditates. This enables the practitioner to do *preksha* at any location because the inauspiciousness of any particular place can be potentially blocked by the power of *mantra*.²⁵

Mahaprajna prescribes *mantra* as the necessary step following the adoption of both *asana* and *mudra*. One recites the syllabic *mantra*, *arham*. While there is some variation of details in terms of how one should go about reciting *arham*, generally the practitioner should follow certain procedures. She inhales deeply and, concentrating on the navel, exhales slowly with the sound "a." "Rha" follows as she shifts her concentration from the navel to the heart. The practitioner then moves her concentration from the heart to the throat and finally to the top of the head while reciting "m." The entire *mantra* should occur with one exhalation, and the practitioner should then inhale again and repeat the *mantra* nine times.

²⁵ Although *arham* is the most important mantra in the practice of *preksha*, Mahaprajna believes in the auspiciousness of mantra generally and argues that, if one recites a mantra properly with right articulation, it is both meaningful and powerful. One cannot know the meaning or the correct articulation, however, without the guidance of a guru. Otherwise, such knowledge is "secret." See Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, 72.

Kayotsarga

Kayotsarga involves “relaxation” and “abandonment” of the body.²⁶ Like *asana*, *mudra*, and *mantra*, *kayotsarga* is also considered a preliminary step necessary for the flow of *prana* throughout the body as well as for meditation and concentration. In the standing *asana* described above, one relaxes the muscles. Alternately, one concentrates on different parts of the body, consciously willing the relaxation of each part. This process whereby one consciously “suggests” to oneself to relax each part of the body is called *bhavana*, translated by Mahaprajna’s disciples as “auto suggestion.”²⁷

Auto suggestion is linked to the idea that consciousness can be located in the subtle body. Because the subtle body corresponds to the physical body, relaxation of the physical body enhances the flow of consciousness in the subtle body. By visualizing the movement of consciousness from one part of the body to another, and the concomitant relaxation of each body part as consciousness flows through it, the practitioner becomes less and less subject to the demands and desires of the physical body. In other words, the goal of *kayotsarga* is to relax the physical body so as to enhance the flow of subtle energy and decrease distraction caused by the stimulation of the senses.

Antaryatra

The step following relaxation is *antaryatra*, which means “internal trip.”²⁸ *Antaryatra* requires the practitioner to direct the flow of her subtle energy in an upward direction.

²⁶ The literal meaning of *kayotsarga* is the mental abandonment (*utsarga*) of the body (*kaya*). As mentioned in the Introduction, *kayotsarga* is one of the six *avashyakas* or obligatory duties of the Jain monastic. The standing posture required for *kayotsarga* is also one of the two postures in which the *jinas* are iconographically represented, the other being the sitting meditative posture.

²⁷ The literal meaning of *bhavana* is “becoming.”

²⁸ There are a variety of ways that *antaryatra* could be translated, such as “internal journey,” but Mahaprajna’s disciples prefer “internal trip,” so I will use that translation here.

Because negative emotions, such as fear and hate, are believed to result from concentrated energy in the lower *kendras*, *antaryatra* is believed to eliminate such emotions. *Antaryatra* involves the flow of subtle energy from the lowest *chakra*, here called the *shakti kendra* (center of energy), to the highest *chakra*, here called the *jnana kendra* (center of knowledge).

The practitioner controls the flow of energy by means of her will. She “wills” her concentrated energy at the bottom of the spine to move upwards along the spinal column to the top of the head. Visualization is prescribed as a useful technique for concentrating on and transmutating subtle energy. The practitioner then moves the energy back down the spinal column to the lowest *kendra*. Upon gaining such control of the flow of subtle energy, the practitioner should synchronize the flow of energy with her respiration, exhaling with the rise of energy, inhaling with the fall of energy.

Although this process is for the sake of regulating the flow of energy, and thus requires both upward and downward flow, it is believed that most exertion is necessary for making the energy flow upwards. As a result of karma, energy is believed to concentrate at the bottom of the spinal column, and such lower *kendras* (as mentioned above) are associated with negative emotions. They are also associated with sexuality, indulgence, and attachment to the physical body. In line with the Jain ascetic agenda whereby one seeks to disassociate from the body, regulation requires the increase in energy flow in the higher *kendras* and thus a resistance to the effects of karma itself with regard to what are believed to be harmful emotions and desires.

In my conversations with the *samanis*, they explicitly associated *antaryatra* with *kundalini yoga*.²⁹ Mahaprajna also makes explicit references to transmutating sexual energy within the body, although he consistently calls it *antaryatra* rather than *kundalini yoga*:

The seat of vital energy is also situated at the base of the spinal column. Normally the vital energy manifests itself as sex-energy (or libido). The flow can be reversed and made to travel upwards. The upward flow produces increased psychic perception. While the downward flow increases physical activity and sensuous pleasure, the upward flow will bring mental peace and equilibrium and state [sic] of bliss. All that is required is the regulation of the direction of flow.³⁰

Thus this state reveals that such energies located in the subtle body and resulting in physical activities can be sublimated into what is considered more spiritually effective energy.³¹ In this way, *preksha* most resembles *hatha yoga* in which such transmutations of subtle energies are essential for advancement along the spiritual path.

Shvas Preksha

Shvas preksha means “perception of breath.” This includes three steps that are characteristic of classical forms of *pranayama* (breath control) in classical yogic practice: deep breathing, breathing through alternate nostrils, and breathing through alternate nostrils coupled with retention of breath. The first step involves the slowing down of breath by means of contracting and expanding the abdominal muscles at will. The

²⁹ Samani Vishubh Pragma, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 23-25, 2009. Samani Vinay Pragma and Samani Sanmati Pragma, repeated personal communications, Houston, Texas, 2006-2009.

³⁰ Mahaprajna, *Perception of Body*, 21. I was only able to locate such details with regard to the transmutation of sexual desire in the English-language version of this text produced by Muni Mahendra Kumar and Jethalal S. Zaveri. Yet several *samanis* confirmed this interpretation of *antaryatra*. See note 29 and note 31. .

³¹ In a private conversation, one *samani* communicated to me that the most difficult part of being a monastic is the renunciation of sex, and that she overcomes the renunciation of sex by “channeling that energy upwards toward the head and spiritual goals.” Personal communication with *samani*.

practitioner is believed to eventually be able to pass through one minute with only four to six breaths.³² As in other yogic systems, physical respiration (*shvas*) and the flow of subtle energy (*prana*) are often conflated in the discourse on the subtle body. In the next chapter, we will evaluate how Mahaprajna somaticizes subtle energy by means of appropriating scientific discourse to talk about its movement and function in the body.

The next step involves alternate breathing through the left and right nostril. The practitioner breathes in through one nostril and then out through the other. At first, she uses her fingers to open and close the nostrils in order to alternate effectively, but eventually the practitioner is expected to be able to alternate by “will.” This practice is believed to bring the subtle body into a state of equilibrium by regulating the flow of *prana* through the major *nadis*: *ida*, *pingala*, and *sushumna*. While *sushumna* is the central *nadi*, which runs along the spinal column, *ida* is located on the left side of the *sushumna* and *pingala* is on the right. *Ida* passes through the left nostril and enters the right cerebral hemisphere. *Pingala* passes through the right nostril and enters the left cerebral hemisphere. *Ida* carries cold energy whereas *pingala* carries hot energy. Thus, when the breath from the left nostril is stronger, the body will be cold and when it is stronger from the right nostril, the body will be hot. Ideally, the practitioner will be able to regulate the flow through both *nadis* so that the body is in a state of equilibrium. It is only in this state that breath can effectively flow through the *sushumna* and thus move toward the higher *kendras*. The final step involves the further control of breath (and thus subtle energy) whereby the practitioner holds her breath for as long as possible in between inhalation and exhalation.

³² Samani Akshay Pragya and Samani Vinay Pragya have demonstrated to me their ability to go one minute with only four to six breaths.

Sharira Preksha

Thus far it is evident that *preksha* is about the awareness and movement of subtle energies within the body by means of both meditative and physical practices. And, like *hatha yoga*, physical bodily techniques are absolutely integral to the manipulation of subtle energies in *preksha*.

Preksha also involves meditative techniques that require concentration on the physical body. *Sharira preksha* means “perception of the body.” In this stage, one perceives the physical body in increasing degrees of depth and subtlety: first, one perceives the superficial sensation of the skin; second, one perceives muscular sensations; third, one perceives sensations of the internal organs; and fourth, one perceives subtle vibrations of the electrical impulses in the nervous system. Because the physical and subtle bodies are both constituents of matter, Mahaprajna locates different parts of the physical body along a continuum of subtlety. He considers the nervous system to be “more subtle” than the skin, muscles, or organs, and thus they function as a link between the physical body and the subtle body. He argues that by perceiving the physical body in increasingly subtle degrees, one gets closer to perceiving the subtle body itself.

In line with classical yogic thought, such attention to sensations should occur with absolute indifference to pleasure or pain. Mahaprajna prescribes *preksha* as an ascetic practice, and thus it functions to enhance the practitioner’s ability to dissociate from what are considered profane desires and thus transcend the body. This is believed to become increasingly possible as the practitioner increases her direct perception of the layers of the physical body. Perception of the physical body’s underlying physiological processes increasingly enable the practitioner to act as an external “witness” of such processes but

not be subject to normal bodily demands, such as hunger or sexual desire. The idea is that, upon perceiving the cause of such demands, one becomes increasingly indifferent to them.

Chaitanya Kendra Preksha

Chaitanya kendra preksha means “perception of psychic centers.”³³ This stage involves meditation on each of the major thirteen *kendras* in order to become directly aware of the vibration of subtle energy at each *kendra*. It is essential, according to Mahaprajna and his disciples, that the practitioner gives priority to the higher *kendras* as is the case while practicing *antaryatra*. For instance, practice should begin with concentration on the lower *kendras* (the lowest three) and culminate in the higher ones, and if the practitioner is short on time, she can ignore the lower *kendras* all together and focus entirely on the higher ones.

Chaitanya kendra preksha differs from *antaryatra* insofar as it is not about the movement of subtle energy, but the perception of subtle energy. Thus *chaitanya kendra preksha* is a natural progression from *sharira preksha*, during which one perceived the physical body. The practitioner’s perception progressively moves throughout all layers of the physical body in *sharira preksha* and then throughout the subtle body in *chaitanya kendra preksha*.

³³ “*Chaitanya*” is usually translated as “consciousness,” but I use “psychic” here because this is the translation that proponents of *preksha* themselves prefer for “*chaitanya*” in this context.

Leshya Dhyana

Once the practitioner directly perceives the subtle body, she practices *leshya dhyana* the “perception of psychic colors,” as translated by Mahaprajna’s disciples.³⁴ Although the idea that mental activities or dispositions produce *leshya* (color) associated with *manas* (mind) or *jiva* (soul) is characteristic of many South Asian traditions, the concept is unique and indispensable to Jain karma theory.³⁵ Jain karma theory maintains that action leads to the accumulation of karma and that karma in turn produces *leshya*. There are many different *leshyas* and the specific type produced by karma depends on the mental state behind the action that produced that karma. In other words, intention combined with action results in the attribution of a particular color to karma.

Citing the Jain Shvetambara *sutras*, Kristi Wiley explains the relationship between the immaterial soul and *leshya*, which, like karma, is a constituent of matter: “The relationship between soul and *leshya* is described with the analogy of a crystal... Thus, the soul, in a manner of speaking, ‘reflects’ the qualities of color (*varna*), taste (*rasa*), smell (*gandha*), and touch or palpability (*sparsa*) that are constituent parts of matter, although usually it is only color that is referred to when discussing *lesyas*.”³⁶ Thus the soul itself does not *become* a particular color, but it “reflects” color insofar as the karma occupying its same space produces it.

Mahaprajna took this classic Jain concept and incorporated it into the structure of *preksha*. A particular *leshya* is believed to characterize each *kendra*. The practitioner thus

³⁴ The literal translation of “*leshya dhyana*” is “meditation on color.”

³⁵ Kristi L. Wiley, “Colors of the Soul: By-Products of Activity or Passions?” *Philosophy East and West* 50, no. 3 (July 2000): 348-366.

³⁶ *Prajnapana-sutra*, with Malayagiri’s commentary (Bangalore: Shree Adinath Jain Temple Trust, 1988); cited by Wiley, “Colors of the Soul,” 351. For the terminology, Wiley cites Hermann Georg Jacobi, *Jaina Sutras, Part I & II* (Charleston: South Carolina: Forgotten Books, 2008), 196.

meditates on a particular *kendra* and its constituent *leshya*. This practice does not involve all of the *kendras* but only five of the highest *kendras* and their constituent *leshyas*: *ananda kendra* (green), *vishuddhi kendra* (blue), *darshana kendra* (red), *jnana kendra* (or in its place, *chakshusa kendra*) (yellow), and *jyoti kendra* (white).³⁷ By alternately meditating on these *leshyas* radiating from each of their *kendras*, the practitioner becomes increasingly less subject to negative emotions (and thus the negative results of karma) and attains full conscious control over her emotional state. What makes this possible is the association between “auspicious” colors and a passion-less *bhavana* or “mood.”³⁸ By focusing on auspicious colors as opposed to inauspicious ones (unsurprisingly associated with the lower *kendras*), the practitioner blocks certain deleterious emotional effects of karma, such as anger and fear. She also blocks sexual desire. This is consistent with the earlier stages whereby the practitioner focuses on the higher *kendras* as opposed to the lower ones. Consistently throughout the practice of *preksha*, the goal is to increase the subtle energy at those locations.

Anupreksha

The final step of *preksha* is *anupreksha*, which is translated as “contemplation.”³⁹ There are two parts of this stage: *anupreksha* resulting in the direct experience of some aspect of reality; and *anupreksha* resulting in the neutralization of the deleterious effects of karma, especially those that bring about inauspicious emotive states.

³⁷ Mahaprajna, *Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 90-91; for the English-language rendition in the English-language version of the text, see Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 88-89.

³⁸ Mahaprajna, *Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 91; for the English-language rendition in the English-language version of the text, see Mahaprajna, *Theory and practice*, 88.

³⁹ Literally, *anupreksha* means “[the stage] following perception.”

The first part of *anupreksha* is focused on consciously becoming increasingly aware of the distinction between the Self and its transient associations: with one's surroundings, one's seat, one's clothes, one's body, one's bodily and psychological processes, one's emotions, one's behaviors, and one's *karma-sharira* or "karma body," particularly with regard to the emotions stimulated therein. The practitioner then contemplates the Self as pure soul and then repeats the above series in reverse order. The goal is to realize the transitoriness of all associations and consequently come to disassociate with the non-Self (matter) and experience the true Self (soul).

The second part of *anupreksha* involves meditation on three particular *kendras* and their concomitant *leshyas* and virtues. The practitioner concentrates on the *ananda kendra*, (pink), and contemplates fearlessness. The practitioner then shifts focus to the *jyoti kendra* (blue) and contemplates equanimity. Finally, the practitioner focuses on *shanti kendra* (white) and contemplates modesty.

In sum, contemplation is believed to bring one to the perception of the immaterial Self while cultivating the necessary virtues to sustain the knowledge that the Self is pure soul. Such virtues release the practitioner from the desires and demands of her physical body and prepare her for a reintroduction into the world beyond the ritual. In its culmination, then, *preksha* aims to put the practitioner in a state whereby she perceives the soul as distinct from the physical body and is then prepared to re-enter the world a more virtuous person, although early steps utilize the physical body as a means to this very state.

***Preksha* as Mystical Practice**

Preksha functions as an empirical inquiry into the true Self. In other words, it is based on an experiential epistemology. To experience the Self directly, the practitioner travels within, and *preksha* is prescribed as the necessary vehicle. Insofar as it is believed to deliver her from the conventional world to the profound experience of the real, it is a practice that culminates in a mystical experience. Mahaprajna eagerly uses himself as an example of how individual experience is the most important path to the realization of truth. Mahaprajna described to me how, although he studied the ancient Jain literary tradition in his search for a unique form of Jain yoga, the main source of his knowledge with regard to *preksha* was his own direct experimentation and experience.⁴⁰ In fact, he sees himself as returning religion to its true form by emphasizing experience and practice over doctrine and sectarianism:

The problem is that now-a days (so-called) religious leaders have devalued the moral principles and have tried to establish ritualistic traditionalism as religion. The true religion, which should not be dogmatic or doctrinaire but practical and dynamic, has unfortunately been shorn off its practical side... In reality, experimental research and actual experience is the spirit of religion... The basic principle of being religious (i.e. adopting a virtuous way to life) is to commence transmutation.⁴¹

Even though Mahaprajna maintains a dualist ontology and argues that the practitioner should ultimately experience the soul as distinct from the body, there is an emphasis on unitive experience. In the practitioner's transcendence of the body, there is a communion of consciousness and the Self. As discussed above, consciousness became a part of matter insofar as it functions as a constituent of the subtle body, but the state of transcendence is believed to be true knowledge, which is *prajna* or "wisdom," whereby

⁴⁰ Mahaprajna, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 28, 2009.

⁴¹ Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 99-100. This is not in the Hindi-language version of the text.

consciousness transcends associations with the subtle and physical bodies, sensations, and emotions. Mahaprajna stresses that *preksha* involve the transcendence of all dualities between likes and dislikes and even life and death:

The important benefit of relaxation is – awareness of wisdom. When wisdom awakens, equanimity of the soul naturally descends. Gain-loss, pleasure-pain, criticism-adulation, life-death – a capacity develops to put harmony in place of these dualities.⁴²

This is the state of pure consciousness, in which the object of consciousness is the Self. In other words, this resembles *kevala jnana* or what classical yogic schools call *samadhi*.

Proponents of *preksha* describe such experiences of the advanced practitioner as blissful, non-sensual, and entirely non-physical. This is the mystical experience of enstasis, the term used by Eliade to refer to the end of the yogic path, *samadhi*.⁴³ Enstasis or “standing within” is an apt term in the present context because *samadhi* is not a mystical union or experience of something outside of the Self but the Self itself. In other words, the yogic path is not one that leads outside of oneself, rather, the yogi goes within. This is in line with the motto placed at the bottom of the *preksha* symbol on a variety of JVB promotional materials: “*Svayam satya khojem*” or “Seek the truth yourself.”⁴⁴ Mahaprajna prescribes an internal quest for the sake of yogic transmutations and the realization of the Self. No external force can bring about that mystical state. Although in classical Jain thought, *kevala jnana* is described in this way, it is a permanent state whereas the transcendence of dualities in *preksha* is temporary insofar as it only occurs in the ritual space.

⁴² Mahaprajna, *Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 102. The transliteration of the Hindi text is as follows: *Kayotsarga ki ek aur mahattvapurna nishparate hai – prajna ka jagarana. Jab prajna jagati hai, tab jivan men samati svatah avatarit hoti hai. Labh – alabh, sukh – dukkha, ninda – prashamsa, jivan – maran – in dvandvon men sam rhane ki kshamata vikasit hoti hai.* For the English-language rendition of this excerpt in the English-language version of the text, see Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 107.

⁴³ Eliade, *Yoga*.

⁴⁴ For an image of the *preksha* symbol used by JVB, see www.preksha.com.

The Monastic Context and Yogic Liminality

The yogic initiation described by Eliade, whereby the yogi undergoes a process of death and then rebirth to a “transcendent modality” is applicable to *preksha*.⁴⁵ In fact, the practitioner of *preksha* undergoes the following three phases: an initial phase in which she abandons the *laukika* and turns her attention inward toward the spiritual or *lokottara*; a phase consisting of transmutation whereby her consciousness comes to reside in new parts of the body, which culminates in the ecstatic transcendence of the body and experience of the soul (enstasis); and finally, her re-entrance as a more virtuous person into the external material world. Arnold van Gennep’s tripartite ritual structure may be aptly applied to *preksha*’s ritual process. He proposed that the ritual process is as follows: the preliminal phase of separation; the liminal phase of transition; and the post-liminal phase of reincorporation.⁴⁶ Victor Turner’s elaboration upon the liminal phase provides additional insight into the ritual process.⁴⁷ According to Turner, liminality functions as a transitional state whereby individuals are “betwixt and between” different identities. Such a conception of liminality is helpful for understanding the ritual process of *preksha* whereby the individual occupies an altered and transformative space. I would like to use van Gennep’s tripartite structure and Turner’s theorization of liminality to evaluate two Terapanthi monastic contexts and thus demonstrate that *preksha* resembles the process described by Eliade with regard to classical yoga whereby the yogi dies to the conventional world and is finally reborn into a new yogic-ascetic body. In this way, I hope to demonstrate that in these monastic contexts *preksha* functions as an ascetic ritual.

⁴⁵ Eliade, *Yoga*, 361-362.

⁴⁶ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965. First published 1908).

⁴⁷ Victor Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction Press, 2008. First published 1969).

First, I would like to evaluate the practitioner whose monasticism is permanent and for whom *preksha* functions as a re-enactment of her initiation (*diksha*) into the monastic order whereby she died to the conventional world and was then reborn into a new ascetic state of being. The *diksha* ritual is a public enactment of the individual's transportation from the *laukika* or worldly life into the *lokottara* or spiritual one. In the *laukika*, one concerns oneself with worldly values. In the *lokottara*, one concerns oneself with transcendence of the world.

The ritual of *diksha* itself is one in which the Terapanthi initiate undergoes a ritual death to the world. That death is represented by the renunciation of family, social identity, and material belongings. In the weeks prior to the ritual initiation and the initiate's concomitant renunciation, the initiate feasts on rich food and is cloaked in extravagant clothing by her family in anticipation of her permanent separation from them. The initiation itself is a public event. The initiate enters having had her head completely shaved except for a small tuft of hair but still wearing her extravagant clothing. Her shaved head marks her as a liminal being, neither lay nor monastic. After speeches by a variety of participants glorifying the ascetic life, the initiate disappears into privacy for a short time, strips of her beautiful clothes, and re-emerges in the white robes of a monastic. The contrast is meant to be dramatic. The initiate's extremely indulgent state during the period of pre-initiation and her ascetic state during the formal initiation highlight the extent of renunciation required in Terapanthi monasticism. In the Terapanth, renunciation is radical. After asking and receiving the permission of her family for the initiate to embark upon such a radically ascetic path, the *acharya* initiates her.

Perhaps the most visceral part of the ritual occurs at the end of the initiatory ritual when the initiate approaches the *sadhvi pramukha* or “chief *sadhvi*” (or if it is a male initiate, the *acharya*) who uses her own hands to pluck out the hair of the initiate left in the small tuft on her head.⁴⁸ This ritual act, the *kesha loncha*, is the culmination of the initiate’s transition from the *laukika* to the *lokottara* and is required by the Terapanth in order to demonstrate the ascetic intentions and abilities of the initiate. Such ascetic acts demonstrate that the initiate seeks to renounce the body in her quest for the realization of the Self. From the start of the initiatory ritual to its finish, the initiate must demonstrate a complete lack of emotion in order to prove her non-attachment to the world and her commitment to the spiritual realm of values, the *lokottara*. In this way, the initiate embodies the ascetic ideal. Following the ritual of initiation, the initiate experiences a rebirth, not back into the worldly life of the lay person, but into a new monastic community aimed at the negation of life altogether.

The monastic’s ascetic regimen includes *preksha*. Mahaprajna prescribes *preksha* according to the structure described above for all monastics to perform regularly. In the monastic context of Ladnun, whatever locations the monastics travel through, and wherever they settle during the *chaturmas*, each individual *muni*, *sadhvi*, and *samani* practices *preksha* for the purification of the soul. The monastic begins with the preliminary steps of *asana*, *mudra*, and *mantra* and ends with *anupreksha*. Each time the monastic practices *preksha*, she enters a liminal state whereby she turns inward once again and re-adopts her quest in search of the soul. In the liminal state, the practitioner gradually becomes increasingly ascetic by means of the gradual quest deeper within the

⁴⁸ The *sadhvi pramukha* is subordinate to the *acharya*. She is responsible for enforcing the monastic rules within the Terapanthi order of *sadhvis*.

physical and subtle bodies toward the soul. Thus *preksha* allows the monastic to become the ascetic ideal once again, although that ideal is realized in the context of everyday ritual rather than the ritual of initiation. In other words, *preksha* makes it possible for the monastic to regularly re-enact her initiation into the monastic order whereby she died to the *laukika* and shifted her attention toward the *lokottara*. After completing *preksha*, the monastic emerges with increased virtues and greater knowledge of the nature of the Self and is thus less subject to the profane desires and demands characteristic of “the world.”

The *munis*, *sadhvis*, and *samanis* of the Terapanth are not the only individuals, however, who practice *preksha* as a part of a larger ascetic regimen. In fact, two Terapanthi organizations, Jain Vishva Bharati and Preksha International, organize one-week long camps at which lay men and women retreat from normal everyday life for one week and functionally become temporary monastics.⁴⁹ Upon entry into the camp, the campers undergo an initiation themselves whereby they abandon the *laukika* and reorient themselves toward the *lokottara*. They adopt a number of rules to be maintained while at the camp. Such rules mark them as liminal beings, occupying an altered space within which the camper seeks to transcend the needs and desires of “the world” by means of *preksha*. The camp organizers, either the *samanis* or lay but advanced practitioners of *preksha*, ask them to live in moderation while at the camp by limiting their diet, action, and speech. More specifically, they ask the campers to adopt the following rules: they may not leave the location of the camp during that week; they must renounce their normal clothing and put on white clothes, over which they must all wear identical white

⁴⁹ Such camps take place in Ladnun as well as in the cities where the *samanis* maintain JVB centers. In Ladnun, participants are usually self-identifying Hindu and Jain adult men and women from throughout India. JVB Ladnun also hosts one English-language camp per year, which is mostly attended by Russians from Moscow who learned about *preksha* in Moscow, where there are practitioners but not a central JVB center. For more on this topic, see the Conclusion.

jumpers with the *preksha* logo displayed front and center; men and women have separate sleeping quarters and sex of any kind is prohibited; food cannot be brought into the camp from an outside source; and the diet provided is composed of simple Jain vegetarian dishes.⁵⁰

The camper thus undergoes a qualified monastic initiation whereby she experiences a quasi-death to conventional life, but that death is incomplete insofar as the camper understands that the monastic life is only temporary. It thus propels the camper into a period of liminality whereby she is removed from normal life and adopts an ascetic regimen oriented primarily around processes of purification by means of *preksha*.

Upon reintroduction to normal life, the camper is believed to be more aware of the essence of the Self as pure soul and thus can re-enter the conventional world in what is considered a more virtuous form. Furthermore, with the continual re-enactment of the *preksha* ritual after the conclusion of the camp, the former camper repeatedly commits herself to the ascetic ideal even if not permanently embodying that ideal. The performance of *preksha* for the former camper thus functions to re-enact the *preksha* camp itself insofar as one temporarily abandons the *laukika* and concerns oneself with the *lokottara*.

For both the temporarily monastic camper and the permanent monastic *muni*, *sadhvi*, or *samani*, *preksha* functions as an ascetic ritual process. The *muni*, *sadhvi*, or *samani* is permanently monastic, and *preksha* functions to propel him or her into a state in which he or she embodies the ascetic-yogic ideal, which involves a meditative turn

⁵⁰ At the camps outside of Ladnun (for instance, in Houston), some of these rules are qualified because entire families (adults and children) are invited to participate in the camp events. For this reason, families are able to stay together in the same sleeping quarters, although sex is still prohibited. The campers do not wear the white jumpers, although they are encouraged to wear white clothing. Also, the camps are usually shorter, lasting three to four days. For more on this topic, see Chapter Four.

inward and the perception of the Self. The camper, on the other hand, is only a monastic for one week, from which she emerges spiritually enhanced and more capable of transcending normal everyday desires, demands, and troubles. For both, *preksha* involves the abandonment of the body (and the rest of the material world) and increased perception of the soul and thus re-enacts and confirms their valorization of the *laukika* over the *lokottara*.

Conclusion

Based on my analysis of *preksha* in this chapter, if I were to attempt to categorize it using Elizabeth de Michelis' typology of modern yoga, I would be unsuccessful. I could attempt to locate it somewhere in between Modern Meditational Yoga and Modern Denominational Yoga.⁵¹ In the monastic context, *preksha* resembles Modern Meditational Yoga because monastic practitioners most heavily emphasize meditative techniques, rather than physical postures and breathing exercises. On the other hand, doctrinal philosophical analyses are not lacking in this context. Rather, there is an exclusive commitment to a Jain metaphysical interpretation of the ritual and an authoritative guru who provides that interpretation. In this way, *preksha* more closely resembles Modern Denominational Yoga.

Rather than attempt to locate *preksha* in the monastic context within a particular type of modern yoga, it is most important to locate it on the historical trajectory of classical forms of yoga of both the *raja* and *hatha* variety, insofar as monastic practitioners perform it as an ascetic ritual for the sake of transcendence of the body and

⁵¹ Elizabeth de Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 187-188.

the realization of the Self. Perhaps schools of yoga that more closely resemble classical forms in this way are why de Michelis qualifies her typology by asserting that it applies only to “English speaking milieus.” For the most part, in the monastic contexts in which *preksha* is practiced, Hindi is the primary medium of exchange because few fully initiated Terapanthi monastics know English. Although some of the *preksha* camps do use English instead of Hindi, the English-camps in Ladnun replicate those in Hindi, and the camps outside of Ladnun represent a different, less monastic application of *preksha*, one that does more closely fit into de Michelis’ typology of modern yoga. We will discuss those camps along with the *preksha* classes offered outside of India in Chapter Four. As will become evident in my analysis of *preksha* in the non-monastic context, *preksha* most overlaps with the Modern Postural Yoga type. I will further complicate the attempt to locate *preksha* within a particular “type” of modern yoga in Chapter Three, where I will discuss Mahaprajna’s appropriation of scientific discourse and somaticization of the subtle body. It will become increasingly evident that, in all of the contexts in which *preksha* is prescribed and practiced, it does function as a case study of modern yoga insofar as its explication is characterized by the appropriation of scientific discourse, even though in the monastic context it most consistently intersects with classical schools of yoga. All of this overlapping and categorizing leads to one conclusion: *preksha* is context-specific and thus does not fit perfectly or permanently into any one “type” of yoga.

I want to end this chapter by articulating once again that, in the monastic context, *preksha* shares important characteristics with classical forms of *raja yoga* and *hatha yoga*. Most importantly, *preksha* functions to purify the soul by enabling the individual to

withdraw from external and sensual stimulations, increase concentration, and rid her consciousness of negative emotions, which allows it to move deeper and deeper within, toward the soul itself. Mahaprajna argues that *preksha* purges the body of psychological and physical “faeces.”⁵² There are few (if any) better ways to articulate an ascetic orientation toward “the world” and the perceived need for purification than to compare *preksha* to purifying the practitioner of excrement!

The greatest obstacle to advancement along the spiritual path by means of purification, according to Mahaprajna and his disciples, is sexual desire. Mahaprajna compares himself to Freud insofar as they agree that sex is the fundamental instinct of the human body.⁵³ But unlike Freud, Mahaprajna maintains that the human can transcend sexual desire. This is, in fact, the reason why Mahaprajna says that, even though both Freud and Jung had some bearing on the development of his own thought, Jung has especially influenced him.⁵⁴ Jung, after all, criticized Freud for conceding too much to the unconscious force of the libido as a determinant of personal development. Whereas Freud was concerned with neutralizing the unconscious force of libido, which could otherwise result in neurotic and psychotic problems, Jung argued that it was not enough to simply neutralize the negative effects of libido, but that human beings could actually tap into positive and constructive forces in the unconscious.

For Mahaprajna, such constructive forces also lie buried within human consciousness. The human transcends sexual instinct by means of yogic practice as a part of the monastic’s ascetic regimen and directly experiences the Self. Mahaprajna prescribes fasting and everyday control over desire for food for the sake of calming

⁵² Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, 59.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁴ Mahaprajna, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 27, 2009.

sexual desire.⁵⁵ But the ritual procedure outlined above can also serve to mitigate this instinct. Upon the mitigation of the strongest instinct, the practitioner also gains increased control over concern for all external objects of desire. Mahaprajna writes:

Only he who has not experienced the great vibrations of the life force within, will be attracted by gross outward phenomena, disregarding the subtle happenings inside. But the day he experiences the vibrations of the inner sea, his very conception of life will undergo a transformation, and a great fountainhead of bliss will explode within him.”⁵⁶

Preksha thus functions as a case study of classical yoga insofar as it makes transcendence of normal bodily and psychological processes possible, which results in direct experiences of the sacred.

One could argue that Mahaprajna simply appropriates from other schools of yoga to construct *preksha* in this way. And, in fact, in one of his texts, he openly responds to such an accusation when he recalls the following conversation:

The renowned scholar of the Buddhist philosophy, Dr. Nath Mal Taria said, “The practice of the *asanas* at the *Prekshadhyana* camps has been borrowed from the *Hathayoga*.” I replied, “We can take any good thing from wherever it can be found. But the *asanas* have been described in details in the Jain *Agamas* not in one place but several places.”⁵⁷

Thus Mahaprajna attempts to have it both ways by asserting that yoga is mentioned in the earliest Jain texts and, even if they are appropriating from *hatha yoga*, it does not matter.

I happen to agree that evaluating aspects of *preksha* as “borrowed” from classical schools of yoga is not useful for understanding its role or function for the Terapanthi tradition. After all, the origins of yoga are unknown to scholars, yoga perpetually changes

⁵⁵ Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, 31, 41-42. Jain thinkers often argue that desires for food are closely related to sexual ones. On this topic, see Paul Dundas, “Sthulabhadra’s Lodgings: Sexual Restraint in Jainism,” in *Celibacy and Religious Traditions*, ed. Carl Olson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 188-190.

⁵⁶ Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, 44.

⁵⁷ Mahaprajna, *Lord Mahavira’s Scripture of Health*, 2nd ed., ed. Muni Dulah Raj and Muni Dhananjaya Kumar, trans. Sarla Jag Mohan (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 2001), 110.

over time, yoga has no “essence,” and thus it would be more accurate to say that it is culturally South Asian (in its classical forms), rather than belonging to any particular tradition.

Mahaprajna and his construction of *preksha* can thus be located on a long historical trajectory in which South Asian gurus prescribe yoga as an ascetic practice for the sake of spiritual development. *Preksha* involves the ethical restraints and meditative techniques of *raja yoga* as well as the rigorous physical techniques of *hatha yoga* in order to achieve direct experiences of the sacred. And in these ways, it is both mystical and ascetic. The Jain ascetic-yogi, upon ridding herself of negative emotions thus neutralizing the negative effects of karma, can more easily perceive the distinction between matter and soul, eventually becomes fully aware of the distinction, and gradually progresses toward releasing the soul *from* the world.

Chapter Three

Chakras and Endocrine Glands: Preksha and the Appropriation of Science

In looking ever more deeply into the body, a discourse of science has fused and confused the embodied knowledge of transcendence, and the practice based on that knowledge, with the transcendence of knowledge. In essence this is a mistake that has allowed Yoga to have its cake and eat it too: to claim that Ultimate Truth can only be experienced and never understood, while all the while seeking to explain, so as to understand, the nature of Truth, and to locate Truth in the body.

Joseph Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*, 36

There are *chakras* [and] there are lotuses arranged in the body. Nothing like a *kamala* is found by doctors anywhere. They have cut the whole body into tiny tiny fragments to give an analysis but [nothing] that resembles a lotus is found anywhere. Ignore the existence of navel-lotus, the existence of *ajna-chakra*, the existence of *vishuddhi-kendra*. But can you [ignore] the pineal, pituitary, thyroid...? But if we look from a comparative point of view, then there is no difference between affirming any particular qualities of yoga and physiology.¹

Mahaprajna, *Preksha Dhyana: Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 32

Preksha is a mystical practice for Terapanthi monastics concerned with the *lokottara* and striving to transcend the body and experience the true Self, pure soul. Mahaprajna argues that knowledge of the Self can only occur through direct experience brought about when the practitioner turns inward and follows each of the stages involved in *preksha*. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that, although Mahaprajna prescribes *preksha* as a mystical and an ascetic practice based on an empirical epistemology for Jain monastics seeking to experience the transcendent Self, he nevertheless appropriates scientific discourse in an attempt to explain *preksha* and thus legitimize it as a physiotherapeutic practice aimed at

¹ This is my translation of the Hindi language text. For this point in the English-language version of the text, see Mahaprajna, *Preksha Dhyana: Theory and Practice*, trans. Muni Mahendra Kumar and Jethalal S. Zaveri, ed. Muni Mahendra Kumar (Jain Vishva Bharati: Ladnun, Rajasthan, 2004), 30. The transliteration of the Hindi is as follows: *Hamare sharir men granthiyen hain, chakra hain, kamala hain. Kamala jaisi cij nahin mili, to doctors ne kaha – hamane sare sharir ko ciraphad kar dekh dala, uske amu-anu ka vishleshan kar diya, par kahin ho, vishuddhi kendra ho ya na ho, kintu jo pineal, pituitary, thyroid adi granthiyen hain, glands [etc] unko yadi ham tulanatmak drishti se dekhne to yogashastra aur sharirashastra ke pratipadan men koi vishesh bhed nahin hoga.*

health. In the contexts in which one finds such scientific discourse, Mahaprajna and his disciples' explication of yoga is concerned less with *preksha* for the sake of transcendence and more on *preksha* for the sake of physiological enhancement.

As argued in Chapter Two, *preksha* belongs on the same historical trajectory as classical schools of yoga insofar as it is an ascetic practice aimed at a transcendent state. In this chapter, I will argue that *preksha* also functions as a case study of modern yoga insofar as Mahaprajna prescribes it as a scientific practice based on the laws of physiology. In other words, Mahaprajna is one amongst many modern yogic adepts who provide a unique combination of classical yogic practices and maintain that such systems originate in ancient literature, while at the same time asserting their compatibility with modern science. In this way, Mahaprajna's construction of *preksha* demonstrates a process of adaptation to trends in the development and practice of modern yoga that began as early as the nineteenth century.

In his study, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body between Science and Philosophy*, Joseph S. Alter argues that modern ideas about science and health have played a strong role in the formation of modern yoga. Alter maintains that yoga is not a stable phenomenon, and that by appropriating the discourse of science, proponents of modern yoga made it cross-culturally translatable. As we witnessed in the Introduction, this process did not only occur outside of India, but also within India where, according to Alter, "yoga was modernized, medicalized, and transformed into a system of physical culture."²

² Joseph S. Alter, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body between Science and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

10. For a study on the appropriation of scientific discourse in Buddhism, see Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Buddhism and Science: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Whereas Alter addresses the appropriation of scientific discourse in modern yoga on the part of Hindu yogis in India, particularly Kuvalayananda and K.N. Udupa, as well as yoga and health practices, such as auto-urine therapy and nature cure/yoga, tied to Hindu forms of nationalism, in this chapter, I will contribute to the analysis of the intersection between modern yoga and science by evaluating the Terapanth's locale at this intersection.³ In particular, I will evaluate the explanation of yogic metaphysics by means of scientific physiology by Mahaprajna and his disciples.

Proponents of *preksha* somaticize metaphysical yogic processes by using the bio-medical discourse of physiology to locate and identify the functions of subtle body parts. Alter argues that, because of ideas about science and health in the modern world, the transcendent truth becomes located in the body in the practice of modern yoga. He refers to this process as "modern mimesis."⁴ By evaluating the mimesis of physiology and metaphysics in *preksha*, I will demonstrate that Mahaprajna and his disciples also locate transcendence in the physical body, which is indicative of a process of adaptation to the modern valorization of bio-medical science as the preeminent paradigm for understanding the physical body.

³ Auto-urine therapy is a present-day practice based on an ancient Indian yogic practice whereby one ingests the midstream portion of one's first morning urination (*amaroli*) for the sake of meditational benefits. Nature cure/yoga here refers to several distinct movements in India that propose a combination of yogic practice and ethics with ayurvedic medicine for the treatment of sickness and disease. These movements often oppose Western bio-medicine.

⁴ Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*, 21.

Somaticization of the Subtle Body

As indicated by the epigraphs to this chapter, the theme here is how the discourse of science in modern yoga conflates the transcendence of truth with the embodiment of truth. Alter articulates this point succinctly:

Whether intentionally or not, the scientific procedure of anatomical reference and physiological function – as well as the more straightforward use of knowledge based on language to describe an indescribable experience – leads to a rather “gross” characterization of that which is, in the end, most subtle.⁵

In a radical shift from his prescription of *preksha* as a means to clairvoyance, purification, and the transcendent experience of the soul, Mahaprajna calls on his readers to adopt a “comparative point of view” by means of a mimesis of subtle body parts, such as the *kendras or chakras*, and anatomical body parts, such as the endocrine glands (see epigraph). In other words, he argues that yoga is comparable to physiology insofar as there are correspondences between the subtle and physical bodies. By means of the yogic manipulation of subtle energies, the practitioner brings about physiological effects in the body, which have consequences for health.

Yet before evaluating this “comparative point of view” in the explication of *preksha*, I want to point out that even in Mahaprajna and his monastic disciples’ most forthright attempts to appropriate scientific discourse to argue for the physiological function of *preksha*, they never completely abandon a concern with spiritual development, and consistently assert that, for the advanced yogic adept, the physical body and its health are means, not ends in themselves. Whereas science is believed to have its limits insofar as it can only measure processes in the physical body, *preksha* is believed to result in the manipulation of both the physical body and the subtle body, as

⁵ Ibid., 50.

well as the achievement of the realization of the soul. Thus although physiology and yoga are comparable in the discourse on health, *preksha* makes unique contributions insofar as it is also a “spiritual science.”⁶

Mahaprajna describes the physiological function of yoga:

Spirituality’s [*adhyatma*] entire path is a process of transmutation [*rupantaran*]... Devout austerity, devout yoga, and devout *dhyana*: [each is] a process of internal chemical-transformation [*parivartan*]. Missing a meal, fasting, seclusion, fasting for five days, fasting for eight days: the practice of all of these external austerities brings about transformations in the internal chemicals of the body. By means of *asana*, *pranayama* and [other] yogic practices chemical transformations occur... What is the biggest source of all chemical transformations – *dhyana*. By means of perception of *chaitanya kendras* and meditation on *leshya* internal astonishing transformations in chemistry occur...⁷

He goes on to explain how such chemical transformations are possible and, in this way, articulates the relationship between yoga’s physiological function and its spiritual one. By means of yogic techniques (such as fasting, *asana*, and especially meditation), the practitioner reverses the causal relationship between karma and physiology. Mahaprajna believes that, under normal conditions, karma has a causal relationship with physiology, whereby karma is the causal mechanism, through a process of color radiation. As described in Chapter Two, *leshya* is a particular color that is produced by karma. There are many *leshyas* and each is associated with a particular *kendra* that is either auspicious or inauspicious. By meditating upon auspicious *leshyas* (and their concomitant *kendras*), the practitioner avoids the negative state of mind associated with inauspicious *leshyas*

⁶ Lay and monastic proponents of *preksha* often refer to *preksha* in this way.

⁷ Mahaprajna, *Prekshadhyanā: Siddhanta aur prayoga*, (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 2009 [original publication date unknown]), 75. This is my translation of the Hindi language text. The transliteration of the Hindi is as follows: *Adhyatma ka samuca marga rupantaran ki prakriya hai... Tap ki samuci prakriya, yoga ki samuci prakriya aur dhyana ki samuci prakriya antarik rasayan-parivartan ki prakriya hai. Ayambil, upavas, ekantar, panc din ka upavas, at din ka upavas – ye sare bahya tap ke prayoga sharir ke bhitari rasayanon men parivartan late hain. Asan, pranayama aur yaugik kriyaon ke dvara rasayanik parivartan ghoti hota hai... Kintu rasayanik parivartan ka sabse bari sutra hai – dhyana. Chaitanya-kendron ke dhyana aur leshya-dhyana ke dvara bhitari rasayanon men ashcharyajanak parivartan hota hai.*

that result from karma. In this way, *leshya dhyana* or “meditation on *leshya*” is a ritual process whereby the practitioner transmutes inauspicious emotions and desires into auspicious ones by means of the visual and meditative steps described in Chapter Two.

Leshya, however, functions physiologically as well. Mahaprajna asserts that the path to spiritual “transmutation” is through chemical “transformation.” What this means is that there exists a physiological component of meditation that is responsible for linking *leshya* to the emotive state. That component is the endocrine system (*granthi tantra*).⁸ Karma produces *leshya*, which stimulates the release of certain chemicals or hormones by means of the endocrine glands. Different *leshyas* stimulate different hormones, which result in different emotive states. However, meditation upon auspicious *leshyas* produces radiations that are opposite to those produced by karma.⁹ Consequently, different hormones are released by the endocrine system (I will return to the means by which *leshya* affects the endocrine glands below). The practitioner thus neutralizes the malevolent effects of karma and brings about an auspicious state of mind. As articulated by Samani Vishubh Pragma, *preksha* does not “burn” karma, rather “*preksha* neutralizes our karmas.”¹⁰ Thus the consequent transmutation of the emotive state has results that are relevant to “spirituality.” When the practitioner is no longer distracted by inauspicious emotions and desires, she can more easily perceive the Self, hence the spiritual function of *preksha*.

Thus the monastic agenda, which aims toward transcendence of the body and perception of the Self, is the final goal of *preksha* despite the mimesis of physiology and

⁸ The literal translation of *granthi tantra* is “gland system,” but this is used in Hindi to refer to the endocrine system.

⁹ Mahaprajna, *Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 75-76.

¹⁰ Samani Vishubh Pragma, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 23, 2009.

metaphysics. Mahaprajna maintains a classical Jain dualist ontology, which equates truth with the realization of the Self, which is pure soul. There exists a tension, however, insofar as much of the emphasis in the explication of *preksha* is on its medical function insofar as the chemical changes in the body that result from yogic techniques are believed to result in a more healthy physical state, which I will elaborate upon below. In order to resolve the tension between *preksha* as a physiotherapeutic practice and *preksha* as an ascetic practice, proponents of *preksha* maintain that it is necessary to achieve bodily health in order to more easily perceive dualist reality. Thus, even though they prescribe this physiotherapeutic practice, for the advanced adept, the physiological function is simply a means to transcendence of the body. In other words, the body is a means to bodylessness.

In the ritual process of *preksha*, there are layers through which the practitioner must penetrate before she can perceive the soul: breath, body, chemical changes in the body, neurological processes in the body, and the subtle body. As we saw in Chapter Two, the physical body and the subtle body are gateways to awareness of the soul. The mimesis of metaphysics and physiology adds a new dimension to this phenomenon: the physical body's health is intimately tied to its ability to function as a gateway to the soul, and the yogic techniques for the manipulation of the subtle body bring the physical body into a state of health.

However, insofar as *preksha* is medicalized and given physiological function by means of scientific discourse, it is antagonistic to the *lokottara*. For the concern is not with spiritual release from the body but with physical healing, which falls within the *laukika* or worldly realm of values. Bikshu articulated a strict boundary between these

two realms of value and at no point allowed for the *laukika* to function as a means to the *lokottara*. Furthermore, Mahaprajna may maintain that ultimately the body and soul are radically distinct, and the yogic adept knows this to be the case, but his explication of *preksha* as well as that of his disciples are laden with scientific discourse in reference to the subtle body itself, which in turn affects both spiritual development and the health of the body. This is tied to his comparative perspective, which identifies correspondences between the subtle and physical bodies.

For example, as described in Chapter Two, *preksha* is based on a classical yogic understanding, alike to that of *hatha yoga*, of the structure of the subtle body, which is composed of *nadis*, *chakras/kendras*, and *prana*. The *sushumna* is the central *nadi* that runs along the spinal column and is surrounded by two additional *nadis*: *ida*, which is located on the left side of the spinal column; and *pingala*, which is on the right. *Ida* carries cold *prana* whereas *pingala* carries hot *prana*, and thus the two *nadis* must be in balance in order for *prana* to flow properly through the *sushumna*. However, this metaphysical understanding of the subtle body is coupled with a physiological understanding. Thus Mahaprajna gives explicit physiological function to the subtle body when he argues that *ida* is also responsible for activating the parasympathetic system whereas *pingala* activates the sympathetic system.¹¹ In order to achieve a state of health, such physiological systems must also be in balance.

On one level, there is an analogy reinforced throughout the explication of *preksha*: medical science is to *preksha* what the physical body is to the subtle body. Thus

¹¹ Mahaprajna, *Prekshadhyana: Sharir preksha. Jivan-Vijnan Granthmala* [Science of Living Series] 7 (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 2000), 16. This is my translation of the Hindi-language text. For this point in the English-language text, see Mahaprajna, *Preksha Dhyana: Perception of Body*, Science of Living Series 5, trans. Muni Mahendra Kumar and Jethalal S. Zaveri, (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 2003), 17.

medical science treats the physical body, and *preksha* treats the subtle body. Proponents of *preksha* imply such an analogy in their criticisms of bio-medicine as limited insofar as it “only” treats the physical body.¹² Yet *preksha* is also believed to physiotherapeutically treat the physical body in ways that are scientifically confirmable. Based on the Jain ontological duality between matter and soul, the subtle body belongs in the category of matter. Because it is material, its relationship to the physical body is direct and occurs by means of a material force, *leshya*.

It is also, however, by means of the manipulation of the subtle and physical bodies that the practitioner achieves transcendent states in which she realizes that the true Self is distinct from matter. This occurs by means of increasingly purifying consciousness, a constituent of the soul in its pure form and of the subtle body in its polluted form, of karmic effects. Thus the practitioner of *preksha* digs beneath layers of the subtle and physical bodies and finds the soul. This is what Alter refers to in the above epigraph: finding the transcendent truth *in* the body. The yogi looks into the body and travels through numerous doors by means of the movement of consciousness in search of the Self. Truth transcends matter and yet can be located in it.

The Endocrine System

In the work on modern yoga by K.S. Joshi, Alter finds,

... the bliss of transcendental consciousness – *cittavrittinirodha* – is materialized in the endocrine glands to produce better human beings. It is the embodiment of bliss that matters. And so the nerves and endocrine glands must be understood by means of science and improved through the technology of Yoga so as to fuse knowledge and power in the gross function of subtle anatomy.¹³

¹² Repeated personal communications.

¹³ Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*, 105. “*Cittavrittinirodha*” means “the stopping of mental processes.”

We also find this appeal to the endocrine system as the link between the physical and subtle bodies in Mahaprajna's construction of *preksha*. Mahaprajna maintains that the endocrine glands in conjunction with *leshya* function as mediators of the subtle and physical bodies. In other words, the endocrine system gives the subtle body physiological function.¹⁴ Thus Mahaprajna takes the subtle body of yoga and, by means of the scientific medical categories of "endocrine system," "hormones," and "nerves," gives them physiological function. He outlines the associations between the endocrine glands of the physical body and the *chaitanya kendras* of the subtle body:

<u>Endocrines</u>	<u>Chaitanya-Kendras (Psychic Centers)</u>
Pineal	<i>Jyoti-kendra</i> (Center of Enlightenment)
Pituitary	<i>Darshana-kendra</i> (Center of Intuition)
Thyroids	<i>Vishuddhi-kendra</i> (Center of Purity)
Thymus	<i>Ananda-kendra</i> (Center of Bliss)
Adrenals	<i>Tajasa-kendra</i> (Center of Bio-Electricity)
Gonads	<i>Svasthya-kendra</i> (Center of General Health), and <i>Shakti-kendra</i> (Center of Energy) ¹⁵

As mentioned above, the mechanism through which the *kendras* of the subtle body acquire physiological function is *leshya*.¹⁶ Mahaprajna and his disciples thus invoke the scientific discourse of the physics of color to explain the relationship. As discussed in Chapter Two, *leshya* is produced by the subtle vibrations of karma and becomes concentrated in different parts of the subtle body depending on the type of karma that produced it, hence each *kendra's* association with a particular *leshya*. According to

¹⁴ Mahaprajna, *Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 11. For this point in the English-language version of the text, see Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 10.

¹⁵ Mahaprajna, *Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 87. This is my translation of the Hindi-language text. For this point in the English language text, see Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 86.

¹⁶ Mahaprajna, *Siddhanta aur Prayoga*, 16-20.

Mahaprajna, such vibrations affect the physical body by means of the color waves of *leshya*, which produce colors linked to particular emotions and desires.¹⁷

In short, karma-produced *leshya* or “color” functions as the intermediary force between the subtle and physical bodies in the same way that the visual perception of a particular color, via color waves, might stimulate a particular mood in a person. Just as color waves affect visual perception (and potentially, stimulation), they also affect the endocrines. Upon stimulation of the endocrine glands by color waves, they release hormones, and those hormones enter the bloodstream and interact with the brain and nervous system. The neuro-endocrine system is then responsible for the production of a particular emotive state of mind. Such emotive states have physiological effects. Anger or anxiety, for example, may lead to an increased heart rate. Such physiological effects may then result in particular diseases, such as heart disease.

I propose that we find in the construction of *preksha* a qualified biological determinism. It is biologically deterministic insofar as those parts of the body responsible for bio-chemistry determine one’s physical and psychological states, thus determining whether or not one is capable of concentrating on the perception of the Self, which is necessary for spiritual transformation. Furthermore, because one’s bio-chemistry determines one’s psychological state, it also determines one’s physical state, since most diseases, according to Mahaprajna and his disciples, are psychosomatic.

His biological determinism, however, is a qualified one. The hormones secreted by the endocrine system depend on the process whereby *leshya*, which is a product of karma, stimulates the subtle body. And, according to Mahaprajna, *preksha* provides the process through which the individual can manipulate this mechanism and consequently

¹⁷ Ibid., 17. For this point in the English language text, see Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 17.

“neutralize” the force of karma by altering the hormones secreted and thus bring about psychological and physical health. As articulated by Samani Vishubh Pragma:

Emotions have frequencies like colors. Emotions have colors. *Leshya* disturbs the endocrine system, which causes emotion... Only when the cap is open, the water comes out. We express emotions only if we choose. We can eliminate our emotions through penance meditation, and yoga.¹⁸

Preksha provides the necessary agency for manipulating the practitioner’s otherwise biologically determined physical and psychological states. Only when the practitioner achieves control in this way can she make progress toward the perception of the Self.

For most living beings, the force of karma produces a negative and deluding psychological state of mind by producing an imbalanced and unregulated endocrine system. The physical result is ill health. Because *preksha* is believed to be the necessary tool for controlling this process, its prescription as a means to health includes a critical view toward bio-medicine.¹⁹ *Preksha*, according to its proponents, is the only truly effective way of attaining hormonal equilibrium in the body because it provides a permanent bio-chemical transformation, which they argue is not possible using drugs prescribed in the bio-medical context.²⁰ Proponents maintain that *preksha* appropriates the discourse of endocrinology but, in contrast to endocrinology, *preksha* provides the guidelines and techniques for “harmonizing” the endocrine system.²¹ Those yogic

¹⁸ Samani Vishubh Pragma, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 23, 2009.

¹⁹ The extent of the Terapanth’s criticism of bio-medicine is wide-ranging, however, for the *samanis*, *munis*, and *sadhvis*, bio-medical treatment of illness is strongly discouraged. In fact, Samani Madhur Pragma provided a case study of such an attitude toward bio-medicine when she told me about a Terapanthi monastic, Sadhvi Vishuddha Prabha, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008. She underwent severe suffering leading up to her death from cancer, and Mahaprajna even gave her permission to take pain medication, but she refused and insisted on using meditation instead as her only means of coping with the pain. Personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 25, 2009.

²⁰ Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, trans. R.K. Seth (New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers, 2006), 29, 95, 141. The *samanis* teaching *preksha* at the JVB centers in Britain and the United States also repeatedly made this assertion in our conversations on *preksha*’s physiological effects.

²¹ Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 66.

techniques, in turn, are believed to make it possible for the practitioner to alter her physiological, psychological, and spiritual states.

Preksha as Physical Yoga: Asana and Pranayama

Meditation on *leshya* is believed to be the primary technique through which *preksha* improves health by balancing and regulating the secretions of the endocrine glands. Yet other techniques are essential as well. There are several techniques, many of which are shared with classical and modern schools of yoga, such as *asana*, *pranayama*, *mantra*, and *mudra*, all of which become somaticized in the context of *preksha* in a way that invokes bio-medical physiological discourse.

Proponents claim that one important way in which *asana* improves health is that it makes the backbone flexible. In this way, it enhances the meditative process and thus the perception of the Self by allowing the practitioner to sit in meditation for longer periods of time without the distraction of physical discomfort. Whereas the context of its popular dissemination is characterized by a concern with *asana* as a fitness routine, which I will discuss further in Chapter Four, the monastic context is characterized by a concern with *asana* as a means of enhancing meditation. In the monastic context of Ladnun, I had many interviews with Samani Madhur Pragya, the current *niyojika* (chief *samani*) and one of the first six *samanis* initiated into the order in 1980, and asked her about the role of *asana* in *preksha*. She repeatedly asserted that *asana* is primarily for the sake of enhancing meditation:

[At yoga centers] intentions are different and here intentions are different. Maybe there people are going only for the fitness of the body. But here maybe people can do it for that purpose but the main purpose/objective is to make our muscles

flexible and get the body in condition so that it helps with meditation because without a good condition of body you can't meditate properly.²²

Her emphasis on meditation as the primary aspect of *sadhana* was so strong that she even de-emphasized the role of austerities for the sake of penance: "Penance is about the body, *asana* is about the body, but meditation is for the soul. Penance and *asana* improve meditation."²³ Although the extent to which most monastic Terapanthis de-emphasized ascetic penances was minimal, the emphasis on *asana* as a means to meditation was the consensus.

The argument that *asana* is a means to better meditation is elaborated upon by those proponents concerned with the "scientific grounding" of *preksha*. According to Mahaprajna and the *samanis* who expressed such interests, *asana* also enhances one's ability to manipulate the subtle body and thus control the secretions of the endocrine glands.²⁴ With regard to the manipulation of subtle energy, the backbone is a particularly important part of the yogi's physiology because it is believed to support the *sushumna*, the central *nadi* for the flow of subtle energy throughout the *kendras*. And because the *kendras* are the locations at which the subtle body affects the physical body by means of *leshya*'s stimulation of the endocrine glands, *asana* is important for both subtle and physiological transformations.

Mahaprajna elaborates on the need for the scientific study of *asana*:

If we depend on ancient medical literature to understand Mahavira's *sadhana* of health, it is necessary at the same time to develop new *asanas*. In this context, a great deal of development has taken place in *Hathayoga* (sic) which recommends the particular *asanas* for particular diseases. It can recommend a particular *asana*

²² Samani Madhur Pragya, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 22, 2009.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The *samanis* who especially expressed such concerns were all actively involved in the study or dissemination of *preksha*: Samanis Vishubh Pragya, Samani Akshay Vinay Pragya, and Samani Rohit Pragya.

in the case of heart disease. Today it is not believed that a heart patient should not do the *asanas*. On the contrary, it is said that a heart patient should do particular types of *asanas*. A diabetic patient should do certain *asanas*. There is a list of the particular *asanas* to be practiced in case of particular diseases. It is being actually done in practice. From this point of view, we should make a serious study of the *asanas*. We should find out their function not on the basis of the ancient treatises, but also in the context of the (sic) modern physiology. How do these *asanas* act? What are the results? If we study both the ancient and the modern concept on the basis of all these things we can develop new *asanas* even today.²⁵

Furthermore, in the yoga classes taught by the *samanis* at the JVB centers in London and Houston, the *samanis* often accompany each performance of an *asana* with an explanation of what physiological benefits result from that particular *asana*. Such benefits go beyond increased flexibility and strength. Instead, because *asana* is believed to bring about the increase or decrease of subtle energy in different parts of the body, and that subtle energy then stimulates the release of beneficial hormones in the physical body, *asana* is believed to prevent or treat specific diseases. For example, one pose may be especially apt for people with diabetes, whereas others are suggested for those with heart disease. Thus, what Mahaprajna refers to above as taking place in *hatha yoga* has entered into the discourse on *preksha*. *Asana* is prescribed for health, and science provides the discourse for the medicalization of yoga.

In addition to prescribing *asana* for the sake of health, Mahaprajna also emphasizes the importance of *pranayama*. This resembles the somaticization of *prana* characteristic of Vivekananda's explications on yoga. Vivekananda argues:

Sometimes in your own body the supply of Prana gravitates more or less to one part; the balance is disturbed, and when the balance of Prana is disturbed, what we call disease is produced. To take away the superfluous Prana, or to supply the Prana that is wanting, will be curing the disease. That again is Pranayama – to learn when there is more or less Prana in one part of the body than there should be. The feelings will become so subtle that the mind will feel that there is less

²⁵ Mahaprajna, *Lord Mahavira's Scripture of Health*, 2nd ed., ed. Muni Dulah Raj and Muni Dhananjaya Kumar, trans. Sarla Jag Mohan (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 2001), 116.

Prana in the toe or the finger than there should be, and will possess the power to supply it.²⁶

In response to this passage, Elizabeth de Michelis points out, “A complete materialization of the concept of *prana* is evident in this passage: *prana* is stated to be an altogether material, perceivable substance, responding to physical laws (albeit ‘subtle’ ones) in controllable fashion.”²⁷ In this way, Vivekananda represents a general tendency of practitioners of modern yoga to see *pranayama* as a “healing technique.”²⁸ Mahaprajna and his disciples also consistently prescribe *pranayama* as a technique for achieving equilibrium of the autonomic nervous system: the sympathetic and parasympathetic subsystems. Since respiration is a component of the autonomic nervous system that can potentially come under some level of conscious control, *pranayama* is believed to function as a means to control the unconscious effects of the autonomic nervous system, such as heart rate, digestion, and sexual stimulation.²⁹

In the ways that Mahaprajna and the *samanis* who disseminate his teachings attribute physiological function to such yogic practices by using scientific discourse, they prescribe *preksha* in a way that is consistent with modern yoga generally but fits especially well in de Michelis’ “Modern Postural Yoga” type. As we will see in the next chapter, the transition from “Modern Denominational Yoga” and “Modern Meditational Yoga” toward “Modern Postural Yoga” where the emphasis is almost entirely on physical practice is increasingly complete in the context of the *samanis*’ yoga classes outside of India.

²⁶ Vivekananda, *Raja Yoga*, in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 1, ed. Vivekananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1995. First published 1896), 155-6.

²⁷ Elizabeth de Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 164.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

²⁹ Repeated personal communications.

Scientific Discourse as Adaptive Strategy

As mentioned above, according to its monastic proponents, realization of the Self as pure soul remains the ultimate goal of *preksha* despite its concern with physical health. Thus, even though we find the recurrent mimesis of metaphysics and physiology in the construction of *preksha*, the Terapanth's concern with the physical body and health does not loosen its grip on a classic Jain soteriology. Rather, I argue that the mimesis described above is a pragmatic step toward adaptation to the increasingly global turn to science as the preeminent paradigm for understanding the physical body. For this reason, the soteriological aim of *preksha*, as discussed in Chapter Two, is marginal to its physical benefits in the *samanis*' popular dissemination. The *samanis* teach *preksha* at the JVB centers outside of India and, at these locations, the focus is on Mahaprajna's explication of *preksha* as a physiotherapeutic practice, not as a spiritual one. The focus is primarily on *preksha*'s perceived ability to enhance physical flexibility, balance the autonomic nervous system, and achieve hormonal equilibrium and thus enhance health by means of *asana* and *pranayama*. In this way, *preksha* resembles other schools of modern yoga, particularly those in the category of Modern Postural Yoga.

Modern Postural Yoga has permeated that part of the transnational yoga market concerned with health and fitness. In the contexts of India, the United States, and Europe, from suburbia street-corner yoga studios to sporting goods stores and health foods markets, yoga holds a steady place in the transnational popular culture. Alter argues that the market provides a somaticized yoga that is "populist and plebian."³⁰ In other words, the concern with the body's health and well-being permeates popular culture, and consequently the yoga market provides products to meet the demands of such concerns.

³⁰ Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*, 8.

A physiological discourse emerges in the market whereby the benefits of yoga for health and well-being receive scientific legitimation. Consequently, in the late twentieth century market, modern yoga became popularized and celebrated as a scientifically legitimated path to health.³¹ Mahaprajna himself discusses this process whereby yoga has become a global “sport,” exported from India to the Western world and then re-imported back into India.³² We outlined the historical process by which this exchange and encounter occurred in the Introduction, so I will not repeat it here, but it is essential to remember that there occurred a gradual and global increase in the popular interest in transnational forms of yoga as a physical practice.

Preksha, in its popular dissemination, is a physical practice. And it is for the sake of marketing it as such that Mahaprajna himself refers to the scientific discourse on *preksha* as “comparative” (see epigraph). One can compare, in his view, yoga to science by invoking a shared vocabulary. By giving metaphysical processes physiological function by means of *leshya*, Mahaprajna makes yoga relevant to anyone concerned about health: we all have bodies, we all have endocrine glands. In line with the growing transnational interest in yoga as a means to health, *preksha* is proposed as a system compatible with the medical concerns of popular culture. As a physiological therapy, *preksha* is prescribed for all, and people are called to attend *preksha* classes in order to achieve physical health while a concern with “Jain spirituality” is not “necessary.”³³ I will return to the non-sectarian orientation of proponents of *preksha* and the ways in

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, 108. And in fact, the analysis of yoga as a sport is highly controversial in European and North American countries. In the United Kingdom, the government organization, UK Sport, regulates yoga, and similar moves are occurring in the United States toward state-mandated regulations of yoga. There are movements to resist such regulatory sanctions on the part of those who argue that, even though yoga classes most often emphasize physical practice, they also have a spiritual component. See Chapter Five, note 86.

³³ Repeated personal communications.

which *preksha* is taught as a physiotherapeutic practice in its popular dissemination in Chapter Four. I will also discuss the socio-economic variables relevant to the emergence of *preksha* as a physiotherapeutic practice in Chapter Five.

Modern Metaphysical Appropriations of Science

In the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the Jain appropriation of scientific discourse to talk about religious practice has not been limited to Mahaprajna and his disciples nor to the context of modern yoga. A recurrent theme, for instance, in the contemporary writings of Jain teachers is that classical Jain dietary practices are grounded in scientific fact and are scientifically proven to lead to better health.

For example, traditionally, Jains are prohibited from eating after sunset because of the vow of *ahimsa*. In the dark, living beings may fall into one's food without one knowing it, and thus one will eat them. Furthermore, lighting a fire to cook food in the dark attracts insects that will then be destroyed in the fire's flames. Many present-day Jains from numerous backgrounds and sectarian affiliations have reinterpreted such a cultural practice. I have been told over and over again by such Jains that the prohibition against eating after dark is linked to health. Because the body is believed to digest food more easily when one is awake and moving about, one should eat at least three or four hours before going to sleep. For this health reason, Jains argue, one should not eat after dark.

Likewise, Mahaprajna reinterprets classical cultural dietary practices as being linked to health. He does not just prescribe *asana* and *pranayama* but also vegetarianism for the sake of health. In classical Jain practice, vegetarianism is practiced for the sake of

ahimsa. This is also the case for Mahaprajna, however, he adds that meat eating is a major cause of disease because it increases salt intake and de-stabilizes body chemistry.³⁴ Many contemporary Jain thinkers believe that Mahavira was aware of such health benefits of Jain practices and that he foretold the reality of microscopic life, the theory of evolution, and the theory of relativity.

One Jain scholar, Mahaveer Raj Gelra, who has worked closely with Mahaprajna argues:

Jain scriptures have provided a classical knowledge not only of life and consciousness but also of the external world. The description of the cosmos, dimension of space, transition of soul during transmigration. (sic) existence of black holes, form, structure and dynamics of matter (Pudgala) are available in the scriptures. The elaborate description of the medium of motion, medium of rest, concept of space and time, and special reference of directions has put Jainism on a sound scientific footing.³⁵

Gelra maintains that ancient Jain thinkers developed sophisticated ideas in the domain of science because of their interest in explicating the nature of karma, which is considered a constituent of matter in Jain thought. Gelra argues that, by means of their research into this form of matter, Jain thinkers developed numerous theories on the nature of the cosmos that today align with discoveries in modern science. In line with this appeal to the “scientific footing” of Jain thought, Mahaprajna maintains that the spiritual science he proposes is not just an exploration of religion, but also of nature itself.³⁶ In other words, spiritual science encapsulates natural science.

³⁴ Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, 25.

³⁵ M.R. Gelra, *Science in Jainism: Perspectives, Issues, and Futuristic Trends* (Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, 2002), 6.

³⁶ Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, 40.

Mahaprajna attributes what he considers to be *preksha*'s scientifically legitimated contributions to health to Mahavira himself and thus asserts that the system is original to Jain thought:

Thinking from the point of view of Mahavira's theory of health, we cannot minimize the importance of these questions. Mahavira did not prescribe the *asanas* merely from the point of view of *sadhana*. He did it also from the point of view of health. Mahavira repeatedly says that it is always best to do *asanas*, they are meant to be practiced at all times. This means that it includes the points of view both of health and *sadhana*.³⁷

Although Jains generally do not attribute a systematic approach to yoga as an important part of Mahavira's *sadhana* and instead emphasize his severe austerities, Terapanthis maintain their *acharya*'s teachings that Mahavira did have a systematic approach to yoga, but it was lost over time. Among the many *samanis* who have told me that Mahavira practiced the same techniques involved in *preksha*, Samani Madhur Pragya was most insistent. She stressed the importance of meditation to Mahavira: "Mahavira spent a lot of time meditating and emphasized it *more* than penances. After Mahavira's death, the focus on meditation was forgotten and more focus was placed on penances."³⁸ Other Jain Terapanthi lay individuals, such as Gelra, agree that *preksha* was part of Mahavira's practice and teachings. Gelra refers to the "three-dimensional" program implemented by Tulsi and Mahaprajna of the Jain Terapanth: the Anuvrat Movement, *preksha*, and the science of living (teachings on the moral and spiritual life) and argues that this program is "fundamentally a derivative of the Jain Philosophy propounded scientifically over 2000 years ago by Lord Mahavira."³⁹

³⁷ Mahaprajna, *Lord Mahavira's Scripture*, 117.

³⁸ Samani Madhur Pragya, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 21, 2009.

³⁹ Gelra, *Science in Jainism*, 25.

According to Mahaprajna, a system of thought is legitimate insofar as it relies on an empirical epistemology. One's goal is to directly perceive the soul, but in order to do that, one must first pass through a number of doors within the physical body and the subtle body. *Preksha* is the empirical process by means of which one travels through those doors. It is concerned with attaining the mystical experience of “*what is*,” “the real.”⁴⁰ But this empirical aspect of *preksha* is also what makes it scientific. Mahaprajna believes that ancient Indian “ascetic-scientists” were empiricists, but that over time this method was lost, and so philosophers turned to reason and logic instead.⁴¹ He maintains that, in “the West,” thinkers depended on empirical observation and experimentation and developed sophisticated technology to obtain “knowledge of supra-sensible substances and elements,” but this functioned as a “substitute” for “transcendental knowledge” instead of working in conjunction with it.⁴² *Preksha*, on the other hand, is a return to the method of the ancient “ascetic-scientists” who, according to Mahaprajna, combined the quest for transcendence with scientific empiricism. Through *preksha*, one acquires knowledge of “the real” on all levels – physical, subtle, and spiritual – along with their various relationships to one another.

Mahaprajna considers his prescriptions for health and spirituality to be in line with past, present, and future advances in science. And in fact, a quote attributed to Albert Einstein predicts that the religion of the future will look much like Mahaprajna's description of *preksha*: it will be universal, will lack any notion of a personal God who creates, rewards, and punishes, will be non-dogmatic, will harmoniously unite the spiritual and the natural, will be based on experience, and will be compatible with

⁴⁰ Mahaprajna, *Lord Mahavira's Scripture*, 122.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 126.

science. The passage goes on to say that the religion most capable of fulfilling such a model is Buddhism. But Mahaprajna would disagree. Mahaprajna's construction of *preksha* frames it in a way that fulfills all of these characteristics, and he argues that *preksha* techniques provide the universal method for attaining knowledge of the "real," in terms of both the spiritual and the natural.

Of course, as demonstrated by Donald Lopez, there is no evidence that Einstein himself actually made such a statement.⁴³ Rather, the significant historical point is that it is attributed to him, the great sage of the post-Enlightenment world. For, in attributing such words to Einstein, those seeking a "universal" religion can appeal to the modern sage for those legitimating characteristics necessary for any religion to succeed in the modern world where the preeminent paradigm with regard to understanding the physical body is modern bio-medical science. For this reason, many metaphysical practitioners and teachers, Jain and non-Jain, since the age of the Enlightenment have sought to appropriate science in defense of their metaphysical systems. Mahaprajna is thus one case study of a much larger socio-historical phenomenon.

From Mesmer to Mahaprajna

Another metaphysical thinker who appropriated science in an attempt to legitimize a metaphysical practice in the post-Enlightenment world was Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815). As Catherine Albanese points out, "[Mesmer] had been caught in the paradigm shift from premodern to modern, from the late medieval culture that, among elites, found place for esotericism to the Enlightenment world of rationalism and scientific

⁴³ Lopez, *Buddhism*, 2.

discourse.”⁴⁴ An analysis of Mesmer and his relationship to science provides insight for understanding Mahaprajna insofar as these are not isolated historical figures but can be located along a particular socio-historical trajectory beginning with the Enlightenment and its encounter with metaphysical systems. And as I will demonstrate below, Mesmer and Mahaprajna are not only tangentially related in this way but also have a direct historical connection to one another. Before discussing that connection, I will introduce Mesmer.

Mesmer was a German medical physician working in the late eighteenth century in Vienna when he constructed a form of healing called “animal magnetism.” He believed that a magnetic fluid functions as the basis of all animal life and is necessary for the natural functions of the body. He proposed that this magnetic fluid flows throughout channels in the body, and illness is the result of its obstruction. Mesmer referred to this magnetic fluid as animal magnetism, and his healing therapy involved the manipulation of the flow of animal magnetism in the bodies of his patients. The animal magnetism would be transmitted from him, the animal magnetist, to them, the patients. The conductor of animal magnetism could restore the flow of vital fluid and consequently return the body to harmony and bring about a healthy state. Mesmer thought of animal magnetism as a natural force that requires a certain balance as established by nature itself. According to his understanding, healing requires not medical intervention by means of external tools or drugs, but the natural manipulation of ever-present energies within the body. In other words, like Mahaprajna, Mesmer prescribed a system of medicine that was internal, not external. Mesmer argued, “Nature provides a universal means of healing and

⁴⁴ Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind & Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 192.

preserving men.”⁴⁵ Thus animal magnetism was the natural internal agent for bringing the body to a state of health.

Mesmer maintained that this fluid was a constituent of matter and that its existence and function with regard to health and illness could be proved by science.

Adam Crabtree describes the therapeutic setting in which Mesmer himself claimed the effects of the manipulation of animal magnetism were evident:

The physician, like the healers of old, would lay hands on the ill and perform miraculous cures. He could use the magnetism of his own organism to restore the patient’s harmony, lost through illness. But now the ancient technique was backed up not by an occult world view but by a physical theory. Mesmer called for broad scientific experimentation to verify his theory and determine the laws of its function.⁴⁶

Thus Mesmer was convinced that animal magnetism, though subtle, could be discovered and understood by science because it was, in his view, material. Such a position, as argued by Crabtree, was an anti-medical one, since it overtly assumed that the medical establishment had not yet discovered the real cause of illness and disease.⁴⁷ The medical establishment never conceded to Mesmer’s position and maintained that he held some kind of “secret” that explained the mysterious healings that occurred under his care, and yet he desperately fought for their legitimation. Mesmer argued:

Animal magnetism... is not what you call a secret. It is a science, which has principles, consequences, and a doctrine... My object is to obtain from the government a public house to treat patients, where, under the shelter of further discussions, the salutatory effects of animal magnetism could be established.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, those representing the medical establishment maintained that they found no material evidence for the existence of animal magnetism.

⁴⁵ Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 18.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

Mesmer's teachings, however, did not come and go without significant influence. In fact, one of his students, Puysegur, argued that through the process of animal magnetism, one could put a patient into a state of "somnambulism" or "magnetic sleep" in which the patient could experience the flow of vital fluid and healing as well as perceive the source of illness within oneself by means of clairvoyance.⁴⁹ Patients were also sometimes capable of communicating with spirits. In other words, magnetic therapy produced altered states of consciousness. As argued by Crabtree:

Magnetic sleep led directly to the evolution of a new paradigm for understanding the nature of the human psyche and mental disturbance: the alternate-consciousness paradigm... all modern psychological systems that accept the notion of dynamic unconscious mental activity must trace their roots, not to Freud, but to those animal-magnetic practitioners who preceded him by a century.⁵⁰

Thus the influence of Mesmer's thought was widespread and had consequences for major future developments in psychology. Mesmer's thought was also characterized by many similarities to modern yoga, especially with regard to the argument that a material though subtle internal substance (animal magnetism or *prana*) is responsible for both physiological and psychological processes. And, in fact, I believe that Mesmer's thought does not just reflect numerous characteristics of Mahaprajna's explication of *preksha* insofar as both desperately attempt to legitimize their metaphysical systems by means of somaticizing subtle energies that are central to those systems, but that Mesmer also acts as a historical precursor to Mahaprajna.

Although in my conversations with Mahaprajna, I was unsuccessful in my attempt to get him to elaborate on this topic, he did acknowledge his familiarity with Mesmer's

⁴⁹ Ibid., 30.

⁵⁰ Ibid., vii.

thought.⁵¹ I was stirred to ask about Mesmer because of a short passage in an English translation of one of the *acharya's* texts (the passage does not occur in the Hindi language text), in which he attributes to Mesmer considerable credit. Mahaprajna says:

Both man and animal have the instinct to guide them to whatever they need to keep them healthy.

But Man, with the progress of 'civilization', gradually lost that instinct. Somebody, however, in the community did retain enough ability to consult his animal instincts and usually was accepted as the 'healer'. Apart from nature healing: diet, medicinal herbs, bone-setting, minor surgery etc., he also used faith-healing, in which he made the patient to relax and gave suggestion. In all cultures for centuries, faith-healing followed a pattern, but later on faith-healing tended to be left to sorcerers and quacks.

With further progress of civilization, belief in the effectiveness of faith-healing began to dwindle and vanish except among the very credulous and very poor.

Franz Mesmer provides the link between the ancient healing techniques with faith-healing in its various manifestations today.⁵²

The section in which these comments appear is titled "Scientific Basis of Contemplation." Much like Mesmer's argument on behalf of animal magnetism, Mahaprajna argues here that *anupreksha* or "contemplation" (the last stage of *preksha's* ritual process) can be scientifically proven to improve health. Because he links Mesmer to "faith-healing" in which the patient's body attains health by means of the healer's "suggestion," I believe he is referencing magnetic sleep.⁵³ Mahaprajna here aligns magnetic sleep with his own theory of *anupreksha*, and by means of that association, attempts to prove that they are a part of every animal's nature, thus provable by science.

⁵¹ Mahaprajna, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 28, 2009.

⁵² Mahaprajna, *Theory and Practice*, 54. In the Hindi-language text, Mesmer is not mentioned. I suspect that Mahaprajna instructed his close disciples responsible for the text's translation to insert mention of Mesmer into the English language version assuming that, for English speaking readers, "Mesmer" would be a more recognizable name than for Hindi speaking readers.

⁵³ In the Hindi-language text, although Mahaprajna does not mention Mesmer, he does use the English language phrase, "faith-healing."

Mahaprajna's goal, as was Mesmer's, is to prove that he holds the key to igniting those abilities that bring about healing through internal means. Whereas Mesmer prescribed animal magnetism, Mahaprajna seeks to scientifically prove that *preksha* is the tool for manipulating the internal system.

At other places in Mahaprajna's texts, he does not mention Mesmer directly but uses Mesmerian discourse in reference to centers of subtle energy in the body. For example, Mahaprajna says:

There are innumerable control-centres in the body. The brain is the controller, the regulator of them all. The nervous system and the spinal chord (*sushumna*) are the control centres. The man who has experienced the movement of consciousness in his *sushumna*, or in his brain and in various parts of the body... already stands in possession of a great many secrets. There is one control centre in the upper part of the body, one at the back, one each on the right and the left, one in the middle. It is possible to make our body transparent at these five junctions. The whole of our body constitutes a magnetic field. But it is possible to make it more magnetic at these five points. When it is fully magnetic, clairvoyance* is born... Without understanding the body and its control centres, it is not possible to render it fully magnetic, or to make use of the electricity generated by it.⁵⁴

In a note, Mahaprajna defines "clairvoyance" as "extra-sensory perception."⁵⁵ I discussed clairvoyance in Chapter Two and elaborated upon Mahaprajna's conception of it as a state of supernormal knowledge that transcends sensual perception. By means of clairvoyance, Mahaprajna argues that the practitioner of *preksha* can see subtle processes that affect both the state of the body and the soul. Here, he discusses the subtle body as a "magnetic field" that becomes increasingly magnetic when subtle energy becomes concentrated in the upper *kendras*. I suspect that this description depends on his familiarity with Mesmer whose theory is grounded in the idea that the body is "magnetic."

⁵⁴ Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, 15.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Mahaprajna's description of clairvoyance also resembles Mesmer and later animal magnetists' notion of a "sixth sense." Mesmer asserted that there exists a rapport between the magnetist and patient and maintained that the two mutually influence one another.⁵⁶ He referred to this experience of empathy in the magnetizer-patient relationship as the "sixth sense."⁵⁷ Puysegur further developed this notion of the sixth sense in the context of somnambulism. He argued that the somnambulist's sixth sense is activated during magnetic sleep, and that it enables the individual to clairvoyantly perceive the source and cause of illness within herself as well as others. For Puysegur, the sixth sense, like the other senses of the animal body, is "a part of nature" rather than something magical or supernatural.⁵⁸

I could not determine the exact extent of Mahaprajna's familiarity with Mesmer and animal magnetism and thus the extent to which Mesmer directly influenced the development of Mahaprajna's thought. In fact, I am yet to find mention of Mesmer in Mahaprajna's Hindi language texts. Thus, in order to guarantee that mention of this figure is indicative of Mahaprajna's interest in him, and not just that of his close disciples who acted as his translators for the English language texts, I asked Mahaprajna directly about his study of Mesmer. As mentioned above, Mahaprajna confirmed that he had read about Mesmer, was very familiar with his thought, and that Mesmer made important advances in healing that were similar to those accomplished in the construction of *preksha*.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, Mahaprajna did not further comment on his intellectual relationship to Mesmer.

⁵⁶ Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud*, 73.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁹ Mahaprajna, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 28, 2009.

But the significant point about the intellectual relationship between these two figures does not require greater details about their intellectual encounter. The point is that the encounter that occurred between metaphysicians and the scientific paradigm in the modern period was one that resulted in numerous new religious products, many of which attempted to reconcile their creators' metaphysical systems with the scientific paradigm. The creators of such systems themselves recognized this shared agenda and thus at times identified with one another. Mesmer and Mahaprajna and their metaphysical systems of animal magnetism and *preksha*, respectively, demonstrate that that process was not limited to any one tradition, individual, or part of the world but quickly developed into a plural and transnational phenomenon.

Conclusion

Mahaprajna and his construction of *preksha* confirm Alter's argument that modern yoga seeks to "harness prana and make it function as medicine."⁶⁰ Alter argues:

Whether or not it is nonsense, the somaticization of the cakras is made possible by the very structure of yogic logic, a logic (sic) which is not based on simple contrast – duality versus nonduality, immateriality versus materialism. Nor is it made possible by the "commonplace and easy extinction of consciousness." As Eliade points out, the somatization of the cakras occurs on the "plane of paradox."⁶¹

What Mircea Eliade refers to as "paradoxical" in his analysis of Patanjali's classical yoga is the yogi's knowledge of his transcendent Self (*purusha*) while remaining "in life," in

⁶⁰ Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*, 63.

⁶¹ Ibid., 62. Alter cites Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Princeton University, 1990. First published 1958), 94-95.

the physical body. Eliade aptly refers to such beings as the “men-gods” of Indian religiosity who dwell at the point “where the divine and the human coincide.”⁶²

In classical Jain philosophy, the human has the potential to attain Godhood upon release from the material world. Such transcendence is understood literally as a rapid upward movement whereby the soul exits the material universe and enters into the immaterial pure realm of the *siddhas* (*loka-akasha*). According to the *Tattvartha Sutra*, “When all karmic bondage is eliminated, the soul soars upwards to the border of cosmic space.”⁶³ Humans, however, achieve the kind of state referred to by Eliade, that of the “men-gods,” even before achieving release, which can only occur upon death since one must be free of the physical body. While still in the physical body, one can attain *kevala* (literally, “isolation” and used by Jains to refer to those omniscient beings who have achieved perfect knowledge of the isolation of the soul from the body), which according to Padmanabh S. Jaini, “as defined by Jainas is clearly in the realm of the supermundane.”⁶⁴ He describes this state as “complete *self*-knowledge” whereby “all external objects are reflected therein.”⁶⁵ In this state, the *kevalin* directly experiences his true Self, pure soul, free of mind and physical body. The paradox of this state, which is comparable to that referred to by Eliade, is the fact that the *kevalin* attains knowledge of his transcendent Self as pure soul while remaining in a physical body.

This paradoxical transcendent Self as embodied Self finds a unique but related form in modern yoga: the use of modern science, especially physiology, in reference to the manipulation of subtle energies within the body in an attempt to locate and experience

⁶² Eliade, *Yoga*, 95.

⁶³ Umasvati, *Tattvartha Sutra: That Which Is*, with the combined commentaries of Umasvati, Pujoyapada, and Siddhasenaguni, trans. Nathmal Tatia (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994), 10.5; 255.

⁶⁴ Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Jaina Path of Purification* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), 266-67.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 266.

the transcendent Self. In other words, we find a quest within the body for that which transcends the body.

Alter interprets the combination of biology, physiology, and anatomy with metaphysics, transcendence, and magic as modern yoga's "monumental mistake."⁶⁶ I am not concerned with making such an assessment here; rather, my goal is to demonstrate that yoga, like religion itself, is non-stable, ever-adaptive, and never monolithic. In other words, religion changes in response to socio-historical and ideological shifts in the cultural climate. As the governing paradigm of a given culture shifts, religious systems adapt. Following the emergence and development of modern science, many such systems took steps to adapt by appropriating the discourse of science and claiming to have known its truths all along. Terapanthi proponents of *preksha*, in their mimesis of the truth in the body and the transcendence of truth, demonstrate this point succinctly, especially since they continue to shift *preksha*'s orientation as it moves from one spatial and ideological context to another (the monastic context to the quasi-monastic context of the *preksha* camp and finally to the non-monastic context of the weekly yoga class at the JVB centers in Britain and the United States).

Despite the instability and plurality of ancient yoga, modern yoga, and even *preksha* itself, Mahaprajna reifies *preksha* as a stable one characteristic of eternal Jain doctrine and practice. He also argues that *preksha* provides a synthesis between the ancient teachings of "ascetic-scientists" and modern science.⁶⁷ In this way, he embodies what Alter calls "the ironic discontinuity between discourses of origin and the brute fact

⁶⁶ Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*, 36.

⁶⁷ Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, 114.

of transnationalism.”⁶⁸ As yoga moved out from the metaphysical, esoteric, mystical, and ascetic culture of South Asia and into the transnational health and fitness market, it underwent processes of adaptation. As demonstrated above, *preksha* is a case study of this phenomenon. Mahaprajna actively adapts *preksha* in response to transnationalism and the rise of science as a prevailing paradigm for understanding health while maintaining claims to an “original” and “true” yogic form. He achieves this by consciously appropriating the scientific paradigm while claiming that this paradigm is not *new*, but has been *newly* rediscovered.

⁶⁸ Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*, 8.

Chapter Four

Mediators of the Guru: The *Samani* Order and the Western Dissemination of *Preksha*

Acharya shri mahaprajna ko maim tirthankar dev tulya manata bum. (I believe in Acharya Shri Mahaprajna as the equal of the Tirthankara God).
Terapanthi phrase in veneration of the *acharya*

[The *samanis*] serve humanity to achieve good health, peace of mind and divine experience without any barrier of caste, creed, sex, race or faith.
Motto for the JVB centers established by the *samanis*

Thus far I have discussed the ways in which Mahaprajna and his disciples construct and prescribe *preksha* for Terapanthi monastic practitioners as well as for lay individuals regardless of religious or sectarian affiliation. But the question remains as to how the *samanis* function to disseminate *preksha* beyond Terapanthi and Rajasthani circles. Today the Terapanth functions as a Shvetambara Jain sect, but in contrast to other Jain sects, it is currently a proselytizing religious organization, and it depends on the *samanis* to fulfill its missionary agenda. They function under the leadership of Mahaprajna, who appoints them at the time of their initiation into the monastic life. Unlike all other monastics, they are granted permission to travel abroad in order to disseminate Terapanthi Jain ideology and practice. In many ways, the *samanis*' conduct differs from that of fully initiated monastics: they live in buildings constructed or purchased especially for them; they generally do not wear the *muhpatti*; and they establish long-lasting relationships with members of the laity.¹

Because we discussed in detail the short but complex history of the *samani* order in Chapter One, I will review it only briefly here. In 1980, the ninth Terapanthi *acharya*,

¹ Usually, the *samanis* wear the *muhpatti* only while performing their morning and evening prayers.

Tulsi, introduced the order. Such an innovative move was radical for a Jain sect founded in 1760 on a call for reformation, defined by Bikshu not in terms of innovation, but rather in terms of returning monastic practice to the ascetic path of purification that he considered true spiritual practice. And the introduction of the *samani* order was not the first innovation, but was in fact the culmination of numerous innovations preceding it in the Jain Terapanth during the acharyaship of Tulsi between 1936 and 1994, beginning with Tulsi's ecumenical campaign for global peace in response to what he deemed to be a degenerating world plagued by modernity and leading up to the introduction of a Jain form of modern yoga, *preksha*, by his successor, Mahaprajna.²

Because *preksha* was prescribed not just for monastics but also for all Jain and non-Jain lay people as an authentic yogic path to physical health and psychological well-being, representatives were needed to teach *preksha* throughout India and the world. There was a steady demand from abroad, especially from Jain communities in the United States and Europe, for what they considered authentic forms of yoga. The fully-initiated Jain monastics traditionally function as the source of spiritual direction for Jain communities but cannot travel by means of mechanical transportation. Thus Tulsi introduced the *samani* order, an intermediary order of traveling monastics who could disseminate *preksha* to Jains abroad. The hope was that the *samanis* would eventually reach non-Jains, and particularly "Westerners," abroad in their work toward the dissemination of *preksha*. The preliminary step toward this global dissemination, however, was building connections with the Jain diaspora.

² There is a certain irony in the fact that in response to the perceived problems of modernity, Terapanthi members appropriated certain characteristically modern adaptive strategies for the promotion of what they consider the universal benefits of Jain teachings. For more on this topic, see Chapter Five.

Jains living in diaspora communities have always sought to construct and maintain their Jain identities in creative ways. They usually have accomplished this through regularly meeting in each others' homes, building temples in which they install sacred images that have been imported from India where they were consecrated by an adequately qualified Jain representative, and establishing Jain cultural centers that host Jain rituals and rites, offer religious education for adults and children, and maintain contact with lay Jains in India who act as liaisons to monastic leaders.³ And although those are the most common ways in which Jains have constructed and maintained communal identity in diaspora, there are some examples of more radical steps toward that end. For instance, two Jain Shvetambara monks separately abandoned their monastic vows in order to travel to the United States in the 1970s to provide leadership to Jains living abroad as well as to disseminate Jain teachings. Those monks were Chitrabhanu and Sushil Kumar.

Chitrabhanu was a Shvetambara Jain monk who, in 1970, became the first Jain to leave his monastic order and travel to the United States. Accounts of his departure from India to the United States demonstrate that his choice was controversial: "His flight from India was dramatic, and stories describe Jain lay people stretching themselves on the ground in front of the plane to stop his departure from India and from orthodoxy."⁴ Upon his arrival in the United States, Chitrabhanu settled in New York and attracted disciples. He not only gave up the monastic prohibition against mechanical means of transportation,

³ Jains have a long history of sustaining a sense of communal identity in diaspora despite their small numbers. For instance, in Indianapolis, Indiana, the eighth largest city in the United States, there is a network of only twenty-five to thirty Jain families. Even though they are few in number, those families meet every Sunday in one of their homes on a rotating basis. Jain families in diaspora have often sustained a sense of community by meeting in individual homes. Eventually, many such communities grow large enough to finance the building of temples and cultural centers.

⁴ The Pluralism Project at Harvard University, "Authority without Monks," <http://pluralism.org/resources/tradition/essays/jain8.php>.

but also celibacy. He married one of his disciples, with whom he had a child. George Dugan, the author of a 1973 *New York Times* article, “Iconoclastic Jain Leader Is Likened to Pope John,” interviewed Chitrabhanu and described him as follows: “The Jain leader combines his ascetic mysticism with a vigorous worldly life.”⁵ He received a lot of attention from Jains living in the United States, Euro-Americans pursuing truth in Asian religions, and the media. Chitrabhanu taught a “non-sectarian” doctrine, informed largely by Jain ideology and practice. His focus was on the benefits of meditation. Although a sex scandal involving Chitrabhanu erupted in 1981 and caused major controversy amongst his disciples, his Jain Meditation International Center in New York City survived, and he and his disciples continue to teach there to the present day.⁶ Chitrabhanu continues to focus on meditation, but many of his disciples teach yoga as well.⁷

Sushil Kumar, a Shvetambara Sthanakvasi monk, also did away with the rules prohibiting monastics from traveling by means of mechanical transportation and went to the United States in 1975. Unlike Chitrabhanu, he maintained his claim to a monastic identity, despite criticism by some Jains who argued that he could not possibly maintain that identity since he broke traditional monastic rules and actively participated in the world of material concerns. Kumar preached what he considered to be a “non-sectarian” message to the Jain and Hindu diaspora. Kumar even synthesized Jain ideas with Hindu yogic practice and established a temple and retreat center in Blairstown, New Jersey.⁸ He

⁵ George Dugan, “Iconoclastic Jain Leader is Likened to Pope John,” *New York Times*, December 18, 1973: 46.

⁶ On the sex scandal involving Chitrabhanu, see Carrie Schneider, *American Yoga: The Paths and Practices of America’s Greatest Yoga Masters*, photography by Andy Ryan (New York: Silver Lining Books, 2003), 39; for more on the events and organization of the Jain Meditation International Center, see Jain Meditation International Center, website at www.jainmeditation.org.

⁷ Y.D. Jordan (disciple of Chitrabhanu), personal email communication, February 24, 2010.

⁸ The center, Siddhachalam Jain Tirth, established by Sushil in 1983 in Blairstown, New Jersey, is still active today.

prescribed what he called “Arhum Yoga,” which, like *preksha*, synthesized aspects of *raja yoga* and *hatha yoga* with Jain ideology. In particular, he emphasized the importance of mantra in yogic practice. He attracted relatively few devoted followers but received “guarded approval” from many Jains in India.⁹

Both Chitrabhanu and Kumar were reformists and innovators with regard to delivering Jain thought to “the West.” And, in fact, they were quite successful in their separate attempts. Especially in the 1980s and 1990s, they became popular guru figures amongst Jains living in the United States. They were often honorary guests at Jain diaspora and inter-religious events, and Jains living in diaspora and in India were familiar with their proselytizing attempts. But despite the proselytizing successes of Chitrabhanu and Kumar, the Terapanth did not follow their lead.

By comprising the strict Jain monastic prohibitions against mechanical travel and prolonged engagement with the laity, Chitrabhanu and Kumar crossed the boundary between ascetic and worldly values, but they both considered their choices to be acts of adaptation to current socio-historical circumstances. According to the above mentioned article in the *New York Times*, “[Chitrabhanu] asserted that social conventions were created ‘in the perspectives of a certain time and some are no longer applicable.’”¹⁰ Although Mahaprajna and his disciples consider the introduction of the *samani* order as an act of adaptation or, in their common way of putting it, “moving with the times,” they consider the monastic rules of fully initiated *munis* and *sadhvis* as necessary without compromise.¹¹ The Terapanth would not allow its fully initiated *sadhvis* or *munis* to

⁹ James Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation: Religion, Economy, and Society among the Jains* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 93.

¹⁰ Dugan, “Iconoclastic Jain Leader,” December 18, 1973.

¹¹ Repeated personal communications with Mahaprajna, Terapanthi *munis*, *samanis*, and lay disciples.

abandon the distinction between the *laukika* or “worldly” values and the *lokottara* or “spiritual” ones in this way, hence the introduction of the *samani* order, which could function to address both realms of values without violating the traditional ascetic rules for Terapanthi fully initiated monastics. The fact that Terapanthis would not compromise on the distinction between these two realms of values indicates that they were not willing to question their ascetic soteriological position, despite socio-historical changes. It also reinforces the fact that, for the Terapanth, the introduction of a new intermediary *samani* order itself was a radical move, and thus they attributed great importance to the dissemination of Jain practice and ideology abroad.

Since the introduction of their order in 1980, the *samanis* have established four major Jain Vishva Bharati centers outside of India in the following locations: London, Britain; Houston, Texas; Iselin, New Jersey; and Orlando, Florida. These locations may seem arbitrary but the *samanis* established centers there for specific and practical reasons. First, these locations feature large Jain diaspora communities; and second, members of those communities are willing to provide the financial support necessary for the establishment of JVB centers and for meeting the basic needs of the *samanis* living and teaching there.¹²

The *samanis* consider their efforts toward the dissemination of Jain ideas and practices to be philanthropic in nature. Along with their guru, Mahaprajna, the *samanis* maintain that *preksha* is a means to improve the world on a global scale. As stated in Chapter One, the *samanis* are ascetics, but they are ascetic philanthropists insofar as they

¹² Repeated personal communications with the following *samanis*: Samani Madhur Pragya, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 2009; Samani Rohit Pragya, London, Britain, July 2009; and Samani Vinay Pragya, Houston, Texas, 2006-2009.

disseminate *preksha* throughout the world as a perceived resolution to problems that they and Mahaprajna associate with modernity, industrialization, and materialism.

The Resolution of Ancient Tensions

The introduction of the *samani* order was not just an attempt to resolve the perceived problems of modernity, however, but also to an ancient culturally South Asian tension between two realms of value: renunciatory and societal. This tension mirrors that discussed throughout this dissertation between the *lokottara* and the *laukika*, but here I am discussing a broader cultural tension, beyond the Jain milieu. The tension between renunciatory and societal values developed in South Asia around the seventh century BCE in the northern part of India along the Ganges basin, where there emerged a culture of world renouncers. Since that time, the rise of an ascetic culture in South Asia and the concomitant emergence of new religious systems oriented around an ascetic ideal, the “inner conflict of tradition” in South Asian religions has been between the values of two ideal types, represented by the renouncer and the social actor.¹³ The renouncer strives for *moksha* or “release” from worldly contingency, whereas the social actor seeks to fulfill *dharma* or social duty, which is determined by a number of variables including caste, region, stage of life, and gender.¹⁴

Building on the ideas of Louis Dumont, who articulates the distinction between the man-in-the-world motivated by *dharma* and the renouncer motivated by *moksha* as

¹³ See Patrick Olivelle, *The Asrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2004. First published 1993). See also Patrick Olivelle, *Samnyasa Upanishads: Hindu Scriptures on Asceticism and Renunciation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 23. Olivelle’s argument is in opposition to J.C. Heesterman who previously argued that the “inner conflict of tradition” in India was between the renunciatory brahman and the worldly king. See J.C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).

¹⁴ In fact, a common title for renouncers in India is *shramana* or “striver.”

that between the social person and the individualist person respectively, Olivelle argues that the construction of the *ashrama* (stages of life) system must have been a desperate attempt on the part of Brahmanic Hindu orthodoxy at resolving a tumultuous tension that most definitely resulted from the renunciation of the world on the part of so many young men.¹⁵ By the second century CE, the *ashrama* system organized life into four sequential stages: student, householder, hermit, and renouncer. By organizing life into such sequential stages, the *ashrama* system was an attempt to guarantee that a person would not renounce the world until having already fulfilled his social obligations. Thus by appending renunciation as a stage at the end of the life cycle, the *ashrama* system was a brahmanic attempt to place renunciatory ideals “within the orbit of dharma.”¹⁶ Olivelle argues: “To call a mode of life an asrama, therefore, was to give that life a theological meaning within the context of *dharma*.”¹⁷ This attempt on the part of brahmanic orthodoxy to cope with renunciatory values points to a cultural tension between worldly values and spiritual ones.

Bikshu's eighteenth-century reformation made manifest once again the perpetual reality of this tension but in the narrower context of the Jain Shvetambara tradition. His reformation included the distinction between renunciatory and social ideal types in his categorization of two types of values: the *laukika* and the *lokottara*. But Bikshu has not been the only Jain concerned about the tension between such ideals. In fact, Jain history is characterized by repeated assertions that the tension must be carefully dealt with by means of strict rules for controlling the relationship between the laity and monastics. This

¹⁵ Olivelle, *Asrama System*. See also, Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, Complete Revised English Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

¹⁶ Olivelle, *Asrama System*, 26.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

is not surprising from a historical perspective since the Jain tradition emerged as part of the north Indian ascetic culture that represented a new position vis-à-vis the world, that of opposition and rejection.

Although Jain communities are all characterized by lay-monastic relationships, those relationships are organized around a strict system of prohibitions put in place in order to control the boundaries between spiritual and social orientations toward the world. Such prohibitions exist in order to control the relationship between the monastics, especially the *acharya*, and the laity, and they consequently set the ascetics apart as sacred (within the realm of the *laukika*). The prohibitions are primarily implemented in a strict system of reciprocity. Basically, the monastics may provide the laity with spiritual direction, and the lay people may provide the monastics with alms (*biksha*). The monastics must refrain from any involvement in the social activities and relations of the laity (since such involvement should only be oriented around advising the laity on how to further themselves along the path of purification from karma), and the laity must follow strict guidelines for how to prepare and offer the appropriate alms for a *sadhvi* or *muni* (since the nature of the preparation and substance of such offerings should limit the amount of karma accumulated on the part of the *sadhvi* or *muni* as a result of consumption).

Biksha is a particularly important ritual for demonstrating the relationship between the laity and the monastics. Monastics depend on devotees for sustenance, and the lay Jains depend on making offerings to the monastics as a way of earning beneficial merit. The problem is that true ascetic renouncers do not show social interdependence but seek total withdrawal from the world. When one worships monastics as embodiments of

the ascetic ideal required for attaining release, there is a continuous paradox: the greater the ascetic's asceticism, the more sacred and thus worthy of worship he becomes, but also the less accessible he is to his devotees.¹⁸ This introduces the conflict between worldly and spiritual values, usually symbolically resolved through the complex rituals of *biksha*, whereby the Jain layperson is expected to offer an abundance of alms to the *muni* or *sadhvi*, and the *muni* or *sadhvi* in turn is expected to reject most of it. This interaction allows both the laity and the monastics to fulfill their ideal roles. The fact that the laity offers alms to the monastic and he denies most of it makes this a spiritual rather than a social act insofar as it affirms renunciation by both parties in the interaction.¹⁹ *Biksha* thus allows the devotee-ascetic relationship to be one that honors world-renunciation as opposed to social bonds.

One may argue that the tension is particularly severe for the Terapanth, a sect in which devotees worship only living ascetics, whereas members of other sects also worship the icons of no longer living ascetics. Such *murtipujak* or "image-worshipping" Jains worship the icons of *jinas* and other *siddhas* ("perfected ones" from the past who fulfilled the ascetic ideal and consequently reached the end of the spiritual path, release from the body and the cycle of rebirth). Because the Terapanth is non-image-worshipping, all merit-earning devotion is oriented toward the living *munis* and *sadhvis*.

Despite the strict prohibitions pertaining to interactions between monastics and the laity, the contemporary situation poses unique challenges for the Terapanth. With mass transportation and communication, thousands of devotees desire interaction with the

¹⁸ See Lawrence A. Babb, *Absent Lord: Ascetics and Kings in a Jain Ritual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

¹⁹ Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation*; and Anne Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent: An Ethnography of a Jain Ascetic Community* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

acharya, who functions as the one guru for the *munis*, *sadhvis*, and *samanis* as well as the laity. Thus the Terapanth must resolve the same ancient tension with regard to the interaction of two groups with distinct and opposing values but on a massive scale. This is a serious problem since the more a guru uses his spiritual abilities for the benefit of his devotees, the more he reduces his own “spiritual capital,” which is earned by means of withdrawal from the world, not interaction with it.²⁰

Another reason why the problem is particularly serious for the Terapanth, relative to other Hindu and Jain traditions, is because one of the most profound innovations under the leadership of Bikshu was the insistence that all members of the sect, whether lay person or monastic, follow a single *acharya*. The *acharya* represents a concentration of authority and charisma.²¹ His charisma is routinized, but it is also personal charisma since his predecessor chooses him based on personal qualities. Within the monastic community, he makes all decisions with regard to discipline and initiation: whether or not a female initiate will become a fully initiated *sadhvi* or a *samani*; monastic travel and location for *chaturmas* (the rainy season during which *munis* and *sadhvis* do not travel but settle in one place for an extended period of time); and the appointment of his successor (*yuvacharya*).²² The *acharya* has a monopoly on decision-making. For instance, the *samanis* have told me over and over again that *everything* they do depends on “Acharya Sri’s will.”²³ Furthermore, with the non-sectarian Anuvrat movement and the introduction of *preksha* as a global practice, the *acharya*’s authoritative and

²⁰ Deborah A. Swallow, “Ashes and Powers: Myth, Rite and Miracle in an Indian God-man’s Cult,” *Modern Asian Studies* 16 (1982): 124.

²¹ For more on this topic, see my discussion of routinization and charisma in Chapter One.

²² Today, senior *munis* may initiate individuals in the *acharya*’s name.

²³ Repeated personal communications.

charismatic reach went beyond Terapanthi monastics to the laity and even beyond the Jain laity but to non-Jain lay people as well.

Anne Vallely points out that Bikshu's insistence on a single *acharya* and the concomitant concentration of authority in a single individual resulted in a "god-man" tradition.²⁴ According to C.J. Fuller, such god-men are ascetic world-renouncers who find fame within and sometimes beyond India and are revered and worshiped as divine by their devotees.²⁵ Fuller claims that this is a contemporary phenomenon that illustrates how devotionism adapts to contemporary sociological change.²⁶ Lawrence Babb, Richard Gombrich, Gananath Obeyesekere, Sudhir Kakar, and Deborah Swallow, all of who evaluate different twentieth-century god-men (or "goddess-women" in the case of Kakar) within Hindu traditions, agree with Fuller.²⁷

These scholars provide case studies of the rapid rise and increased publicity of god-men traditions and maintain that such traditions appeal to contemporary urban middle class individuals who feel threatened by a social environment that they no longer control.²⁸ Of particular concern are the perceived excesses of "modernity," often associated with "the West."²⁹ Gurus attempt to break into the competitive religious market by providing "spiritual wares" that function as solutions to problems of

²⁴ Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent*, 23. "God-man" is used differently in this context than in Chapter Three in which we discussed Eliade's notion of the yogic "men-gods."

²⁵ C.J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004. First published 1992), 177-181. Fuller was not the first scholar to use the title of "god-men" in reference to South Asian guru figures. In an earlier text by Peter Brent, *God Men of India* (1972), the author attributed the title of "god men" to South Asian gurus. Peter Brent, *God Men of India* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972).

²⁶ Fuller, *Camphor Flame*, 181.

²⁷ Lawrence A. Babb, *Redemptive Encounters: Three Modern Styles in the Hindu Tradition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987); Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Sudhir Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors: A Psychological Inquiry into India and its Healing Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983); and Swallow, "Ashes and Powers."

²⁸ Swallow, "Ashes and Powers"; Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*, 191-92.

²⁹ Swallow, "Ashes and Powers," 154.

modernity.³⁰ For example, urban environments often pose serious threats with regard to controlling social boundaries of purity and pollution, especially for those who are high on the caste hierarchy. Controlling group identity involves maintaining social boundaries through traditional laws, such as those regarding marriage and the exchange of food. Because the urban middle class in India and in diaspora communities often cannot control such things as they once did, since they live in environments not conducive to nor supportive of sustaining the necessary boundaries, the guru is looked upon for solutions.

God-men traditions provide a variety of ways to bridge religious ideologies and practices and the perceived problems of excess and chaos associated with modern living. In other words, they demonstrate that traditional methods, such as devotion, yoga, or meditation, can still solve contemporary problems.³¹ Such gurus provide, often within an urban space, group identity to otherwise uprooted individuals along with a “re-enchantment of the world” or “remystification of the world” through the god-man’s acclaimed divinity and miracles.³²

The guru’s authority is further legitimated by means of the auspicious attributes of his body and his miraculous abilities. Like Tulsi, who was regarded as having a characteristically auspicious body, particularly because of his elongated ears, which are considered a sign of advanced spiritual power in the Jain tradition, Mahaprajna is also recognized as having auspicious bodily attributes (also, for instance, the elongated ears). Miracles are also attributed to the Terapanthi *acharyas*. I have been told stories of Tulsi and Mahaprajna’s paranormal abilities to communicate with their disciples at long distances. One miracle story is particularly worth mentioning. A *samani* once told me

³⁰ Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*, 191-92.

³¹ Swallow, “Ashes and Powers,” 153.

³² Babb, *Redemptive Encounters*; and Gombrich and Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed*.

about an event that occurred while some *samanis* were traveling by car across India. Tulsi was *acharya* at the time. They found themselves on a narrow road (not uncharacteristic of India's rural areas) with a deep ditch on either side. Suddenly, a large truck appeared on the road coming from the opposite direction at a fast speed, and the *samanis* were certain that their driver would not be able to avoid a head-on collision. They closed their eyes and prayed to Tulsi, offering themselves in devotion to him. When they opened their eyes, they were on the other side of the truck, as if their car had been miraculously lifted up, carried over the truck, and placed back down safely onto the road. They attributed this event to the miraculous intervention of their guru.

Chhogmal Chopra, a Terapanthi author writing during Tulsi's term as *acharya*, provides the following description of the Terapanthi view of the *acharya*:

He is the Supreme Head of the Order and all Sadhus and Sadhwis owe allegiance to Him and obey His commands and follow His instructions. He is the highest spiritual authority and all [monastics and lay people] pay their unstinted homage to Him (sic) He is the highest living deity – the object of the greatest reverence of all followers, laymen or Sadhus. He is the brightest Moon round whom the entire system of stars move (sic). He is the Heart and Soul of the entire... *Jain Svetamber Terapanth Sect*. He is the greatest Administrator of law and discipline, the commander-in-chief under whom moves the whole noble band of warriors for the emancipation of soul.³³

But self-identifying Terapanthis are not the only devotees to the current *acharya*, Mahaprajna (nor were they the only devotees to the previous *acharya*, Tulsi). In fact, there are three sides of the devotional community oriented around Mahaprajna. First, there are the self-identifying Terapanthis in Rajasthan who are most often members of the same caste as Bikshu, the Bisa Osva merchant caste, and this side remains ethnically Rajasthani, although they attribute universal applicability and accessibility to

³³ Chhogmal Chopra, *A Short History of the Terapanthi Sect of the Svetamber Jains and its Tenets*, 4th ed. (Calcutta: Sri Jain Svetamber Terapanthi Sabha, n.d.), 12.

Mahaprajna's teachings. Second, there are the devotional communities in Indian urban centers who are far more diverse and are made up of middle to upper class urban Jains and Hindus from various sectarian traditions. Third, there are Jains and Hindus in diaspora. All such communities fit the description of contemporary god-men traditions quite well, especially insofar as they are concentrated in urban areas.

I attribute this success in attracting so many devotees to Mahaprajna's personal charisma.³⁴ I can attest to the wide-range publicity of the living god-man, Mahaprajna, who is well known within and beyond Jain and Hindu circles in Rajasthan for his spiritual insights and leadership. In June of 2009, while in Ladnun, Mahaprajna's now permanent place of residence, thousands of Hindus and Jains from all over the country traveled to Ladnun to see Mahaprajna and perhaps to gain just a few minutes of direct access to him.³⁵ In Jaipur, upon my return from Ladnun, I became aware of the popularity of Mahaprajna throughout the city. The urban middle class in Jaipur, both Jain and non-Jain, were quite familiar with Mahaprajna and his late guru, Tulsi, and consistently affirmed their spiritual qualities, especially those of Mahaprajna. They claimed that he is a "great guru" with regard to spirituality *and* health for all Rajasthanis, not just Terapanthis or Jains.³⁶ When Mahaprajna visited Jaipur in years past, many Rajasthanis gathered to see him. His teachings with regard to peace, non-violence, and yoga had wide appeal across the city.

³⁴ For more on the topics of personal charisma and charisma of office, see the Introduction.

³⁵ Although Terapanthi *munis* and *sadhvis* must consistently move from one place to another except during the *chaturmas*, the monsoon season, Mahaprajna is now permanently settled in Ladnun because of his old age. In June of 2009, he turned ninety years old. In the Terapanth, *munis* and *sadhvis* are allowed to settle down permanently if their health or age prevents them from being able to travel long distances by foot.

³⁶ Personal communications, Jaipur, Rajasthan, July of 2009.

Mahaprajna is also well-known in Jain diaspora communities. In Houston, Texas, for example, Terapanthi and non-Terapanthi Jains show reverence to Mahaprajna as a spiritual *and* health guru. Samani Akshaya Pragya and Samani Vinay Pragya recently (October 2009) opened the largest JVB center outside of India in Houston. It is called the JVB Houston Preksha Meditation Center. Although Terapanthi *samanis* run and manage the center, they claim that, like the other JVB centers, it is non-sectarian.³⁷ Yet pictures of Mahaprajna adorn the walls, and the devotees there affirm that this is not a guru to Terapanthis alone. Almost all of the attendees at the Terapanthi-run centers in the United States and Britain are members of the Indian diaspora, most of whom self-identify as non-Terapanthi Jain and often Hindu. Despite their non-Terapanthi self-identity, all of them show reverence to the *samanis* as representatives of the “great guru,” Mahaprajna.

The fact that Tulsi and Mahaprajna both received attention from thousands of devotees following the introduction of the Anuvrat movement and *preksha* required innovations if the Terapanth was to remain committed to the ascetic ideal that requires the monastic to avoid all engagement with society, especially since the new agenda included the dissemination of *preksha* outside of India. Whereas the Terapanth never entirely resolved this problem, it made an important attempt with the introduction of the *samani* order.

I maintain that the Terapanth never entirely resolved the tension because steps are continuously taken to further negotiate the relationship between the guru and his devotees. For example, during my June 2009 visit to Ladnun, Mahaprajna announced

³⁷ I do not believe, however, that the JVB centers will replace other Jain centers in the diaspora communities in which they are found, since many diaspora Jains do not associate with the *samanis* who they consider “not really Jain” because they are concerned with yoga and meditation. I have heard this several times through personal communications with Jains attending the one other non-sectarian Jain center in Houston, Texas, the Jain Society of Houston. For more on this topic, see the Conclusion.

steps to further distance himself from his devotees by means of new prohibitions controlling devotional boundaries. These announcements came on his ninetieth birthday and function as part of his attempt to retreat from social action into spiritual solitude in preparation for death.³⁸ Mahaprajna thus made the following decisions. First, he claimed every Tuesday as a day of solitude, when he will not interact with anyone outside of his immediate circle of monks. Everyday, busloads of people arrive in Ladnun from all over India. They are filled with people, both Jains and non-Jains, who traveled hours (and sometimes days) in order to have just a few minutes with the guru. Following his ninetieth birthday, at least one day a week would be for him to focus on his own spiritual practice rather than others who desperately desire his attention. Second, he implemented a new rule preventing all lay people from touching his feet, a traditional Indian sign of reverence. Such a decision was in line with his attempt to further withdraw from the world as he nears death, since that withdrawal serves to increasingly prevent the accumulation of additional karmic matter to his soul. When people touch his feet, the physical contact is believed to distribute some of their karmic matter to him. Thus this functions as an example of the ways in which Mahaprajna perpetually attempts to regulate conflicting goals: increase devotion to the guru but simultaneously protect the guru from karmic accumulation that results from interactions with devotees.

By means of their intermediary status, the *samanis* can absorb much of the karmic matter that otherwise would be brought upon the *acharya* and other fully initiated Terapanthi *munis* and *sadhvis* through interaction with the laity. The *samanis* partake in most interactions with the laity, not just in Ladnun, but also in every other place they

³⁸ The announcements were made at Mahaprajna's public ninetieth birthday celebration at the JVB University in Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 22, 2009.

travel and/or establish a JVB center. Also, while still forbidden to worship images, the photograph of Mahaprajna is found in every JVB center where the *samanis* teach. Thus they maintain the concentration of authority and charisma in the figure of the guru. The Terapanth, in its desire to introduce a social and global movement to better the world by means of the Jain religion and more specifically, *preksha*, was faced with a problem: how can one improve the world when one's spiritual path requires withdrawal *from* the world. The solution was the introduction of a "semi" monastic order that could mediate between the guru and the masses.

The Role of Gender

A key aspect of the production of a semi-monastic order that could effectively function to mediate between the guru and the masses, especially as disseminators of yoga, was assigning this role to women. As stated in Chapter One, there are currently one hundred and three *samanis* as opposed to only four *samans* or male *samanas*, and no *samans* have been initiated since 1986.³⁹ So the question is: how is gender a relevant category to the identity and function of the *samana* order?

An initial answer may be that the Jain tradition has always featured an asymmetry in the number of *sadhvis* to *munis*, so this is not a question about the Terapanth, but about Jain monastic traditions generally. Throughout Jain history, there has usually been about twice as many *sadhvis* as *munis*, probably due to the fact that the status of a Jain family improves when a daughter takes initiation and, given that daughters pose a financial burden either as widows or by requiring dowries for marriage, they are encouraged to

³⁹ Mahaprajna has never sent any of the four *samans* abroad to establish or run a JVB center outside of India but rather has assigned this role to the *samanis* alone.

become *sadhvis*. These reasons do not, however, seem to apply to the current Terapanthi situation, since all of the *samanis* were initiated as young unmarried women who consistently maintain that it was not family pressures but their own desires to live a spiritual life and to become educated that motivated them to choose the life of a monastic.⁴⁰

When asked about the gender asymmetry, the *samanis* themselves respond that Tulsi and Mahaprajna have chosen females to be initiated into the semi-monastic order rather than males because they are more easily trusted when traveling abroad to resist the “temptations of modernity.”⁴¹ They emphasize that especially with regard to “rules against being alone” with members of the opposite sex, women can be trusted, but not men. In other words, the female monastic vow of celibacy is believed to be more secure than that of the male monastic.

Upon immediate reflection, this position seems to counter traditional ideas about female sexuality in Jain thought. Traditionally, females are considered, by the very nature of their psychology and anatomy, to be less capable of celibacy and chastity and thus more subject to sexual temptations than males. Such views of women have functioned to legitimize a patriarchal tradition. In this way, the Jains were in line with the patriarchy of Hindu brahmanic orthodoxy. Although Jain thinkers certainly opposed the brahmanic hierarchical social order of the *varna-asrama-dharma* system, they did not oppose or critique the patriarchal cultural ideology of brahmanic orthodoxy.⁴² Especially in the

⁴⁰ The Terapanth takes pride in educating monastic members, and the *samanis* generally receive the most years of formal education. For more on this topic, see Chapter Five.

⁴¹ In personal communications, numerous *samanis* in Ladnun, London, and Houston have given me this answer with regard to the gender asymmetry of their order.

⁴² Robert P. Goldman, forward to *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women*, by Padmanabh S. Jaini (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), xi. *Varna-asrama-dharma*

renouncer cultures of brahmans, Jains, and Buddhists, the ideal is to avoid family ties, emotional bonds, and sexual desire and pleasures, and all such things are associated with women. Consequently, women are usually perceived as less capable of the same renunciatory ideals and spiritual abilities as men.

In fact, Robert P. Goldman argues that the Jain and Buddhist heterodox renunciatory traditions are, in many ways, more patriarchal than that of brahmanic orthodoxy:

Yet, although Buddhist and Jaina thinkers are willing to reject the notion of a hierarchical social order, the power of the patriarchal doctrine of male supremacy in all matters proved harder for them to escape. Indeed, with their obsessive concern with renunciation, withdrawal from the secular social universe, and avoidance of the sensual life, the texts and sermons of Buddhism and Jainism often stress so virulently negative a view of women – particularly the female anatomy – as to make even the gynophobic elements in most Hindu texts seem rather mild.⁴³

Padmanabh S. Jaini produced an important study in which he traces a long debate in Jain renunciatory literature (circa 750 to 1275 CE) over the status of women with regard to their spiritual abilities (or lack thereof) and demonstrates that the debate features a systematic analysis of female anatomy, which is tied to a misogynist analysis of female psychology.⁴⁴ Although brahmanic and Buddhist renouncer traditions feature a revulsion for the female body, the sexual parts of which are considered polluting and thus dangerous, only Jain Digambaras argue that it is because of their anatomy that women cannot achieve the highest spiritual goals. The argument relies in part on the belief that a great amount of violence occurs in the reproductive organs of women, including the

refers to the brahmanic system whereby one's social function and duty (*dharma*) is determined by caste (*varna*) and stage of life (*asrama*).

⁴³ Goldman, forward to *Gender and Salvation*, xi.

⁴⁴ Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

constant reproduction and death of organisms. Furthermore, the discomfort that is believed to occur as a result of having female organs is believed to result in a fickle personality fixated on the pursuit of sexual desire.

Although Shvetambaras respond that female anatomy does not prevent the possibility of women achieving such goals, they fail to oppose the Digambara position that female sexual organs are inherently impure and more susceptible to sexual stimulation. Jaini argues that the Shvetambara position is not just equally misogynistic with regard to its analysis of female anatomy but in fact serves to legitimize the wearing of white robes on the part of Shvetambara renunciators rather than to defend the spiritual capacities of women. In response to the accusations of Digambaras that Shvetambaras are simply overrated lay people since they do not renounce clothing and instead wear white robes (the Digambara male monastics go nude and, given the supposition that women cannot go nude, Digambara *sadhvis* are not fully initiated monastics), the Shvetambaras respond with the following argument: female monastics must retain their clothes (this is an assumed necessity for the sake of maintaining social order), such females have the potential to attain the most advanced spiritual states, therefore, male monastics can retain their cloths and still attain those spiritual states. The Shvetambara position thus does not serve to counter misogyny, but to defend the wearing of robes by male monastics.

Does this mean, then, that the Terapanthi position that female monastics are more capable of resisting sexual temptations conflicts with the analysis of women in Jain renunciatory literature? The answer, in fact, is that they do not conflict. Valley demonstrates the non-contradictory nature of the two positions in her study on Terapanthi *sadhvis*. She argues, “Conquering sexual desire is not considered an obstacle for

[*sadhvis*], as it is for [*munis*], because female desire (among ascetics) is considered to be nonexistent.”⁴⁵ Valley asserts that, because women in Jain thought have traditionally been associated with sexual desire and bodily attachment, *sadhvis* must demonstrate a complete absence of desire as opposed to the *munis* who may admit to being subjects of sexual desire yet revel in their resistance to it.⁴⁶ Thus, generally, female sexual desire is more dangerous, but it is believed to be absent in female monastics and is thus not a threat. Female monastics often prove their absence of desire by engaging in prolonged fasts, which have traditionally functioned as an indicator of chastity in Jain traditions. This requirement that female monastics never be subjects of sexual desire, since this is deemed far more dangerous than for male monastics, seems likely to apply in the case of the *samanis* as well.⁴⁷ In fact, given the *samanis* active relationships with both *munis* and lay men as a consequence of their status as mediators to the guru, it seems likely that their sexual subjectivity would pose more of a threat than that of *sadhvis*, since the *sadhvis* spend far less times interacting with lay men, if such subjectivity was present and acknowledged. For this reason, they are treated as having a complete absence of sexual subjectivity.

Vallely points out another important quality gendered feminine in the Terapanthi context. She argues that Terapanthi *sadhvis* are seen to naturally mediate between the laity and monks since the ascetic ideal is a male ideal.⁴⁸ This is in line with Jaini and Goldman’s assertions on the Jain renunciatory ideal as male in orientation. Women are considered to be extensions of the social sphere and thus less capable of breaking with

⁴⁵ Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent*, 137.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁷ In private conversations, *samanis* sometimes express their own subjectivity with regard to sexual desire. See Chapter Two, note 31.

⁴⁸ Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent*, 216.

the *laukika*. Valley adds, “It is in the realm of [devotion] that the position of nuns is most clearly seen as an extension of the householder’s life.”⁴⁹ In other words, in the Terapanth, *munis* are considered more naturally capable of embodying the ascetic ideal and thus are the objects of devotion, and the *sadhvis* fulfill the role of the ideal devotee and act as models of devotion for the laity. If females thus function to naturally mediate as models of devotion between the guru and the masses, then it is not surprising that, with the introduction of a new order constructed for the sake of mediation, that order would be gendered female.

Another reason why the *samana* order is gendered female is a particularly practical one. With more than twice as many females who choose monastic ordination than males, the Terapanth is put in the position of salvaging those *munis* they do have as fully initiated monastics. Since such male monastics best function as embodiments of the ascetic ideal, I suspect that the *acharya* resists assigning to them the role of semi-monastics. It would simply be too much of a loss to the order given the fact that the tradition assigns a masculine gender to the ascetic ideal. These are likely reasons for why the *samana* order is gendered female since it embodies both realms of values: *laukika* and *lokotarra*.

In Ladnun, during the period in which many *munis*, *sadhvis*, and *samanis* are settled there for the rainy season, devotees arrive in the hundreds every day in order to have contact with the auspicious Terapanthi renunciators. The attention of *munis* is most valued. However, it is also the most difficult to attain. The *sadhvis* also spend only a limited amount of time with lay devotees. The *samanis*, however, function as an important intermediary, often receiving lay devotees late into the evening. The *samanis*,

⁴⁹ Ibid., 216-217.

as representatives of the *acharya*, consult the laity on everything from family affairs to health issues to spiritual struggles and needs. They thus function as mediators.

The JVB University in Ladnun, however, differs in important ways from other JVB centers. Although the reasons listed above for gendering the *samana* order as feminine are significant in all contexts, I have found that the *samanis'* gender in the context of the JVB centers in Britain and the United States has less to do with their function as models of devotion and more to do with their role as teachers of yoga. Valley's argument about female monastics as extensions of the laity, especially insofar as they are models of devotion, may apply to the *samanis* abroad, but their liminal status is more significant insofar as it allows them to fulfill two positions vis-à-vis the body in the context of the yoga class.⁵⁰ In Ladnun, they function as teachers but also as models of devotion and mediators to the guru for those who come primarily to get spiritual direction and blessings from the *acharya* himself. Outside of India, they are sought not only as models of devotion and mediators of the guru, but most often as yoga teachers.

The preeminent explanation for why the semi-monastics are females is rooted both in their own answer, which is consistent with Valley's assertion that female monastics are not considered subjects of desire in the Terapanth, and the contexts in which they teach yoga. While Valley's observations with regard to female monastics as models of devotion is particularly relevant to Terapanthi *sadhvis*, there is an additional variable that specifically applies in the case of the *samanis*: their primary mission is to teach yoga beyond India, and more women outside of India practice yoga than men. For instance, according to a 2008 study, of those practicing yoga in the United States, 72.2%

⁵⁰ The *samani* is liminal insofar as, in her dual position vis-à-vis the body, she does not belong to the laity nor has she transitioned into the fully initiated monastic community but functions "betwixt and between" the two.

are women and 27.8% are men.⁵¹ This gender asymmetry is characteristic of trends in Europe as well. The dramatic gender asymmetry has been a consistent pattern since the first time a representative of yogic traditions delivered yoga to “the West.” That person was the late nineteenth century figure, Vivekananda, whose converts to Vedanta were mostly women.

In *preksha* yoga classes, far more women have attended since the 1980s when the *samanis* first began traveling outside of India to teach. If men in the Terapanth are more often subjects of desire and women are objects of desire, it would be necessary that the *acharya* not choose male *samanas* to teach outside of India where most of their students would be women. In order to avoid sexual attraction from entering into the context of a yoga class, women who are believed to not be subjects of desire are considered the ideal teachers.

This commitment to the absence of sexual desire in the context of yoga became stronger in January of 2009 when Mahaprajna officially announced that the *samanis* are no longer allowed to teach men because of the *samanis*’ potential role not as subjects of desire, but as objects of the potential sexual desire of the men attending their yoga classes.⁵² Since most students are women at all of the JVB centers outside of India, the *samanis* function as the best mediators with the fewest number of people (men) left out of the yoga class. The few men interested in learning *preksha* must now rely on lay practitioners who function as intermediaries between the *samanis* and them.⁵³ The gender

⁵¹ Dayna Macy, “Practitioner Spending Grows to Nearly \$6 Billion a Year,” Press Release for *Yoga Journal's* 2008 Yoga in America Survey, February 26, 2008.

⁵² Samani Akshay Pragya and Samani Vinay Pragya, personal communications, April 17, 2009. Other *samanis*, through personal communications, have emphasized that it is not appropriate for them to stand in the sometimes “immodest” yogic *asanas* in front of men.

⁵³ Samani Prasanna Pragya and Samani Rohit Pragya at the JVB Center in London offer one co-ed yoga class each Sunday so that men can come, but a lay female disciple teaches this class in place of the

asymmetry then, more than any other reason, is due to the general disposition on the part of the Terapanth toward “accepting the practical realities of life in the modern world” and adapting to those realities when deciding who will function as mediators between the masses and the guru.⁵⁴ In other words, the gendering of the *samani* order was an act of adaptation to socio-cultural circumstances as was its introduction in the first place.

The Dissemination of *Preksha*

As described in Chapter One, in 1970, a major event occurred in the history of the Terapanth. One of Tulsi’s wealthy disciples donated sixty acres of land in Ladnun to establish a Jain learning center, and Tulsi responded with the establishment of Jain Vishva Bharati (JVB). JVB was constructed as a global organization for disseminating Terapanthi Jain spiritual teachings and practices while committing to adapting the Jain tradition to changes in the modern world. JVB’s agenda overlapped with that of Tulsi himself toward the end of his career as *acharya*. According to the website of the Terapanth: “Transcending sectarian boundaries, [Tulsi] had been incessantly working during the last six decades for the welfare of mankind – eradicating social evils, reforming social customs, building up national character and educating the masses about the principles of non-violence (sic) Universal peace and brotherhood.”⁵⁵

JVB projects in India have included establishing a Jain university (JVB University) in Ladnun, engaging with Indian politicians, convincing primary and secondary schools to adopt *preksha* as part of their students’ physical education, and the “Science of Living”

samanis. Personal communication, London, Britain, July 29, 2009. Similarly, Samani Akshay Pragya and Vinay Pragya at the JVB Center in Houston have a lay female disciple who occasionally teaches co-ed yoga classes.

⁵⁴ Jain Vishva Bharati London, “Our Activities,” <http://www.jvblondon.org/aboutus-activities.htm>.

⁵⁵ Terapanth, http://www.terapanth.com/jain_visva_bharti.htm.

campaign, which strives to convince Indians to adopt a new beneficial lifestyle oriented around physical health and psychological well-being by means of *preksha*, as well as a commitment to the Lesser Vows (*Anuvrat*) of the Jain tradition.⁵⁶

The JVB label is attached to all centers that the *samanis* establish and manage. Unlike “Terapanthi,” “JVB” is a title that has non-sectarian connotations and is thus more effective for attracting non-Terapanthi practitioners interested in yoga. Although for reasons of time and space the current study will not evaluate the strategies and activities of JVB outside of the literary contributions of Mahaprajna on the topic of *preksha* and the activities of the *samanis*, it is important to note that the centers established and managed by the *samanis* outside of India are within this larger JVB umbrella, within which exist all activities on the part of the Terapanth to proselytize by means of delivering their ideology and practices to those throughout Rajasthan and beyond that immediate fold.

The question now arises as to how exactly the *samanis* function as proselytizing mediators of the guru. The answer lies in the fact that part of the “semi” status of this monastic order is played out insofar as the *samanis* teach those who do not seek to fulfill the ascetic ideal of the Terapanth but nonetheless demonstrate an interest in the body maintenance regimen of *preksha*. As demonstrated in Chapters Two and Three, Mahaprajna considers the perception and ideal state of the body important means for perceiving one’s true Self, pure soul, which lies buried within the body, beneath layers upon layers of physical body and subtle body. *Preksha* makes the digging through such layers possible. Mahaprajna thus maintains a classical Jain body-negating soteriology but qualifies its concomitant ascetic ideal in everyday practice, in the body maintenance of

⁵⁶ The most notable relationship between JVB and politicians is that established with the former President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Mahaprajna and Kalam have a close relationship and are described in JVB promotional material as working together toward “inter-faith” peace.

the practitioner, where the body's health is a legitimate and necessary aim. The advanced adept, upon ridding herself of negative emotions and achieving a state of equilibrium in the body, can more easily perceive the distinction between body and soul and eventually becomes fully aware of the distinction and thus progresses toward releasing the soul *from* the body.

In their conversations with me in Ladnun on the role and function of *preksha*, the *samanis* maintained Mahaprajna's assertion that the physical practices and benefits of *preksha* are simply means to the eventual disassociation from the physical body.⁵⁷ They emphasized the importance of meditation and contemplation far more than the physical practices, *asana* and *pranayama*, that, as I will demonstrate below, make *preksha* in its popular dissemination so similar to modern forms of physical yoga, classified by Elizabeth de Michelis as "Modern Postural Yoga."⁵⁸ The explication of *preksha* on the part of the *samanis* and Mahaprajna in Ladnun is more monastic in orientation and thus concerned with ascetic withdrawal from the world and from the body for the sake of attaining the mystical transcendent experience of the Self. In this way, it more closely resembles classical yoga schools.

Most individuals outside of the monastic context in Ladnun, however, are believed to lack the necessary knowledge and ambition to orient their practice around the attainment of advanced spiritual states. Instead, such lay practitioners orient their yoga practice around the quest for health, as an end in itself. For those practitioners, health is not a preliminary goal but *the* goal. As a practical response to most people's exclusive

⁵⁷ Samani Madhur Pragya and Samani Vishubh Pragya, personal communications, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June of 2009.

⁵⁸ Elizabeth de Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 187.

concern with health over spiritual gains, the *samanis* in the United States and Britain focus on *preksha*'s health benefits and physical practices: *pranayama* and *asana*. They reorient their teachings on yoga to emphasize physical fitness and rather than prescribe individual practice, they emphasize what de Michelis describes as “the orthoperformative side of participation within a limited ‘classroom,’” a feature of Modern Postural Yoga.⁵⁹ In their emphasis on health and classroom participation, the *samanis*' dissemination of *preksha* fits the category of Modern Postural Yoga as described by de Michelis.

The contrast between *preksha* in the monastic context and *preksha* in its popular dissemination is not surprising given Mahaprajna's agenda. After all, in Mahaprajna's attempt to disseminate *preksha* globally, he needs the *samanis* to market *preksha* according to the desires of those with an interest in yoga. And as demonstrated by de Michelis, Modern Postural Yoga is the most popular form of yoga outside of India. She argues, “Indeed, in colloquial English, ‘yoga’ has come to mean a session of [Modern Postural Yoga].”⁶⁰

At each of the JVB centers in Britain and the United States, the *samanis* repeat Mahaprajna's proclamation that *preksha* is a tool for achieving overall well-being and health. However, they do not represent a permanent or consistent shift away from a monastic orientation. In the context of their yoga classes, they demonstrate a flux between monastic ideological commitments to a Jain dualist ontology and the concomitant ascetic ideal and the everyday concerns of their students who desire physical health and psychological well-being.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 248.

When teaching *preksha*, the *samanis* often address the everyday problems and concerns of their students, such as body aches, trouble at work, or problems with concentration. If pressed, they maintain that *preksha* is characteristically Jain insofar as the goal is “inner purity” and that the ultimate realization is of the true Self as pure soul, radically distinct from the body and its physiological and subtle processes.⁶¹ However, although it is not denied, the spiritual goal of realizing the true Self is marginal to that of health and well-being as indicated by the motto consistently found on the pamphlets and websites for the JVB centers:

[The *samanis*] serve humanity to achieve good health, peace of mind and divine experience without any barrier of caste, creed, sex, race or faith.⁶²

The motto mentions “good health” first, and the overall message is that *preksha*, as a means to achieving physical and psychological health as well as “divine” experience, is compatible with all religious or ideological worldviews. In fact, what constitutes “divine experience” is left open for the individual to interpret depending on her own worldview.⁶³

The *samanis*’ focus on health reflects their students’ concerns. They are interested in *preksha* as a way of enhancing their life in the world (or *laukika*) and have little interest in it as a step along the long-term spiritual path (or *lokottara*) as classically understood in Terapanthi Jain thought.⁶⁴ With such students, the *samanis* rarely address issues of Jain ontological and soteriological concepts but focus almost exclusively on the physical practice and benefits of *preksha*.

⁶¹ Repeated personal communications.

⁶² The phrase is found on several pamphlets and websites of JVB centers outside of India. For example, see Jain Vishva Bharati Houston, “Daily Schedule,” <http://www.jvbhouston.org/dailyschedule.htm>.

⁶³ In fact, the *samanis* frequently pursue opportunities to participate in events for inter-religious dialogue in which they maintain that they and their guru, Mahaprajna, promote religious tolerance and prescribe practices and values applicable to people of all different religious backgrounds.

⁶⁴ In London, in fact, *no* Terapanthis and very few Jains come to *preksha* yoga classes. Almost all of those in attendance are self-identifying Hindus. Samani Prasanna Pragma and Samani Rohit Pragma, personal communications, London, Britain, July 25, 2009.

In my personal communications with the *samanis*, they have openly discussed this issue and have stated that, especially when dealing with students outside of India, they do not teach “Jain spirituality” *initially*. They maintain that Jain spirituality is not practical for dealing with those immersed in a culture where “bodily satisfaction is on equal footing with spiritual satisfaction.”⁶⁵ The *samanis* consider their emphasis on physical health and psychological well-being to be preparation for such thinking, something they say they need not do with their Jain students in India. With new students, they begin by addressing health problems and suggest a Jain vegetarian diet, yoga, and meditation. Commonly, people come for *preksha* because of depression, and the *samanis* provide counseling. They offer regular weekly classes on yoga, which focus almost exclusively on *asana* and *pranayama*, and most students practicing yoga with the *samanis* aim to reduce stress, improve their health and physical appearance, and perhaps, along the way, “achieve something spiritual.”⁶⁶ According to the *samanis*, few come for yoga with spiritual goals as their priority and thus few move beyond adopting *preksha* primarily for the perceived physical and psychological benefits.⁶⁷

At the JVB centers managed by the *samanis*, one finds an example of the shift from body maintenance through austerities for the sake of the body’s subordination to the soul (as found in the monastic context) to body maintenance through diet and yoga for the sake of elevating the body and mind as legitimate ends in themselves. In *preksha* classes, the meditation is even set aside from *asana* and *pranayama* because students are most often entirely concerned with the physical benefits of yoga. The *samanis* describe how very few students come when a meditation class is offered, but several more come

⁶⁵ Samani Sanmati Pragya, personal communication, Houston, Texas, October 20, 2006.

⁶⁶ Ibid. For more on the discourse on “stress,” see below.

⁶⁷ Repeated personal communications.

for yoga.⁶⁸ For this reason, meditation classes are rare, although the *samanis* offer yoga classes every week.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the *samanis* even offer *preksha* camps in the cities where JVB centers are found. These camps have a qualified monastic orientation insofar as the camper must renounce profane desires and activities while at the camp, and there is an assumption that those participating in the camps are largely concerned with spiritual aims. The existence of such *preksha* camps is consistent with other schools of modern yoga, which, according to de Michelis, often offer “retreats” for advanced practitioners.⁶⁹ In Ladnun, those camps are more heavily weighted toward spiritual concerns, monastic withdrawal, and meditative practice (as discussed in Chapter Two). However, in Britain and the United States, such camps function to improve overall health and well-being by removing the practitioner from the “stressful” life of everyday work and play and immersing her in a setting where *preksha* and its concomitant practices, including a Jain vegetarian diet and abstinence from normal profane activities, followed by a reintroduction of the now more health-conscious practitioner back into normal hectic life. Health, in these contexts, maintains its status as the most explicit goal of the camps, despite attention to the more implicit goals of spirituality and meditation. The primary concern with health is evident in a 2007 issue of the Terapanthi Jain newsletter in Houston, Texas in which one finds the following description of one of the events during a *preksha* camp:

Dr. Lata Joshi, and Anand Daksha Basi (sic) conducted voluntary tests of Blood Pressure, Sugar, BMI, and Body Fat Analysis of all attendees including Samanijis. They then presented the data in separate groups for men, women, and

⁶⁸ Repeated personal communications with three *samanis*: Samani Madhur Pragya, Ladnun, Rajasthan; Samani Vinay Pragya, Houston, Texas; and Samani Rohit Pragya, London, Britain.

⁶⁹ De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 187.

Samanijis. Results showed how Samanijis living style provided a healthy balance to body (sic).⁷⁰

This succinctly demonstrates the overt concern with the body's health and well-being.

Concern with spiritual advancement is not absent but is marginal to "lifestyle" concerns.

The goal of *preksha*, as many *samanis* teach it to their students in the United States and Britain, is "to understand the true cause of one's misery."⁷¹ Rather than the classical Jain (and classical yogic) notion that the world is inherently characterized by suffering, in the dissemination of *preksha* one finds the attitude that, if one wants to end suffering, one can. The difference is between release from suffering by means of *release from the world* and release from suffering by means of *work within the world*. This attitude follows from a shift away from the idea that one can only escape the suffering of the world by means of ascetic withdrawal *from* the world. Rather, at least some of the suffering of the world, that which results from a lack of health and well-being, is believed to be avoidable and in fact necessary for the spiritual path. This is believed to be achieved by means of active engagement with one's body through the performance of those aspects of yoga directly linked to the body: *asana* and *pranayama*. There is thus a shift from the denigration of the body to the affirmation of the body as a valuable tool for a healthy life.

As demonstrated in the Introduction, popular forms of modern yoga became increasingly oriented around the attainment of physical fitness in the twentieth century. Commenting on these trends, de Michelis argues, "Quite naturally, the more exoteric aspects of [Modern Postural Yoga] came to play a part in these phenomena, and this

⁷⁰ Jain Vishva Bharati Houston, "JVB Houston Newsletter," April 2007, <http://www.jvbhouston.org/newsletters.htm>.

⁷¹ This is a common phrase used by the *samanis* to describe the goal of *preksha*.

discipline thus established itself at the margins of the ‘sports’ category.”⁷² Thus *pranayama* and *asana* became the primary practices in modern yoga classes, including those taught by the *samanis*, as opposed to the more esoteric concerns of classical forms of yoga oriented around mysticism, asceticism, and transcendence. Thus there is a stark distinction between *preksha* as taught and practiced in the monastic context and *preksha* as taught in its popular dissemination, where fitness is a primary concern of those attending yoga classes.

But physical health is not the only concern. There is also a concern with psychological well-being. As we saw in Chapter One and Chapter Two, *preksha* is believed to decrease negative emotions. The *samanis* place great emphasis on this benefit of *preksha* and especially emphasize its capacity to “reduce stress.” In fact, at the London JVB Center, a mantra recited in every yoga class, first by the *samani* leading the class and then by her students, is as follows: “I do yoga for relief from physical, mental, and emotional stress.” In this way, *preksha* fits the category of Modern Postural Yoga since this type of yoga is often prescribed as a de-stressor in addition to being prescribed as a means to physical fitness. The concept of “stress” as both a psychological and physiological syndrome is itself a modern one.⁷³ It has only been since the 1930s, that stress entered the vocabularies of numerous languages. Hans Selye produced the earliest scholarly work on stress and argued that stress is associated with urban life.⁷⁴ Allan

⁷² De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 249.

⁷³ “Stress” is notorious for lacking a single definition. For a discussion on the ways in which people have attempted to define “stress,” see Michael King, Gordon Stanley and Graham Burrows, *Stress: Theory and Practice* (Sydney: Grune and Stratton, 1987). For a critical essay on the discourse on stress, see Allan Young, “The Discourse on Stress and the Reproduction of Conventional Knowledge,” *Social Science and Medicine* 14B (1980): 133-146.

⁷⁴ For Selye’s most popular work on stress, see Hans Selye, *The Stress of Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978. First published 1956).

Young demonstrates that, today, stress continues to be associated with urban life.⁷⁵ As argued by de Michelis, schools of modern yoga often promote themselves by claiming to reduce stress:

The constellation ‘urban living – stress – [Modern Postural Yoga]’ is not random. Modern conditions of urban living are notoriously frustrating, and this type of lifestyle is also highly conducive to sedentariness. Hence the need for fitness and de-stressing, both of which can be supplied by [Modern Postural Yoga].⁷⁶

As is characteristic of proponents of Modern Postural Yoga generally, the *samanis* reify the association between urban living and stress and argue that the stress caused by urban life is responsible for both physical and psychological ailments. They thus prescribe *preksha* as the solution.

Conclusion

The *samanis* fulfill certain roles in the Terapanth that provide solutions to both the ancient tension between renunciatory and social values and the exacerbation of that tension in the contemporary situation where the charismatic *acharya* requires an intermediary between himself and the masses of devotees he attracts, many of whom approach the *samanis* for guidance with regard to health, rather than spiritual direction. Their existence makes it possible for the Terapanth to be context sensitive. People flock to the JVB centers of the Terapanth for numerous reasons: to renounce the world and enter the monastic path, which requires asceticism for the sake of transcendence; to offer devotion to the *acharya* as the embodiment of divinity and in turn receive his blessings, merit, and perhaps miraculous intervention; and to improve physical health and psychological well-being by means of yoga. The *samanis* enable the order to address all

⁷⁵ Young, “Discourse on Stress,” 134.

⁷⁶ De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 250.

of these desires and demands. The introduction of the *samani* order for the sake of disseminating *preksha* thus contributed to the stability of the Terapanth in two ways: first, by functioning to relieve the ancient tension, exacerbated in the contemporary context, between the conflicting values of renunciation and worldly life; and second, in its global dissemination of *preksha* to an overwhelmingly female population concerned with yoga as a practice for the enhancement of physical health and psychological well-being.

The *samanis* are the only Jain monastics that many people living outside of India, including those in the Jain diaspora, will encounter for long periods of time and perhaps throughout their lives. These intermediary monastics, as representatives of Mahaprajna, seek to disseminate yoga as a non-sectarian body maintenance regimen aimed at improving health and well-being. They demonstrate a concern with the bodily health and well-being of the masses while simultaneously upholding Bikshu's argument that full asceticism in the form of withdrawal from society and the limitation of bodily action is necessary for a quest down the path to release from the world. In this way, the *samanis* fulfill two positions vis-à-vis the body, which is impossible for either the fully initiated monastic or the lay person immersed in worldly pursuits. In their unique role, the *samanis* are mediators, and it is not despite their intermediary status but because of it that they resolve ancient cultural tensions and meet contemporary demands consequently providing the Terapanth with the ability to thrive in the contemporary socio-historical context.

Chapter Five

The Intersection of *Preksha* and Late Capitalism: Consumer Culture, Commodity Exchange, and the Sacred

As Durkheim pointed out, anything can become sacred, so why not the ‘profane’ goods of capitalism?

Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, 119.

The Terapanth introduced radical innovations in the second half of the twentieth century: the Anuvrat social movement, *preksha*, and the *samani* order for the sake of *preksha*'s popular dissemination. Such innovations resulted in the sect's ability to appeal to different audiences characterized by a plurality of needs: monastic, devotional, psychological, and physical. And as demonstrated by means of our discussion of modern yoga, such innovations did not occur in a socio-historical vacuum but were part of a larger trajectory that featured other metaphysical individuals and systems making important adjustments, innovations, and adaptations.

Catherine Albanese demonstrates that processes toward the reconstruction of yoga began as early as the nineteenth century and resulted from early encounters between European and American metaphysicians and Indian ones.¹ Such processes also emerged as a consequence of Enlightenment thought that privileged a scientific worldview and thus stimulated such metaphysicians to reconceptualize their own systems in light of science. However, in order to understand the specific innovations of the Terapanth, one has to more closely evaluate the specific socio-historical context of the second half of twentieth century, since it was not until that period that major Terapanthi reconceptualizations of classical Jain cultural ideas and practices occurred. In this

¹ Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind & Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

chapter, I will discuss the processes of late capitalism in the second half of the twentieth century and, by locating the intersection of the contemporary Terapanth and late capitalist culture, will demonstrate that the Terapanth's innovations represent self-conscious religious adaptations to socio-historical circumstances.

Marxist scholars in Europe first used the category of "late capitalism" in the 1930s. Scholars in the Frankfurt School (a school of neo-Marxist critical theory and social thought associated with the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt am Main) used the term "late capitalism" in the 1960s to refer to a "late" phase of capitalism, implying that capitalism was approaching its end. The term referred to an historical period of capitalism that began after World War II and witnessed sudden economic growth that was the largest in history. In 1972, Ernest Manel further popularized the term and argued that it featured the emergence of multinational corporations, global markets, and mass consumption. Beginning in the 1980s, Fredric Jameson, an American cultural theorist, used late capitalism as a category for the cultural critique of what he considered postmodernity. I am interested here in late capitalism not in terms of economic or political exchange, but in terms of cultural critique.

In the cultural context of late capitalism, new forms of religiosity result from processes of adaptation, appropriation, and syncretism, all in response to new cultural desires and trends. The plurality of such desires and trends is made possible by processes of globalization, which, as articulated by Roland Robertson, means that world communication and the consequent pluralization of commodities and ideologies lead to separate nations undergoing shared capitalist cultural processes.² In other words, the

² Roland Robertson, "Globalization Theory and Civilizational Analysis," *Comparative Civilizations Review* 17, no. 1 (1987): 20-30.

“global” takes the place of the “nation-state” as the framework for social life.³ A plurality of socio-cultural formations exists alongside the global tendency toward transnational encounter.

Throughout this dissertation, I have used the category of “encounter” in order to emphasize that the movement of yogic, scientific, and metaphysical ideas and practices between India, America, and Britain in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has not been unidirectional across national and cultural lines. In this way, such encounters were transnational, meaning they involved a perpetual movement of people, ideas, and practices between two or more spaces, rather than from one point to another. Yoga did not move from India to “the West” but rather moved and continues to move back and forth between a plurality of spaces, which results in a plurality of yogic forms that are perpetually constructed and reconstructed anew to meet new discourses, demands, and trends in the transnational yoga market.

Furthermore, by “late capitalism,” I refer to the decentralized consumerism of capitalist culture that began in the second half of the twentieth century whereby technological and economic processes brought about the pluralization of transnational commodities on a global scale. As a parallel process, religious pluralism on a global scale entered into capitalist culture, and individuals began to *choose* religious identities in response to individual desires and needs rather than necessarily *inherit* identity as a consequence of an individual’s place of birth or family line. In this sense, choosing religious identities became rather akin to choosing commodities.⁴

³ Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash, introduction to *Global Modernities* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 2.

⁴ Bryan S. Turner, “The Body in Western Society: Social Theory and its Perspectives,” in *Religion and the Body*, ed. Sarah Coakley (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 36.

I refer here to what Peter Berger refers to as “the heretical imperative.”⁵ Berger uses the term “heretic” because it derives from the Greek word, *hairein* or “to choose.” He argues that, as a consequence of modernity and the concomitant pluralization of both commodities and worldviews, for the social actor picking and choosing or “heresy” is no longer simply a possibility, as it was for the premodern individual, but an imperative.⁶ Berger writes, “Thus heresy, once the occupation of marginal and eccentric types, has become a much more general condition; indeed, heresy has become universalized.”⁷ It is not as if choice did not exist in premodern societies, and the extent to which contemporary social actors exercise choice certainly varies on a broad spectrum, but Berger maintains that the range of choices of the contemporary person whether lower class or social elite “would have been in the realm of mythological fantasy” in a premodern society.⁸ In other words, certainty in premodern societies was “taken-for-granted” even though it was not “total.”⁹ But choice for a contemporary individual may range from occupation, marriage, leisure activities, and material goods to lifestyle, ideology, and religion. According to Berger:

In other words, there comes to be a smooth continuity between consumer choices in different areas of life – a preference for this brand of automobile as against another, for this sexual life-style as against another, and finally a decision to settle for a particular ‘religious preference’... there is a direct and sociologically

⁵ Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (New York: Doubleday, 1979).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3. Scholars have problematized the tendency to speak of any universal developmental sequence, arguing that certain nation-states do not fit into the same Western defined developmental sequence of tradition-modernity-postmodernity. See Featherstone and Lash, introduction to *Global Modernities*. While I agree with such an assessment, I still find Berger’s analysis useful because it addresses the fact that technological and economic shifts since the Enlightenment have in some way affected almost all human societies such that choice, to one degree or another, has become more plural relative to the premodern period.

⁹ Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, 9.

analyzable link between the institutional and the cognitive transformations brought on by modernity.¹⁰

Simply put, institutions and worldviews are pluralized in the current situation. As a consequence of contemporary pluralism, social actors by necessity must make choices. And, as argued by Bryan Turner, choice with regard to the construction of identity in the contemporary capitalist context is not only a sociological imperative but also a self-conscious process.¹¹

As I demonstrated in previous chapters, the Terapanth diversified its own religious practices in the second half of the twentieth century by moving beyond its world-rejecting ascetic orientation toward an inner-worldly ascetic orientation for a new intermediary order concerned with enhancing the physiological and psychological health of the masses by means of the popular dissemination of *preksha*.¹² Here, I will argue that *preksha* is in part a product of globalization and transnationalism and the concomitant encounter between the Terapanth and late capitalism. Terapanthis participate in the late capitalist pluralized religious marketplace by actively responding to popular demands for religious practices oriented around body maintenance and stress reduction and compatible with certain aspects of both bio-medicine and modern yoga. Thus the adaptive strategy toward constructing and disseminating *preksha* occurs in a way that makes it intersect with popular demands and desires in the context of late capitalism, which in turn requires compatibility with certain metaphysical and scientific paradigms.

¹⁰ Ibid., 17.

¹¹ Turner, "Body in Western Society," 36.

¹² As discussed in Chapter One, "world-rejecting" asceticism is a Weberian term. Weber compared "world-rejecting" asceticism to *innerweltliche* or "inner-worldly" asceticism, which refers to those who live an ascetic life but from within society. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963. First published 1922), 166-183. For more on this topic, see Chapter One.

Thus the Terapanth and its many recent innovations can be located within the larger sociological phenomena of the transnational yoga market where they embody the shifts in trends in the late twentieth (and now early twenty-first) century. In adapting to such shifts, the contemporary Terapanth moderates the ascetic ideal and challenges the Jain dualism between body and soul. There are metaphysical spaces where this dualism even breaks down. There is also a shift from ascetic body work for the negation of the body to active engagement with and maintenance of the body. The ascetic ideal, however, does not disappear. Rather, a seemingly paradoxical dual-ideal emerges whereby the practitioner is called to engage with the body (oftentimes, through ascetic practices) as a potential tool for achieving bio-medically defined physical health and psychological well-being. Ultimately, if one desires advanced spiritual progress, then one must realize the truth of the classical Jain soteriology and enter onto the ascetic path aimed at the release of the soul from the physical body. Thus for the Terapanth the ideal is now *both* the “healthy” body and the “ascetic” body.

Adaptation to Shifting Contexts

An important characteristic of late capitalism is the unique pluralization of the religious market, which is global in scope, and in which individuals do not simply choose from a limited set of religious systems within a particular cultural point of reference but from entirely different transnational ideological and religious systems, including the scientific one. This orientation toward the world, what Berger refers to as “modern consciousness,” is a consequence of a combination of socio-historical forces.¹³ Modern technology is the major force that has increased one’s ability to choose commodities, lifestyles, and means

¹³ Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, 8.

of communication but also religious identities or worldviews. An ability to self-consciously construct one's position vis-à-vis the world depends largely on the freedom in physical mobility that results from technological developments. Physical mobility not only allows individuals to travel to other parts of the world and adopt disparate ideologies and practices but also allows proselytizing teachers to travel outside of their home states or regions to disseminate aspects of their religious systems all over the world.

Technology and the concomitant increase in physical mobility are only the beginning of the pluralization that characterizes the contemporary global situation. Technology leads to shifts in the division of labor and thus economic institutions. But as argued by Berger, modernity has complicated the "institutional network of a society" having major implications for areas far beyond technology and economics.¹⁴ He asserts: "Where there used to be one or two institutions, there are now fifty. Institutions, however, can best be understood as programs for human activity. Thus, what happens is that where there used to be one or two programs in a particular area of human life, there now are fifty."¹⁵ Not all such pluralization, as Berger points out, means increased choice, but much of it does.¹⁶

Consumerism emerges as a consequence of changing technology, economic circumstances, and the concomitant increase in choice. In fact, Fredric Jameson has famously linked the "cultural logic of late capitalism" to postmodernism, in which a lifestyle of mass consumption is set apart from the asceticism and self-restraint of early

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ As an example of increased pluralization without increased choice, Berger describes the contemporary citizen who has to pay five different sets of taxes as opposed to the subject of a traditional ruler who only has to pay one. On the contrary, increased choice is a consequence of the pluralization of "sexual lifestyles." Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, 15-16.

capitalism, which Max Weber convincingly linked to the Protestant work ethic.¹⁷ In Turner's words, "we can regard post-modernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism in which there has been a profound pluralization and fragmentation of the life-world, reflected in the perspectivism and simulation of the world of contemporary media products and consumer life style."¹⁸ The culture is "fragmented" insofar as it is constantly reprocessed and does not consist of a single dominant ideology.¹⁹ Turner further states: "Within the post-modern life style we do not simply choose things; we *know* that we choose them."²⁰ My objective here is to demonstrate that individuals *choose* religious identities in a similar way that they *choose* commodities, hence Berger's notion of the heretical imperative.

The shift toward an affirmation of the body as a part of the Self to be managed and enhanced as well as an inherently valuable part of a health-oriented life is another characteristic of consumer culture. As argued by Mike Featherstone, the inner and outer bodies are "conjoined" in this context insofar as one enhances the outer body by enhancing the inner one.²¹ In other words, body maintenance requires rigorous self-control. In consumer culture, the body and self-development are considered valuable and interlinked.

¹⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991). For Weber's theory on the Protestant work ethic and capitalism, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1930).

¹⁸ Turner, "Body in Western Society," 34.

¹⁹ Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 1991), 112.

²⁰ Turner, "Body in Western Society," 36. With regard to the argument that the postmodern situation is characterized by the ability to choose and construct religious identities, see also Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: The Penguin Press, 1967); and Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*.

²¹ Mike Featherstone, "The Body in Consumer Culture," in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth, and Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 1991), 171.

Upon reading Mahaprajna's texts, engaging with the *samanis*, and observing JVB's many attempts toward the dissemination of *preksha*, it becomes apparent that they are fully aware of the processes outlined above and have thus embarked upon a particular marketing campaign in an attempt to convince people to *choose preksha* as both an ideology and lifestyle. The most obvious attempt to disseminate *preksha* was Tulsi's choice to respond to the new freedom of travel as a consequence of advances in technology and the concomitant global spread of ideas and practices in the twentieth century by introducing the new *samani* order into the monastic community. But the acts of adaptation range far beyond that innovation and include a certain construction of *preksha* itself as compatible with bio-medicine, a healthy lifestyle, and decreased stress, as well as the production of promotional material and *preksha* classes that respond directly to transnational popular demands and trends with regard to body maintenance practices and regimens.

The Terapanth's marketing strategies include using models who ethnically resemble the majority population in Europe and North America for promotional material aimed at a "Western" audience. Mahaprajna himself is supposed to see all of the promotional material for *preksha* and *preksha* camps at the JVB University before it is distributed so that he can either approve or disapprove of it. In fact, I once came across some Hindi language promotional materials with a white female model on the front and asked one of the lay *preksha* instructors if it was common for non-Indian models to be on such materials. He responded that it was not correct, and that Mahaprajna had not seen the design of that particular pamphlet before it was produced and was "very upset" when

he saw that a white model was on the cover of a Hindi language pamphlet.²² According to my informant, Mahaprajna thought that this was “inappropriate” because Indian people would be reading that pamphlet, not white people.²³

Another marketing strategy involves allowing the *samanis* to forgo wearing the *muhpatti* or “mouth-covering,” since such a device may be off-putting to a non-Jain or non-Indian audience unfamiliar with such an ascetic practice. The *samanis* themselves acknowledge that the reason they do not wear the *muhpatti* has nothing to do with their own religious practice but with the environments they are often in, where the potential adoption from a religious system depends on the attractiveness of and comfort with that system.²⁴ The *muhpatti* is one example of a form of religious asceticism that may clash with late capitalist consumer-oriented imagery of “the good life.”²⁵

Additional marketing strategies include placing high priority on the education of the *samanis*, most of whom have master’s degrees from JVB University in Ladnun. This emphasis on the importance of their education is not unique to Mahaprajna but was also expressed by Tulsi. One *samani* enthusiastically described Tulsi’s commitment to the *samanis’* education: “He always gave great importance to our education. If a girl showed interest in becoming a *samani*, he always said, ‘First education, then initiation.’”²⁶ Today, many *samanis* continue to pursue masters and doctoral degrees even after initiation. The *samanis* consistently demonstrate great pride in holding such degrees from JVB University. These credentials represent the values of the urban contexts in which they live

²² Vivek Singh, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 28, 2009.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Repeated personal communications.

²⁵ For a discussion on the imagery of “the good life” in consumer culture, see Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, xxii.

²⁶ Samani Malli Pragya, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 28, 2009.

and work. Furthermore, their ability to actively pursue degrees distinguishes them from the fully-initiated *munis* and *sadhvis* who are sometimes allowed by the *acharya* to study at JVB University. But this is much more rare and difficult for two reasons: first, fully-initiated monastics are so busy with the rituals of everyday monastic maintenance, such as collecting alms and mending monastic robes, that the consequent lack of time makes it very difficult to commit oneself to study; and second, it thrusts them into the *laukika* or worldly realm of values, since many of the degrees offered, in subjects such as *amuvrat*, *preksha*, and social work, are oriented around social engagement and philanthropy and are thus outside the purely *lokottara* or spiritual realm of values. On the other hand, for the *samanis*, whose mission it is to disseminate *preksha* in urban centers where most of their clientele are from the middle to upper classes and thus privilege knowledge from those with a higher education, having a degree is an act toward fulfilling that mission insofar as it makes them more appealing to existing and potential patrons.

Mahaprajna and his disciples' marketing choices respond to the reality of late capitalism: human beings consciously choose from a plurality of transnational religious practices and ideologies to meet individual desires and needs. The Terapanth functions in a market and consequently responds to the fact that there are costs to certain religious practices and ideologies, primarily with regard to sustaining followers and attracting new ones. Consequently, many of the rules, such as those dealing with alms and wearing the *muhpatti*, that traditionally function to separate the monks and nuns from society, are abandoned by the new *samani* order so that they can function within society and consequently fuel the growth and influence of the Terapanth.

Their particular use of language is another indicator of the active adaptation to socio-historical circumstances on the part of the Terapanth. All of the *samanis* speak English. Their guru does not speak English, nor do most of the fully-initiated *munis* and *sadhvis* of the Terapanthi order. Yet the tradition considers it necessary that the primary disseminators of *preksha*, the *samanis*, do. Furthermore, the Terapanth uses the English language as the primary medium for most promotional pamphlets and *preksha* classes both within and outside of India. This is indicative of a pragmatic adaptation to a certain fact of the contemporary world: English is the primary means of large-scale communication.²⁷ Furthermore, many of the modern schools of yoga that have emerged and grown since the 1960s primarily rely on English as their medium of exchange. In fact, Elizabeth de Michelis' typology of modern yoga only addresses schools found in "English-speaking milieus," which is indicative of the fact that modern yoga has become popular primarily in those milieus.²⁸

However, the Terapanth is not limited to the use of English in its dissemination of *preksha*. In this way, the Terapanth is in an interesting case study with regard to the use of language in the dissemination of modern yoga, since its language choice is context-sensitive. The *samanis* are responsible for popularly disseminating *preksha* in both Hindi and English speaking milieus. In much the same way that the Terapanth shifts from a focus on *preksha* as an ascetic practice to a focus on *preksha* as a practice for physical enhancement, it also shifts from Hindi language classes, camps, and promotional material to the use of the English language for these things. This pragmatism with regard to their language choice further indicates the Terapanth's adaptive orientation with regard to the

²⁷ In India, use of the English language is also a popular indicator of elite culture.

²⁸ Elizabeth de Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 187.

dissemination of *preksha*. It also puts into question de Michelis' typology. Given the transnational nature of modern yoga, it is problematic to categorize yogic practices and ideologies based on the primary language used since such practices are most often moving across different locales and languages, whether through the establishment of formal institutions and centers, or through the informal exchange of ideas and practices.

In their English and Hindi language promotional pamphlets, websites, and newsletters as well as at the JVB centers in India, the United States, and Britain where the *samanis* teach Jains and non-Jains, the message is consistent: *preksha* will bring relief from stress and depression as well as disease, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes, diseases that Mahaprajna and his disciples associate with the stress of modern lifestyles. The concern with health and well-being, in Mahaprajna's work and as taught by the *samanis* in the monastic context, is far more limited insofar as yoga and its physical benefits are ultimately means to greater spiritual ends defined in classical Jain terms. The goal is to realize the true Self and disassociate from the body all together. In contrast, in the dissemination of *preksha* outside of the monastic context, the message rarely strays from the physiotherapeutic benefits of *preksha*. Individuals come for this-worldly benefits and leave without concern for the role of *preksha* in moving them along the *moksha-marga*.

Such concerns, as opposed to the Jain monastic ones, intersect with the popular demands and trends of the transnational yoga market in late capitalist culture, however, this is not to say that asceticism has no place in the late capitalist religious market. The *samanis* who teach *preksha* at JVB centers in the United States and Britain assert the value of ascetic practices and prescribe them despite the seemingly body-affirmative

practices involved in *preksha*. One finds the promotion of certain ascetic techniques, particularly vegetarianism and even fasting, for practitioners of *preksha*. But the key difference in the transnational popular context as opposed to the monastic context of Ladnun is that such practices are promoted for reasons more compatible with late capitalist trends, namely for perceived medical benefits instead of the spiritual benefits classically attributed to them.²⁹ This is in contrast to the type of world-rejecting asceticism described in Chapter One and Chapter Two that is characteristic of classical Terapanthi thought as well as classical schools of yoga and aims toward release from the world of normative social action, identification with the body, and human life.

Furthermore, the teachers of *preksha* themselves, the *samanis*, are celibate members of a monastic community and thus embody an ascetic ideal, although it is an inner-worldly ascetic ideal. Therefore the *samanis* do not represent an opposition to the Jain ascetic ideal but a new interpretation and implementation of that ideal. In order to understand their position and its place in the late capitalist context, it is useful to turn to Featherstone and Turner's arguments against the common assumption that contemporary capitalism is equivalent to hedonistic consumerism, suggesting instead that a "calculating hedonism," with its own ascetic qualities, characterizes consumer culture.³⁰

Featherstone argues that even though consumer culture features religion entering into the wide variety of lifestyles to be self-consciously chosen, this form of consumerism

²⁹ For example, in Chapter Three I discussed the traditional prohibition against Jains eating after dark. This is to prevent the accidental destruction of life forms when they fall into one's food without one knowing it or are attracted by the light of the fire cooking the food and thus fly into the flames. Today, not eating after dark is prescribed for the sake of health. It is believed that the digestive system functions at its best when one is awake and moving about. Furthermore, I discussed how vegetarianism is prescribed not for spiritual purification but because meat is considered generally unhealthy and oftentimes the underlying cause of diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. If pressed, proponents of *preksha* will always acknowledge the spiritual benefits of such practices as well, but those are often not the reasons initially offered.

³⁰ Featherstone, *Consumer Culture*, 112-13. See also, Mike Featherstone, "Body in Consumer Culture," 171.

is not the same as hedonism.³¹ Rather, discipline and hedonism are not incompatible.³² As mentioned above, rigorous self-control for the sake of body maintenance functions as part of the successful construction of the Self.³³ Turner agrees:

Modern societies are... caught between two contradictory processes which both produce and regulate the body, while also freeing it for the hedonistic pleasures of modern consumerism... The modern world is a place of biopolitics which requires and achieves a certain surveillance of the person through the regimentation of the body. However, there are other forces which through consumerism allow a certain liberation of the body as a vehicle of hedonism and desire. These two forces are part of the profound set of cultural contradictions within modern capitalism.³⁴

In this context, the Terapanth provides both a “regimentation of the body” and a “liberation of the body.” In day-to-day practice, there is an emphasis on the value of healthy bodies for the sake of improving the individual and the world at large. Yet, alongside the de-asceticized practices and concerns, Mahaprajna and the *samanis* also emphasize the necessity of ascetic practices for perceived benefits to health and, for those concerned with spirituality, as a means to *advanced* spiritual development. They themselves as the ascetic leaders and as objects of great reverence represent the fact that asceticism continues to fulfill a vital function for the Jain Terapanth, even beyond the immediate and monastic setting of the JVB community in Rajasthan, as it adapts to late capitalist consumer culture.

Featherstone outlines a specific function of asceticism in the context of consumerism. He recognizes that asceticism has been invoked throughout history in an attempt to liberate the soul from the body, particularly the sexual body. However, he

³¹ Featherstone, *Consumer Culture*, 112-13.

³² Featherstone, “Body in Consumer Culture,” 171.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Turner, “Body in Western Society,” 39. See also, Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (London: Heineman, 1976).

argues that in consumer culture individuals adopt ascetic regimens of diet and exercise in order to enhance sexual prowess.³⁵ De Michelis' analysis of modern yoga includes such an evaluation in terms of the motivation on the part of participants in yoga classes who attend for the sake of "physical grooming" and "youthful looks."³⁶ Furthermore, in her field research amongst yoga practitioners in Rishikesh, Sarah Strauss also observed that women often attended yoga classes primarily as a way of "losing weight" or "staying fit."³⁷ This is all in line with Featherstone's argument that ascetic practice is a characteristic of consumer culture, yet "the reward for ascetic body work ceases to be spiritual salvation or even improved health but becomes an enhanced appearance and more marketable self."³⁸ In other words, asceticism remains, but the goal is different. Thus diet and exercise, for example, function primarily to improve physical appearance rather than to release the soul from the physical body.

Here Featherstone's argument does not explain the attitude toward the dietary and exercise regimens of Mahaprajna and the *samanis*, but this does often explain the motivation on the part of students who attend *preksha* classes. The *samanis* embody a certain paradox here insofar as they lead the *preksha* class in white cotton saris covering most of their bodies, their heads shaved, physically representing the ascetic concern with inverting sexual prowess, and yet they lead a yoga class filled with women most often concerned with improving the appearance of their bodies in order to enhance sexual prowess. As discussed in Chapter Four, such students rarely come to *preksha* classes with spiritual aims as their primary motivation, although they often pursue yoga as a de-

³⁵ Featherstone, "Body in Consumer Culture," 182.

³⁶ De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 249.

³⁷ Sarah Strauss, *Positioning Yoga: Balancing Acts Across Cultures* (New York: Berg, 2005), 77.

³⁸ Featherstone, "Body in Consumer Culture," 170-71.

stressor in addition to its physical benefits.³⁹ The *samanis* teach students with such motivations, but their own motivation remains progress along the *moksha-marga*. Although the *samanis* are inner-worldly ascetics, a part of that role involves detachment from the world. In other words, they participate in the world but remain detached from worldly benefits.

Turner contributes an additional analysis of the nature of consumerism and asceticism that explains the compatibility of the *samanis*' attitude toward *preksha* and late capitalist culture when he articulates the cultural shift toward the "medicalization of the body in which religious notions of asceticism were gradually replaced by secular medical perspectives and regimens"; this process is linked to the "secularization of the body."⁴⁰ The biopolitical agenda of religious authority shifts in the modern context to the medical profession and in response religious institutions, such as the Terapanth, appropriate medical discourse in order to reclaim that authority. Mahaprajna and his disciples, the *samanis*, demonstrate that the religious is not "replaced" by the "secular," but religious systems now seek to manage the body in a way that is considered compatible with the medicalization of the body. *Preksha* is thus prescribed as a system compatible with scientific or medical concerns, without becoming entirely divorced of its religious ideology or the sanctity its practitioners ascribe to it. This was evident in Chapter Three, in which we discussed Mahaprajna's somaticization of the subtle body in his construction of *preksha* and in Chapter Four, in which we discussed the *samanis*' *preksha* classes, in which the monastic teachers do not voice a concern with "sexual

³⁹ Strauss adds that the women in Rishikesh also mentioned "relaxation" as a motivation for attending yoga classes. Strauss, *Positioning Yoga*, 77.

⁴⁰ Turner, "Body in Western Society," 35.

prowess,” but they consistently invoke medical language to explain the functions and benefits of *preksha*.

In the cultural context of consumer culture and late capitalism, the Terapanth also seeks to regulate consumption by means of an ethical call to *ahimsa* as defined, not in the classical sense of purification and spiritual liberation, but in the socially activist sense of compassion and world transformation. As already discussed in previous chapters, there is definitely a philanthropist thread to the Terapanth’s contemporary agenda. Mahaprajna believes that by changing individuals with the methods involved in *preksha*, the world at large will change for the better. As part of that thought, practitioners are called to resist over-consumption, which is perceived to be one of the greatest problems of modernity. The transnational environmental movement has resisted over-consumption and convincingly argued that the planet cannot sustain consumption on the levels at which it occurs today, and in fact, according to Featherstone, attempts to regulate consumption have occurred at each stage of consumer culture’s development and expansion and have had sources in both forms of religious asceticism and Puritanism as well as non-religious forms of regulation.⁴¹

This further complicates the picture of what it means to be a traditional religious institution that actively adapts to shifting socio-historical circumstances. Just because certain Terapanthi innovations are in line with popular demands and trends in consumer culture does not mean that one should reduce such innovations to uncalculated consumerism. In fact, as argued by Featherstone:

[Consumption] clearly involves consumers in calculation, comparisons and research: in short consumer culture involves knowledge. Not just knowledge of cost-efficient goods and bargains, or that of the connoisseur or taste-maker who

⁴¹ Featherstone, *Consumer Culture*, xvii.

know their wine, décor, restaurants and travel destinations, but also (especially in the new middle class) knowledge of the ethical background of goods.

Mahaprajna's "New Year Message" delivered via email on January 2, 2010 to people all over the world with formal and informal affiliations with JVB demonstrates this point. In his message, which was delivered already having been translated into English, Mahaprajna mentions nothing of classical Jain world-rejecting ascetic practices, such as fasting, celibacy, or meditation. He does however provide the following criticism of the present state of world affairs:

Unfortunately society gave priority to economic development rather than moral values and that has become the root cause of problems. Materialistic economic development in the world has increased consumerism manifold. Excessive use of natural resources and its products are polluting air, water and environment. Such pollution is not only impacting our physical health, it is negatively impacting our mind and thought. For making this world a beautiful place to live for our future generation, we must be able to strike balance between development and environment.⁴²

In many ways, Mahaprajna and his disciples, despite their dramatic innovations and adaptations to current socio-historical circumstances and in line with late capitalist cultural trends, do not reflect a hedonistic consumer culture but demand certain inner-worldly ascetic and calculative behaviors on the part of their followers. In this way, followers of the guru are expected to replicate the inner-worldly asceticism of his disciples, the *samanis*. Such demands are motivated by the attribution of non-monetary value to certain "goods," and for this reason acts of innovation cannot be reduced to processes of commodification even if the motivation is to increase choice. We will return to this issue below.

⁴² Mahaprajna, "New Year Message," email message to undisclosed recipients, January 2, 2010.

The Intersection of *Preksha* and the New Age Movement

I have argued that *preksha* is a product of the encounter between late capitalism and the Jain Terapanth and have pointed out some of the ways in which Mahaprajna and his disciples market *preksha* in response to the specific demands and trends of late capitalist consumer culture. Proponents present *preksha* as a non-sectarian practice, available to all people independent of religious identity or background, and compatible with bio-medicine and other schools of modern yoga. Most of all, there is a shift away from the classical Jain dualism that calls for disassociation from the body toward an affirmation of the body as a part of the Self to be managed and enhanced. As noted above, whereas early capitalist culture featured a subordination of the body to the soul, contemporary capitalist culture treats both as components of the Self.⁴³ In these ways, *preksha* is compatible with the socio-historical context of late capitalism, but it also intersects in many ways with what is characteristic of the New Age movement or “new spirituality” of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Albanese describes this new spirituality as without boundaries of membership, affiliation, or sets of beliefs or practices. From the perspective of American history, she argues: “A new generation of metaphysical thinkers emerged with pragmatic agendas for everything from mystical practice to environmental needs, from pursuit of the divine feminine to international peace, and from promoting true science and holistic health to spiritual and psychological transformation.”⁴⁴ This metaphysical new spirituality features a shared lingua franca of the “enlightened *body-self*.”⁴⁵ Her category of the enlightened

⁴³ Turner, “Body in Western Society,” 33.

⁴⁴ Albanese, *Republic*, 505.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 514.

body-self points to a non-dualist metaphysical position that locates divinity and transcendence within the embodied Self.

Hugh Urban's evaluation of the New Age movement in the context of late capitalism informs the analysis that a non-dualist metaphysics is characteristic of late capitalist consumer culture. Urban argues that what the New Age movement shares with late capitalism can be found in tantra.⁴⁶ He asserts that, in late capitalism, we find a denial of the dualism between the material world and the spiritual world. Using Fredric Jameson's expression, "the spiritual logic of late capitalism," Urban claims:

With its apparent union of spirituality and sexuality, sacred transcendence and material enjoyment, Tantrism might well be said to be the ideal religion for late twentieth-century Western consumer culture... 'the spiritual logic of late capitalism.'⁴⁷

Urban adds that tantra may be "the very essence of the liberated, holistic spirituality that characterizes the New Age as a whole – a spirituality that would no longer repress the human body, sexuality, and the desire for material prosperity but integrate them with the need for spiritual nourishment."⁴⁸ In other words, according to Urban, what we find in tantra, we also find in the New Age movement *and* late capitalist culture, and thus all three coexist quite nicely.

Consequently, New Age religiosity and tantra, both of which feature a non-dualist metaphysics, are useful comparative categories for evaluating *preksha*. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, *preksha*, like several streams within the New Age movement, in many ways resembles *hatha yoga*, which is the school of yoga associated with tantra. In fact,

⁴⁶ Hugh B. Urban, "The Cult of Ecstasy: Tantrism, the New Age, and the Spiritual Logic of Late Capitalism," *History of Religions* 39, no. 3 (February 2000): 270. See also, Hugh B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

⁴⁷ Urban, "Cult of Ecstasy," 270; see also, Urban, *Tantra*. Urban cites and relies here on Jameson, *Post-Modernism*.

⁴⁸ Urban, "Cult of Ecstasy," 270.

preksha challenges the classical Jain dualist position by means of linking the physical body and the soul by means of consciousness, which functions as a constituent of both the soul and the subtle body, as well as the somaticization of the subtle body, which in turn sacralizes the body as an essential part of the spiritual path. I agree with Albanese when she argues that it would be too simplistic to equate the new forms of yoga that began to emerge in the nineteenth century with tantra. However, as a comparative category, tantra provides a useful lens for understanding a certain metaphysical compatibility of both the New Age movement and modern yoga, including *preksha*, with the context of late capitalism.⁴⁹

Although I disagree with Urban's conflation of late capitalism with "Western consumer culture" and his analysis of late capitalism as characterized by an overwhelmingly hedonistic treatment of the human body, which ignores the central role that asceticism plays in this context, his suggestion that tantra can function as a lens for uncovering the intersection of contemporary socio-economic processes and socio-religious ones is useful. The non-dualist metaphysics of tantra certainly align with conceptions of the Self in the consumer culture of late capitalism and thus it becomes increasingly clear why certain ideologies and practices, particularly non-dualist ones, thrive in this context.

Like *preksha*, which as a Jain practice can be located at one location in a historical trajectory going back to the eighteenth century figure, Bikshu, and even as far back as the founder of the Jain tradition, Mahavira of the fifth century BCE, the New Age movement is not without a long history. Albanese places it in the history of what she terms "metaphysical religion" in Britain and the United States the earliest precursors of

⁴⁹ On the metaphysics of New Age spirituality, see Albanese, *Republic*, 372.

which go as far back as Hellenic and Hermetic thought.⁵⁰ She traces this history up through the nineteenth and early twentieth century Romantic and orientalist appropriations of the “East” and places the New Age at the present day location of this ongoing trajectory of metaphysical religion. But even though *preksha* and the New Age movement are part of such long historical trajectories, there are ways in which their contemporary manifestations align with late capitalist cultural trends beyond the metaphysical ones.

Urban points out, for instance, that the syncretism of contemporary forms of New Age religiosity adopts disparate elements from different religions based on the needs and concerns of the individual.⁵¹ This is consistent with Paul Heelas’ analysis that the New Age is “detraditionalized” and with an emphasis on “spiritual technologies” drawn from various religious traditions.⁵² Albanese agrees.⁵³

Syncretism is characteristic of the history of religions as a whole, but the pluralization of religious practices and ideologies in the late capitalist context provides the ideal context for such “picking and choosing,” which now occurs on a global scale and involves transnational flows of spiritual practices and wares. It is in that socio-historical context that choice became an imperative rather than a possibility. For this reason, we have what Albanese describes as “new spirituality” emerging in the late twentieth century:

⁵⁰ Albanese, *Republic*.

⁵¹ Urban, “Cult of Ecstasy,” 296; see also, Urban, *Tantra*. For studies on the history of the New Age and New Age metaphysics, see Albanese, *Republic*; and Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998).

⁵² Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Oxford University Press, 1996), 2, 68.

⁵³ Albanese, *Republic*, 508.

Now it was ‘new spirituality’ – a new spirituality that went its way innocuously and underlabeled. Meditation became a property that even mainstream churches promoted. Environmentalism brought sacred sensibilities into the offices of lobbyists. Alternative healing, to the consternation of mainstream medical professionals, became a majority practice alongside the work of credentialed physicians. Psychics found their niches as service professionals... Chakras functioned as part of a new spiritual vocabulary. The New Age was stepping aside for a new and exoteric spiritual America.⁵⁴

And it was that very phenomenon, which was not limited to the United States but was in fact happening in other parts of the world including India and Britain, that made it possible for *preksha* along with other schools of modern yoga, to enter into and thrive in the new transnational flow of religious wares.

Preksha and Transcendental Meditation

The Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi provides a specific example of a form of “new” spirituality along the same historical trajectory as the “New Age” that shares much with *preksha*.⁵⁵ Mahaprajna and Maharishi both exploited the robust trends following the 1960s whereby a transnational yoga market emerged, and yoga was now a form of popular practice amongst Indians, Americans, and Europeans. Not only do *preksha* and TM share certain characteristics with regard to the proposed methods of their relative systems, but also their relationship is important since proponents of *preksha* actively compare the perceived beneficial effects of *preksha* to those of TM.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 513.

⁵⁵ Albanese locates TM along the trajectory of American metaphysical religion. Albanese, *Republic*, 371. Humes argues that, although TM furthered many New Age beliefs, it ultimately rejected such spiritual traditions and instead prioritized Hindu orthodoxy. Cynthia Ann Humes, “Maharishi Mahesh Yogi: Beyond the TM Technique,” in *Gurus in America*, ed. Thomas A. Forsthoefel and Cynthia Ann Humes (New York: SUNY Press, 2005), 56.

A comparison of these two schools of thought and practice may help toward conceptualizing the extent to which Elizabeth de Michelis' typology for modern yoga applies to *preksha*, since TM (at least in its early form) falls into the Modern Meditational Yoga type rather than the Modern Postural Yoga type.⁵⁶ For these reasons and in order to better understand the ways in which *preksha* functions as one case study of a plural phenomenon in the second half of the twentieth century, I will evaluate TM in comparison to *preksha* and the ways in which both systems similarly (and at times dissimilarly) have strategically responded directly to late twentieth and early twenty-first century transnational popular discourses, trends, and demands.

Before elaborating on the similarities in the marketing strategies of proponents of TM and *preksha*, I would like to first comment on certain similarities in the founding figures of these movements. Such similarities are significant for understanding the importance attributed on the part of religious institutions to adapting to shifting socio-historical circumstances while maintaining a claim to ancient origins with regard to religious ideology and practice, a dual agenda that Joseph S. Alter refers to as “the ironic discontinuity between discourses of origin and the brute fact of transnationalism.”⁵⁷

Maharishi and Mahaprajna both maintain that their teachings continue the legacies of the founders of their religious lineages. Maharishi's guru was Swami Brahmananda Sarasvati, a *Shankaracharya* of the Jyotir Math between 1941 and 1953. Mahaprajna was the disciple of Acharya Tulsi, the monastic leader of the Jain Terapanth between 1936 and 1995. Tulsi and Brahmananda Sarasvati both sought to bring the

⁵⁶ De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 188. De Michelis argue that the late Transcendental Meditation falls into the Modern Denominational Yoga type.

⁵⁷ Joseph S. Alter, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body between Science and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 8.

teachings of their respective lineage's founder to the masses. Tulsi traveled throughout India in an attempt to spread the Anuvrat movement that he believed encapsulated the teachings of Bikshu and thus Mahavira himself, and Brahmananda Sarasvati spread *advaita vedanta* during his travels throughout northern India, attracting thousands of people as his disciples along the way. Brahmananda Sarasvati's monastic organization, the Jyotir Math, sought to preserve the non-dualist teachings of the eighth century philosopher, Shankara, who claimed the correct interpretation of the Upanishads. Both Maharishi and Mahaprajna locate their own proselytizing efforts as acts of devotion to their gurus, whom they affectionately refer to with the title of "Guru Dev" (Guru God). Thus Maharishi and Mahaprajna can both be located in conservative monastic lineages, and both sought to re-introduce to India and the rest of the world what they considered the "true" and "original" teachings of their respective traditions.

A major difference between Maharishi and Mahaprajna is that Maharishi took his movement beyond India's borders on his own (and recruited teachers in Britain and the United States), whereas Mahaprajna assigned the task to the *samanis*, who have nonetheless functioned as teachers of *preksha* under his authority from afar. This difference points to the fact that the Jain ascetic ideal remains the ideal commitment in Terapanthi thought so that even the charismatic guru must embody that ideal and thus must creatively negotiate new ways to respond to the world either indirectly or through mediators.

When Maharishi initially traveled outside of India in 1955 and began to spread his TM school of thought and practice in Britain and the United States, he acted much like a traditional Hindu guru, requiring devotion, the majority of which he directed at his own

guru, Brahmananda Sarasvati.⁵⁸ He carried with him his *advaita vedanta* lineage and taught that the mantric meditation method for the realization of the non-duality of Self and *brahman*, the cosmic essence, he delivered was introduced by his Guru Dev. Yet despite this traditional *advaita* teaching and devotion to his guru, Maharishi also adapted his message to his audiences by claiming that the benefits of meditation could be proven by science and by initiating teachers who were neither monastic nor official brahman gurus.⁵⁹

By the early 1960s, he had begun responding directly to popular desires on the part of an emerging transnational market for meditation as a means to reduce stress and improve self-development by under-emphasizing the explicitly Hindu aspects of his teaching, such as devotionalism, caste, reincarnation, and traditional gender norms.⁶⁰ Like Mahaprajna who medicalized and psychologized *preksha*, Maharishi adopted less explicitly spiritual language, such as “Transcendental Consciousness” as the goal of TM instead of “Enlightenment.”⁶¹ In the early 1970s, especially with the adoption of the “Science of Creative Intelligence” (SCI) as the new title for his school of thought, Maharishi reached the pinnacle of his attempt to market TM as a science rather than as a Hindu tradition.⁶² This is not unlike JVB’s “Science of Living” campaign in India, which seeks to promote *preksha* as an improved lifestyle based on science, rather than a religious practice. Likewise, the *samanis* emphasize the functions of *preksha* as a lifestyle choice, rather than as a part of religious identity. Both Maharishi and Mahaprajna along

⁵⁸ Humes, “Maharishi Mahesh Yogi”, 57.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 57, 64-65.

⁶¹ Ibid., 65.

⁶² Ibid., 65. In the 1980s, the TM movement also established the Maharishi Vedic Approach to Health, which promotes traditional Indian medicine as a complementary system to modern bio-medicine.

with their followings also attempted to associate themselves with science by means of their academic emphasis. Maharishi opened the Maharishi International University in Fairfield, Iowa in 1974, whereas Tulsi and Mahaprajna opened the Jain Vishva Bharati Insitute in 1991, which became the Jain Vishva Bharati University under the acharyaship of Mahaprajna in 2006.⁶³

TM proponents emphasize its scientific grounding and its ability to bring about physical and psychological health, and this has resulted in hundreds of scientific studies on TM. Although such studies have rarely been published in peer-reviewed journals and have been the object of criticism by much of the scientific community for their “poor methodological quality,” many proponents of TM and other meditative techniques consider such studies legitimate evidence of the health benefits of meditation.⁶⁴

Proponents of *preksha* agree and, in fact, one reason why a comparative analysis of Mahaprajna’s *preksha* movement and Maharishi’s TM movement may be useful for understanding them both is because proponents of *preksha* themselves actively compare the two practices and what are believed to be their health benefits.

More than any other Terapanthi I encountered, Samani Malli Pragya took this comparison very seriously. Malli Pragya recently completed her doctoral thesis in the Department of Science of Living, Preksha Meditation and Yoga at JVB University, and

⁶³ Jains in diaspora, Terapanthi and non-Terapanthi, continue attempts to associate the Jain tradition with academia as part of their argument that Jain thought is scientific. And in fact, two *samanis*, Samani Unnata Pragya and Samani Charitra Pragya teach courses in the Department of Religious Studies at Florida International University (Miami, Florida). Furthermore, many Jains in the United States recently worked together in a non-sectarian movement to finance a “Bhagwan Mahavir Professorship of Jain Studies” at Florida International University. That professorship was officially established in March 2010 and Nathan Katz currently holds that chair.

⁶⁴ M.B. Ospina, K. Bond, M. Karkhaneh, *et al*, “Clinical Trials of Meditation Practices in Healthcare: Characteristics and Quality,” *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 14, no. 10 (December 2008): 1199-213.

enthusiastically shared it with me during my visit to Ladnun in the summer of 2009.⁶⁵ The thesis is titled, *Influence of Preksha Meditation on Personality and Emotional States of Under Graduate Girls*. In her thesis, Malli Pragya cites many of the scientific studies on TM and argues that similar studies should be performed on *preksha* (what she refers to, in short, as PM for “*preksha* meditation”). She conducted her own study on *preksha*’s effects on “personality and emotional states” of undergraduate girls and cites her results as evidence of the scientific grounding of *preksha*, which she concludes improved the personality and emotional states of her subjects. Malli Pragya argues that additional studies should be done on *preksha* in the same way that studies were done on TM, which went beyond measuring TM’s effects on personality and emotions and measured physiological responses to TM techniques (such as heart rate and blood analysis). Malli Pragya argues that, given the proven effects of TM in such studies, it is reasonable to believe that *preksha* will have the same results.⁶⁶

The question arises as to why proponents of *preksha* so actively compare it to TM as opposed to other modern schools of meditation or yoga. According to de Michelis’ typology, early TM is an example of Modern Meditational Yoga whereas later TM is an example of Modern Denominational Yoga.⁶⁷ Modern Meditational Yoga emphasizes techniques of concentration and meditation, whereas Modern Denominational Yoga is increasingly ideologically engaged with stronger sectarian tendencies and less focused on yogic practice.⁶⁸ Based on my analysis of *preksha*, it more closely resembles Modern

⁶⁵ See Malli Pragya, *Influence of Preksha Meditation on Personality and Emotional States of Under Graduate Girls*, doctoral thesis, Department of Science of Living, Preksha Meditation and Yoga (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati University, 2007).

⁶⁶ Samani Malli Pragya, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 28, 2009.

⁶⁷ De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga*, 188.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

Meditational Yoga and Modern Denominational Yoga in the monastic context. However, in the context of its popular dissemination, *preksha* more closely fits the category of Modern Postural Yoga, since *preksha* yoga classes are almost entirely focused on the practice of *asana* and *pranayama*. By using de Michelis' typology to locate *preksha* and TM within larger trends, it becomes increasingly evident that these yogic schools are context-sensitive. Whether *preksha* is about Jain ideology, monastic practice, meditative practice, or physical practice depends on who and where it is being defined. In other words, the meaning of *preksha* depends on the intentions and priorities of the practitioner.

Malli Pragya emphasizes the meditative side of *preksha* in her comparison of it to TM, which is primarily a meditative practice focused on mantra. When I asked Malli Pragya what specific qualities TM and *preksha* had in common, she replied that both use mantra.⁶⁹ Of course, mantra is only one step in the *preksha* ritual structure and is occurs in various degrees in most South Asian schools of meditation and yoga, so this alone does not explain why she chose to compare *preksha* to TM. Rather, I suspect that the more significant reason proponents of *preksha*, such as Malli Pragya, choose to compare it to TM is because TM provides an example of a school of meditation that has been tested by science, and producing such scientific studies of *preksha* is a major priority for professors and monastics teaching and studying at JVB University. Malli Pragya emphasized that scholars at JVB University hope to produce many studies on *preksha* that are similar to those that have been done on TM. Furthermore, one reason that there are so many scientific studies on TM is because its proponents' dissemination of the practice occurred on a large scale, which enabled the necessary large-scale interest in producing such

⁶⁹ Samani Malli Pragya, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 28, 2009.

studies. Proponents of *preksha* can thus turn to TM as an example of how a religious institution has successfully marketed itself in the modern yoga market. Perhaps their desire to market their meditative/yogic practices in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century modern yoga market by proving the scientific grounding of such practices is what the TM and *preksha* movements share the most.

The attempt to compare *preksha* to TM is otherwise surprising, given the radically conflicting ontologies that underlie the two systems: Jain dualism and Vedantic non-dualism. The fact that proponents of *preksha* explicitly make the comparison demonstrates that, in the transnational dissemination of *preksha*, its (and TM's) function matters more than its underlying ontology at least to the extent that practitioners participate on an introductory level. For as already demonstrated, most practitioners of *preksha* outside of the monastic context do not readily engage with the dualist ontology but rather focus on the enhancement of the body as a part of self-development. For this reason, the *samanis* reserve the philosophical concepts of non-duality for advanced practitioners who demonstrate an explicit interest in what they refer to as "Jain spirituality." Likewise, Maharishi did not initially require introductory practitioners to have an *advaita* philosophical understanding in order to practice TM.⁷⁰ Rather, their promotion of TM's relative techniques focused on health and well-being.

But their concern with health and well-being does not completely overshadow the doctrinal underpinnings of these two systems. In fact, beginning in 1976, the underlying Hindu character of Maharishi's movement became increasingly evident to non-Indian practitioners, and it became clear that TM was only a first step to a characteristically Hindu spiritual path that sought ultimately to lead to the "embodiment of Vedic

⁷⁰ Humes, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi," 64.

virtues.”⁷¹ Catherine Ann Humes thus argues that Maharishi adopted a universalist position during the movement’s initial growth but then moved to a particularist position, locating TM within the Hindu fold.⁷² He never, however, forfeited certain features that made it marketable as a form of new spirituality, such as refusing to call it “Hindu” and continuing to adopt scientific discourse.⁷³ Humes describes the conflicting nature of the movement:

The Transcendental Meditation Movement in America has meandered. First appearing as a plastic export Hinduism, it quickly segued into an Import, a nondevotional form of meditation marketed as a “scientific technique,” only to morph again into a full-fledged incarnation of a multinational, capitalist Vedantic Export Religion. Playing on themes of universal Vedic wisdom and the primacy of personal experience first introduced to the West during the Hindu Renaissance, Maharishi appropriates the idiom of Western intellectualism and situates his movement as science and even “natural law,” whereas to Indians, he boldly affirms his movement to be “Vedic Science.”⁷⁴

According to Humes, Maharishi “crafted what many would identify as a highly influential Hindu global theological perspective... by denying the Hindu-ness of his teachings, and at least for a time, any religious quality.”⁷⁵ According to Humes, Maharishi’s choices demonstrate an “adaptive strategy” that would dominate the marketing attempts by the TM movement from the 1960s to the present day.⁷⁶

Proponents of the TM movement, like those of *preksha*, as well as many associated with streams within New Age religiosity, actively market their teachings by proposing so called non-sectarian ideologies and practices rather than locating them within particular cultural and religious traditions. Yet because of TM’s ultimate

⁷¹ Ibid., 67.

⁷² Ibid., 72.

⁷³ Ibid., 73.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 74.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

commitment to the *advaita vedanta* of Shankara, the movement maintains its reputation as Hindu.⁷⁷ A similar argument can be made for Mahaprajna's *preksha* movement. Although Mahaprajna and the *samanis* argue that *preksha* is a lifestyle choice for the improvement of physical health and psychological well-being, ultimately, the Terapanth remains committed to a classical Jain dualist ontology in their construction of the ascetic soteriological path. In other words, the *lokottara* is privileged as the only realm of values permissible for one concerned with progress along the *moksha-marga*. In the Conclusion, I will discuss this further and will demonstrate that, like Maharishi's TM movement, which meandered as a consequence of its unrelinquishing grasp on a characteristically vedantic ontology and soteriology, the growth of the *preksha* movement beyond Jain circles is stunted by its classical Jain ontology and soteriology.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with the ways in which the construction and dissemination of *preksha* intersects with popular discourses, demands, and trends in the context of late capitalism. In other words, my concern has been to demonstrate the ways in which proponents of *preksha* respond to the transnational yoga market in their construction of *preksha*. A growing literature evaluates the construction of religious practices in the capitalist socio-historical context but is concerned primarily with who profits in the market.⁷⁸ Such literature criticizes the so-called "capitalist spiritual marketplace." I find that, despite differences in the core questions of such literature and

⁷⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁷⁸ See Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005); Kimberly J. Lau, *New Age Capitalism: Making Money East of Eden* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); and Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

the current study, it is important to engage with them in order to fully evaluate the nature of new religious practices in the late capitalist context. For that reason, I would like to engage some of the observations and theses of a deeply critical text, Jeremy Carrette and Richard King's *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*.

In contrast to Albanese's analysis that new spiritualities emerged out of a long history of metaphysical religion, Carrette and King do not locate such religious forms on any historical trajectory and instead argue that they are mere products of capitalism that function to heal "anxiety" that has resulted from disillusionment with traditional religious institutions.⁷⁹ With regard to the category of "spirituality" itself, they argue, "The very ambiguity of the term means that it can operate across different social and interest groups and in capitalist terms, function to establish a market niche."⁸⁰ Since we demonstrated above that there are important overlaps between such new spiritualities and *preksha*, I would like to respond to Carrette and King's reduction of such spiritualities to capitalist commodities and their argument that their proponents simply "rebrand" ancient religious ideas and practices, thus exploiting such traditions.

According to Carrette and King, new spiritualities often re-define religious categories. Such acts amount to a "rebranding" of ancient religious traditions.⁸¹ This critique brings up an important question for the current study: do Mahaprajna and his disciples simply "rebrand" ancient categories such as "Jain," "yoga," and "meditation"? It is my contention that such an assessment would be far too simplistic. It is certainly the case that, by means of reform and innovation, the Jain Terapanth constructs new approaches to classical South Asian ontological, metaphysical, and soteriological systems

⁷⁹ Carrette and King, *Selling Spirituality*, 1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

and thus reevaluates certain ancient categories. Some of the key elements in this process, as discussed throughout this dissertation, include the appropriation of scientific discourse, the concern with the enhancement of the body, a pluralist outlook that requires no formal religious affiliation or identity, and a disassociation from the negative stereotypes associated with the so called “extreme” ascetic practices (such as wearing the *muhpatti*) often linked to Jain monastic traditions. In contrast to Carrette and King, however, who suggest that, “the corporate machine or the market does not seek to validate or reinscribe the tradition but rather utilizes its cultural cachet for its own purposes and profit,” I argue that “validating” and “reinscribing” the tradition are exactly what Terapanthi proponents of *preksha* seek to do by means of its contemporary innovations. In particular, by means of an appeal to science and a concern with physical health and psychological well-being, Mahaprajna and his disciples seek to respond to new cultural desires and demands with a product that is perceived to be both authentically ancient and progressively modern. Such categories are thus reconstructed to fit a particular socio-historical context but are nonetheless believed to be simultaneously authentic indicators of truth that are original to the Jain tradition.

Although I resist Carrette and King’s analysis of contemporary spiritualities as commodities to be bought and sold in the spiritual marketplace, the authors’ insights with regard to the significance of socio-economic circumstances in the construction of religious systems is important to the current study because it forces one to address whether or not there is a difference in the contemporary religious market between choice that functions *like* choosing commodities and the commodification of religion. My analysis of the construction and dissemination of *preksha* as acts of adaptation to current

socio-historical circumstances does not demonstrate that they can be equated with the commodification of yoga. *Preksha* is not simply a commodity to be bought and sold in the capitalist marketplace for the following two reasons: first, processes of appropriation and adaptation are characteristic of the history of religions both before and within the capitalist context, and thus we cannot equate such processes with capitalist commodity exchange;⁸² and second, there are metaphysical and existential meanings of *preksha* to those who practice it even if the emphasis is on its perceived physiotherapeutic benefits.⁸³

There is no doubt, nevertheless, that many of the ways in which its proponents market *preksha* can be linked to the consumer culture of late capitalism. Mahaprajna and his disciples' choices, however, with regard to the dissemination of *preksha* reflect the fact that not all consumption is the consumption of material goods. Largely, what are marketed for consumption in the dissemination of *preksha* are lifestyle, health, and well-being. With regard to consumer culture, Featherstone argues that not only are there immaterial objects of consumption but new cultural products are not always "fed through the commodity market process."⁸⁴ Featherstone argues:

... modernity with its processes of rationalization, commodification, secularization and disenchantment does not lead to the eclipse of religious sentiments, for while formal religions may decline, symbolic classifications and ritual practices which embody sacred/profane distinctions live on at the heart of secular social processes. As Durkheim pointed out, anything can become sacred, so why not the 'profane' goods of capitalism? If we focus on the actual use of commodities it is clear that

⁸² For instance, see the Introduction and the Conclusion for Jain examples from pre-capitalist periods. I discuss the appropriation of yogic, tantric, and *bhakti* discourse and practice on the part of Jain thinkers in the medieval period as acts of adaptation to medieval period religious trends.

⁸³ For monastic practitioners, *preksha* is part of the *moksha-marga*. And even for lay practitioners whose goals are primarily physical health and psychological well-being, they often describe *preksha* as something that is deeply meaningful to them insofar as it "makes them better people." Repeated personal communications. Furthermore, many lay practitioners, though they do not attribute explicit spiritual goals to their everyday practice, do identify the *samanis* as mediators of the sacred guru. Many also participate in *preksha* camps once a year, which are considered to have a spiritual component, which includes the emphasis on health and well-being. For more on this topic, see below.

⁸⁴ Featherstone, *Consumer Culture*, xxiii.

in certain settings they can become de-commodified and receive a symbolic charge (over and above that intended by the advertisers) which makes them sacred to their users.⁸⁵

Thus the consumer culture of late capitalism is not without symbols and images that are deemed sacred. The Terapanth participates in the cultural processes of late capitalism, but the products it provides cannot be reduced to commodities, rather practitioners sanctify the enhancement of the body and psychological well-being as means to “becoming better people” or for the more explicitly religiously motivated practitioners, “becoming more spiritual.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, most of the individuals who practice *preksha* also express devotion to the *acharya* and attribute a sacred quality to him and his prescriptions. As argued by Weber, “Charismatic authority is thus specifically outside the realm of everyday routine and the profane sphere.”⁸⁷ Since the *acharyas* of the Terapanthi tradition have embodied personal charisma (in addition to charisma of office), especially those who so successfully introduced reform, such as Bikshu, Jayacharya, Tulsi, and Mahaprajna, their actions and prescriptions have occurred within a “sacred sphere.” And not only do Terapanthis imbibe sacred meaning to the object of their devotion and his teachings but they also, like Mahaprajna, imbibe sacred meaning to health itself. The attainment of health is not the attainment of a commodity of exchange but a part of self-development. Thus, in this cultural context as in others, socio-historical circumstances are

⁸⁵ Ibid., 119.

⁸⁶ Repeated personal communications.

⁸⁷ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. and with an introduction by Talcott Parsons, trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1964. First published 1947), 361. In a footnote, the editor adds: “Weber used the antithesis of *Charisma* and *Alltag* in two senses. On the one hand, of the extraordinary and temporary as opposed to the everyday and routine; on the other hand, the sacred as opposed to the profane.”

significant determinants of how a religious system chooses to construct its “products,” but those who participate in that system may nonetheless deem those products sacred.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Many yoga studios in North America feature teachers who, while not identifying with any particular religious tradition or ideology and emphasizing the physical and psychological benefits of yoga, deem yogic practice to be a “spiritual” or “religious” one. See, for instance, the website of a Texas organization, the Texas Yoga Association (TYA). With the leadership of Jennifer Buergermeister as Director and Executive Director, the TYA is a collaboration of Texas yoga practitioners and teachers to overturn the Texas state mandated regulation of yoga. Members of the TYA argue that yoga is an ancient practice comprised of a plurality of branches. They maintain that yoga has developed as a “spiritual” and “religious” practice, not simply as a “trade skill” or “sport.” www.texyoga.org.

Conclusion

For the body's perfection, asanas, pranayama, bandhas etc. are useful but the most important is non-attachment.

Mahaprajna, *Toward Inner Harmony*, 63

People do not understand why [Acharya Shri] wears a mask.

Samani Madhur Pragya, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 29, 2009

Since the introduction of the *samani* order in 1980, the Terapanth has pursued a large-scale dissemination of *preksha* by means of convincing people to *choose preksha* as a lifestyle regimen that guarantees physical health and psychological well-being. However, in their efforts to disseminate *preksha* beyond the Terapanthi monastic and Jain lay contexts, they have been unsuccessful relative to other movements in the transnational market for modern yoga of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, such as Transcendental Meditation or Iyengar Yoga. I will conclude here by evaluating the extent of *preksha's* dissemination and will attempt to answer questions with regard to why *preksha* has not attracted a large-scale following as has other forms of modern yoga.

Working out from the Terapanth's central location in Ladnun, Rajasthan, we can trace the dissemination of *preksha* as such. It has established a JVB University in Ladnun along with separate living quarters for *samanis* and *munis* on campus and living quarters for *sadhvis* very close to campus. In addition to the numerous locations throughout India where the *samanis* travel and live for prolonged periods of time to teach lay practitioners the techniques involved in *preksha*, there are two formal centers in India for the study of *preksha*: Preksha Vishva Bharati in Koba, Ahmedabad; and Adhyatma Sadhana Kendra in New Delhi. Outside of India, there are a number of locations under the rubric of Preksha International. Basically, the Preksha International label signifies a location where

an individual or individuals practice *preksha* in some form in their homes or businesses, but *samanis* have not established JVB centers nor do they live in such locations.

Representatives for Preksha International can be found in the following locations: Russia; Ukraine; Kazakhstan; the Netherlands; Germany; Australia; and Singapore. It is from these locations, especially Russia, that participants for English language *preksha* camps in Ladnun are recruited.¹ Such individuals, usually neither ethnically Indian nor self-identifying Jains, are most often interested in *preksha* as one amongst many spiritual and health practices oriented around yoga, meditation, and naturopathic healing. As mentioned in previous chapters, the JVB centers outside of India where the *samanis* live and teach *preksha* are in the following locations: London, Britain; Houston, Texas; Iselin, New Jersey; and Orlando, Florida. At each of these locations, the *samanis* usually attract between fifteen and fifty lay practitioners of *preksha* on a weekly basis.

Beyond Mahaprajna and the *Samanis*

Although my research focused primarily on Mahaprajna's construction of *preksha* and the *samanis'* role in its dissemination, I also sought to understand the ways in which proponents of *preksha* taught and practiced it in other contexts, particularly the locations of Preksha International and the Adhyatma Sadhana Kendra. I will evaluate these two contexts below in order to fully comprehend the influence and reach of *preksha*. These organizations represent potential applications of *preksha* that differ, although not entirely, from those at the JVB centers and will help us understand why the dissemination of *preksha* has not been as large in scale as that of other schools of modern yoga.

¹ Most of the *preksha* camps in Ladnun use Hindi as the medium of exchange and thus primarily attract Jains and Hindus living in Rajasthan and other parts of northern India.

Adhyatma Sadhana Kendra

Popular interest in naturopathic medicine, especially the transnational markets for Indian and Chinese medical systems, has grown since the 1960s.² Such trends are aligned with those of the transnational flow of yoga. Yoga and traditional forms of medicine became transnational products, often explained by means of modern scientific discourse. As argued by S. Irfan Habib and Dhruv Raina, those who are “reinventing” traditional medicine maintain that the distinction between traditional schools of medicine and the modern one is not an ontological one but an epistemological one so that one can be explained in terms of the other.³ In this way, a traditional form of medicine can be “Indian” or “Chinese” but also “scientific.”

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, Mahaprajna and his disciples have exploited recent popular trends in the transnational yoga market. For instance, as discussed in Chapter Three, Mahaprajna resists an ontological distinction between yoga and physiology and thus constructs *preksha* in a way that makes it function as bio-medicine. Mahaprajna and his disciples have in similar ways exploited trends in the transnational market for naturopathic medicine. In fact, proponents of *preksha* often combine the physical and meditative techniques of *preksha* with aspects of naturopathic medicine in an attempt to construct a new form of physiotherapy that they claim is authentically Indian and scientifically legitimate. This is in line with general trends in the current age of transnationalism, in which individuals and organizations construct new schools of medicine by appropriating from ancient schools of thought, particularly Indian

² Joseph S. Alter, ed., *Asian Medicine and Globalization* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

³ S. Irfan Habib and Dhruv Raina, “Introduction: The Politics of Culture and Medicine,” in *Asian Medicine and Globalization*, ed. Joseph Alter (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 67-77.

and Chinese, as well as from biomedicine, consequently constructing new products for transnational markets.⁴

Located just a few miles outside of New Delhi, Adhyatma Sadhana Kendra (henceforth Sadhana Kendra) is a Terapanthi case study of the construction of modern yoga in a way that appropriates practices and ideas from naturopathic medicine in response to growing transnational trends. It is a healing center where naturopathic medicine is combined with *preksha* meditative and physical techniques, all of which are explained by means of scientific discourse. Lay devotees of Tulsi established the center in 1965 when Tulsi, energized by the Anuvrat movement and concerned with the welfare of the masses, called upon them to establish a center for people ill with “diseases of modernity,” such as diabetes and heart disease. Tulsi believed that the adoption of the lesser vows prescribed in the Anuvrat movement, combined with naturopathic and allopathic medicine, would help bring about healing for such individuals who had succumbed to what he considered to be the unique stresses of modern living.

Upon the introduction of *preksha* by Mahaprajna, it was integrated into and eventually took center stage in the healing system at Sadhana Kendra. Since 1985, S. Dharmananda has functioned as the guru and manager of the center, and he claims to have developed his expertise while studying alongside Mahaprajna in Ladnun in the early 1970s in his search for a “lost” form of Jain yoga.⁵ In addition to the guru, there are thirty employees and a total of eight teachers at Sadhana Kendra today.

⁴ Several examples of such processes are discussed in the edited volume, Alter, *Asian Medicine*.

⁵ Personal communication, New Delhi, July 4, 2009.

Dharmananda describes Sadhana Kendra as a place for sick lay people to practice what he calls “preksha therapy.”⁶ Thus the focus at Sadhana Kendra is on *preksha* as a physiotherapeutic practice. In contrast to the monastic emphasis on the physical practices of yoga as a means to transcendence of the physical body, the emphasis at Sadhana Kendra is on yoga as a lifestyle, which leads to improved happiness and health *in the world*, not transcendence *of the world*. In fact, the emphasis is so heavily weighted toward the physiotherapeutic benefits of *preksha* that far more non-Jains than Jains come for therapy, although all of his patients are Indian. His patients reflect the general population of New Delhi. Sadhana Kendra is more similar in its emphasis on the physical benefits of *preksha* to the JVB centers managed and run by the *samanis*, although students attending the *samanis* classes are more often motivated by a desire to improve physical appearance in addition to health issues. In contrast, Dharmananda’s patients are most concerned with treating their chronic illnesses, especially heart disease.

Dharmananda maintains that people come to Sadhana Kendra as a last resort in an attempt to resolve their chronic health issues. He assured me: “We don’t talk about religion except fundamental basic dharma,” and by “fundamental basic dharma” Dharmananda meant the Anuvrat vows.⁷ Nevertheless, Dharmananda added, “People who believe in the soul get double-benefit.”⁸ Thus he does not entirely pluck *preksha* from its spiritual context and in this way strongly resembles the dissemination of *preksha* by the *samanis* at the JVB centers in London and the United States, where the emphasis remains on *preksha* as a physical practice, but the spiritual aspects of *preksha* and the monastic identity of the *samanis* themselves does not disappear. Likewise, at Sadhana

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Kendra, the emphasis is on physical health, but recognition of *preksha* as a spiritual practice and of Mahaprajna as the spiritual guru remains and is reinforced by the fact that pictures of Mahaprajna can be found throughout the center. In this way, the spiritual charisma and authority is concentrated in the guru, Mahaprajna, as is the case at the JVB centers.

Although Dharmananda's *preksha* therapy is not contrary to bio-medicine, he does emphasize the importance of what he considers to be more "natural" approaches to health, such as certain dietary regimens and yogic techniques. He also, however, appropriates scientific discourse in his own explications of *preksha*, arguing that *preksha* results not just in relaxation but also in physiological transformations in the body as argued by Mahaprajna. In this way, Dharmananda demonstrates how, in the transnational yoga market, yoga does not replace medicine but becomes medicalized itself so that modern biomedicine is considered just one other expression of a true and universal system that is shared across naturopathic and allopathic approaches to the physical body. Thus, in line with Mahaprajna's medicalization of *preksha* and the concomitant somaticization of the subtle body, Dharmananda argues that yoga functions to stimulate physiological processes that lead to health, such as the release of beneficial hormones by the endocrine system. In fact, Dharmananda emphasizes the value of "scientific studies" performed at the center. Doctors working with Dharmananda have used the scientific method to evaluate the benefits of yoga in much the same way that other yogic adepts in India have been doing scientific studies on the effects of yoga since the 1920s.⁹

⁹ Joseph S. Alter, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body between Science and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). See also my discussion of *preksha* and TM in Chapter Five.

Other JVB centers are following Sadhana Kendra's lead in terms of its attention to naturopathic approaches to the body. In Houston, for example, the *samanis* who manage the JVB Center there have hosted a homeopathic practitioner, Pankaj Hiralal Dabhi, several times. During Dabhi's visits, he gives a public lecture to JVB Center attendees and then meets with members of the community individually to consult on individual health problems. Dabhi argues: "Trust your body's intelligence. It will heal itself if you allow it."¹⁰ In turn, the *samanis*, like Dharmananda, prescribe *preksha* as the ideal "natural" healing mechanism for the body and in this way exploit popular trends in modern yoga and thus work toward *preksha's* dissemination.

Preksha International

Preksha International is a broadly defined organization that signifies two types of *preksha* proponents: those at JVB in Ladnun who organize and manage the *preksha* camps hosted at JVB University (JVB University functions as the central office for Preksha International); and those who, having attended one of these camps and, convinced of the value of *preksha* as a spiritual and health practice, returned to their home cities but maintained an affiliation with JVB. There is no central office for Preksha International outside of Ladnun, rather individuals practice out of their individual homes or businesses. Members of Preksha International range from those practicing *preksha* as an individual practice in the privacy of their homes to teachers at naturopathic healing centers or yoga studios who incorporate aspects of *preksha* into the material taught in their businesses. In Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, there are over one hundred people who have been

¹⁰ Email invitation to undisclosed recipients for "Naturopathy Workshop" at JVB Preksha Meditation Center, Houston, Texas, February 20, 2010.

trained at *preksha* camps and maintain an affiliation with Preksha International.¹¹ The number of practitioners in this region far outweighs that in the other areas where affiliates of Preksha International live and teach.¹²

Affiliates of Preksha International incorporate *preksha* into their teaching and practice as one amongst various spiritual and healing techniques. In other words, such practitioners consider *preksha* to be one of many valuable spiritual and healing tools. One Preksha International representative in Moscow, Russia, listed reiki, Tibetan Buddhist meditation, and *advaita vedanta* as some of the schools of thought and practice that often influence practitioners of *preksha* in Russia.¹³ Consequently, I speculate that, in line with our discussion in Chapter Five of the comparison between TM and *preksha* by *preksha* proponents, the emphasis with regard to *preksha* must be on practice over ideology, since the plurality of ideologies underlying such traditions are antagonistic to the Jain dualist ontology underlying *preksha* (for instance the non-duality of *advaita vedanta*).

This antagonistic relationship between Jain dualism and other religious systems practiced alongside it brings us to the question of why the disseminators of *preksha* have not been successful in establishing independent schools, centers, or yoga studios devoted primarily or exclusively to the practice of *preksha* outside of those established and maintained by the *samanis* themselves. In order to address this question, I will turn to a particular case study, that of Preksha International in the Netherlands.

On April 13, 2009, I contacted the Preksha International representatives in the Netherlands, Fons Delnooz and Patricia Martinot, and asked them to tell me about the

¹¹ Gennady Lugov, personal email communication, February 24, 2010.

¹² I was unable to access estimates of how many affiliates of Preksha International are living at these other locations. I was told, however, that the majority of those who come to the *preksha* camps held in Ladnun are from Russia. Thus I speculate that there are far fewer affiliates in these other locations.

¹³ Gennady Lugov, personal email communication, February 24, 2010.

practice of *preksha* in their country. They replied:

We run a private therapeutic praxis.

People come to our praxis for personal development, for help with emotional problems. Many people that come for help are extremely sensitive. A minor part has psychiatric disorders. We both are working (sic) in this field for a long period. All our live (sic) we have been searching for the best way to help people. Of course this search is closely related to our personal development. For about 15 years spirituality is becoming (sic) more and more important in our work. So we have been looking for concepts and methods to integrate spirituality in the field of helping people. Here is where Preksha comes in. In 2004 we met Acharya Mahapragya. In 2006 we started Prekshameditatienerland. Our intention was to integrate preksha in our work and to get preksha known in the Netherland (sic) and Belgium. We started with trainings for our own client (sic). We had different formula's (sic) ranging from five days spread over several month (sic) up to a residential five day course where we could start early in the morning, give sattvic food, etc. We had some beautiful groups with very enthusiastic (sic) participants.

The problem was to find new participants come (sic) from outside of our network of clients. We made our website (Preksha.com); googleaddwords; advertisements; lectures; articles...

We tried to interest businessclubs (sic), university... it all did not work out: we did not get enough new clients to get groups started. So in 2008 almost (sic) all planned activities were cancelled due to lack of participants.

In 2007 we took some student (sic) with us to the international Preksha camp. One started teaching in his own circuit. But just like in our situation, it did not grow.

This year we have a 2day course in Preksha in the summer.

We would like to participate with a group of Dutch people on (sic) the international prekshacamp (sic) this year. We hope that there will come (sic) more teachers who have a lot of time and money to invest in Preksha, because that is what is needed to get Preksha going here.

In India Preksha is organised fully on a base of volunteers. Our situation is very different. Helping people is our way to make a living. To make a living in this kind (sic) work here, means making many many hours, always and always. So we can not do this work on a voluntary basis. If there would be teachers that can work fully on a voluntary basis, that might make the difference. But even then the cost for publicity is high.

We feel very sympathetic to Jainism. It feels like old roots. Ahimsa always has

been a part of our lives. Spirituality is so important to mankind. So we would love Preksha to get well started here. That is why we have invested so much in it. At this moment there is little activity. We hope that somehow this will change, although we do not know now how to get things well started here.¹⁴

I followed up by asking why they think *preksha*, compared to other schools of yoga, has not been successful in attracting many practitioners in the Netherlands. Delnooz replied:

Of course we struggle with the same questions.

This is what we come up with:

Preksha is fully unknown. The sound doesn't relate to anything familiar in our language or languages Dutch people know. It is like a Chinese word.

It is difficult to use photographs from shree Mahapragna due to the maks (sic) that he is wearing. This phenomenon is in Holland completely unknown. People would think he has got a serious and infectious illness.

The yoga studios here are all embedded in a known tradition. They have an infrastructure that helps them, like an organisation that functions well.

Teachers in [other] yoga traditions can be trained here in Holland. They do not have to go to India to get a license.

Preksha emphasizes pureness in all aspects off life. This mirrors our lives, our work and the 10 books that we have written on our work. We see that those books that emphasize pureness are not sold well. People want spirituality, but they don't like to give up on what they are used to, f.e. (sic) watching all evening violent television programs, eating tamasic food, alcohol, smoking, a strong emphasize (sic) on sexuality in an impure way etc.

People like to buy spirituality. Here we have had a strong movement of Reiki which is a technique of passing on energy. You pay some money, spend one weekend and for the rest of your life effortlessly you can pass on the energy. Do this 3 weekends and your (sic) are Reiki Master and can give your own courses for which you can charge a lot of money. Of course, the reality of transferring healing energy is endlessly more complicated than one can learn in a few days – but that is not the way this is sold.

Yoga here in our country is especially related to doing asana's (sic). This goes well with taking care of your body. It also is related to relaxing. So if you don't want to do intense workout, you do yoga. Spirituality doesn't come in this way.

¹⁴ Fons Delnooz and Patricia Martinot, personal email communication, April 24, 2009.

Preksha dhyana asks a lot of effort. You have to do it regularly to be effective! This is not what people like so much. It should be easy!

Jainism is fully unknown in our country. Buddhism is quite popular. Hinduism is strange for the Dutch in general, but advaita vedanta is highly (sic) valued amongst spiritual scholars (sic).

Ahimsa comes so deep from my soul, but here in the Netherlands, for people in general it is meaningless.¹⁵

An underlying theme thread throughout Delnooz's message on the lack of attraction to *preksha* in the Netherlands is Jain asceticism. My informant mentions how most Dutch people are unfamiliar with the Jain tradition as well as their distaste for the ascetic components of *preksha*, but these are, in fact, related issues. In fact, one reason that many non-Indian people are familiar with Buddhist and Hindu traditions but not with Jain traditions is that attention to the details of the Jain social, communal, and worldly practices are often marginalized in scholarly analyses because Jains have always been associated with "extreme" asceticism both within and beyond South Asia.¹⁶ As articulated by Paul Dundas:

As represented in many accounts written in the previous century, this view would see Jainism as monolithic and undifferentiated in nearly all respects, in essence both ahistorical and eccentric, with its teaching and practice revolving around extreme forms of ascetic behavior, dietary restrictions and a near-pathological preoccupation with the minutiae of a doctrine of non-violence. This misconceived approach has been compounded by many contemporary Jain writers who, in an attempt to boost their religion's intellectual credibility, have often seemed principally concerned with representing Jainism in purely metaphysical terms as little more than a gradualistic spiritual path in which the only truly significant historical event after the death of the founding teacher was a sectarian 'schism.'"

If few people outside of India know anything of Jain traditions, and those who are familiar with it hold a stereotypical picture of Jains as "extreme" ascetics, then it is no surprise that Jain yoga may not have initial appeal to most practitioners of modern yoga

¹⁵ Fons Delnooz, personal email communication, April 24, 2009.

¹⁶ Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1-3.

since such practitioners do not usually identify their motivation for doing yoga as the ascetic disassociation or release from the body.

And all this despite the fact that our analysis of the Terapanth throughout this dissertation demonstrates that Jain traditions feature a high degree of plurality, not only between the monastic and lay communities but also within these two categories. Different Jains hold different intentions, priorities, and motivations, hence the numerous examples of the context-specificity of the construction and (non)practice of *preksha*: the eruption of controversy following Tulsi's late twentieth century innovations and the refusal by some Terapanthis to recognize such innovations as legitimately Jain (see Chapter One); the monastic implementation and mystical interpretation of *preksha*'s ritual process as well as the liminality of the *preksha* camp for those who desire a "temporary" monastic state (see Chapter Two); Mahaprajna's appropriation of scientific discourse in an attempt to make modern a so-called ancient practice (see Chapter Three); the *samanis*' focus on *asana* and *pranayama* in the *preksha* classes taught at the JVB centers where women come primarily with the intention to enhance their physical bodies (see Chapter Four); and the analysis of the body as part of the Self to be properly organized on the part of *preksha* proponents in adaptation to late capitalist cultural trends (see Chapter Five). These are just some of the examples strewn throughout this dissertation that demonstrate that *preksha* itself is context-specific and thus plural. Yet those unfamiliar with the Jain tradition often assume that Jains are monolithically ascetic in a way that aims toward the disassociation from the body. Because of this general unfamiliarity with Jain thought and practice, people practicing modern yoga both within and beyond India are less likely to adopt a form of "Jain" yoga as opposed to "Hindu," "Buddhist," or purely "physical"

yoga.

Given the popular association between “Jain” and “extreme ascetic,” Jain yoga has not been widely appealing. Of course, yoga itself has a long history of asceticism (as demonstrated in the Introduction and Chapter One), however, popular modern yoga traditions have most often been associated with non-dualist ontologies, whereas Jain asceticism is linked to a dualist one. Modern yoga practitioners, including those mentioned above in Russia and the Netherlands, attest to the popularity of *advaita vedanta* as a popular philosophical system in New Age and modern yoga circles. This trend has been consistent since the earliest attempt at the global dissemination of yoga by Vivekananda who taught a form of yoga in conjunction with the philosophy of *advaita vedanta*.

Also, as argued in Chapter Five, the contemporary socio-historical context of late capitalism and the transnational yoga market feature their own forms of asceticism. Thus, it is not asceticism itself that prevents a large-scale dissemination but Jain asceticism in particular, which is based in a dualist ontology that holds that the soul is radically distinct from the body, and all physical action results in karma attaching to the soul and thus polluting the Self.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the introduction of the *samani* order made it possible for individuals to practice *preksha* given a variety of different motivations: devotional, ascetic, physical, or psychological. Although the Terapanth has sought to make this increasingly possible and thus reach increasing numbers of yoga practitioners in their dissemination, the ability to appeal to a particular motivation is not the only determinant of whether or not a practitioner will pursue *preksha* as a yogic path. And in

the context of the class itself, an emphasis on physical health and psychological well-being does not cancel out a concern with ascetic purification. Instead, the body is a means to a state of bodylessness. In other words, a concern with the enhancement of the body does not cancel out a concern with the ascetic disassociation from the body.

The image of Mahaprajna in a *muhpatti* succinctly demonstrates this point. A picture of Mahaprajna hangs in every *preksha* classroom and is shown in all of the books on *preksha*. In this way, the concentration of charisma and authority remains in the figure of the *acharya* who embodies the world-rejecting ascetic ideal of the “Tirthankara God.” And the fact that the guru is in a mask both confuses those completely unfamiliar with the practice of wearing a *muhpatti*, and for those who do understand the *muhpatti*'s function, reminds them that this tradition maintains a Jain ascetic ideal.

In the practice of *preksha* the enhanced body-Self does not replace the ascetic negation of the body, but rather, the two coexist, and the enhanced body-Self becomes a means to the ascetic negation of the body. The “guru in a mask” is a constant reminder to practitioners of *preksha* that the Jain ascetic path leads to the ultimate end of Jain yogic practice. And although asceticism is not inherently contrary to the transnational yoga market, Jain asceticism, whereby ascetic practice is a means to the purification of the soul *from* the body, is contrary to popular demands and trends in that market.

Another key variable in determining whether or not efforts toward the dissemination of yoga are successful, according to my informant from the Netherlands, is whether or not there are “volunteers” willing to sustain the practice. According to Delnooz, because of the lack of interest in *preksha* and the need on the part of yoga teachers to make a living and thus attract many students, the dissemination of *preksha*

depends on those who promote it without need for economic reimbursement. He argues that in India such “volunteers” teach *preksha*. I have found, however, that the binary between the dissemination of *preksha* “within India” and “beyond India” is too simplistic here when one considers the success of the *samanis* in sustaining the dissemination of *preksha* outside of India. By means of my analysis of the JVB centers in Britain and the United States, I have found that the dissemination is successful where two things are found: a large Jain diaspora community; and a desire and ability on the part of that community to financially support the *samanis* and a JVB center. The *samanis* are successful in these contexts because they function to link *preksha* to a particular religio-cultural heritage. For that reason, their dissemination of *preksha* does not reach far beyond the Jain diaspora, but it does often reach both Terapanthi and non-Terapanthi Jains living in the cities where the *samanis* establish and manage JVB centers.¹⁷

The *samanis* chose the locations for such centers based on the presence of active and established Jain communities interested in “voluntarily” financially sustaining them. Such volunteers provide the financial stability necessary to maintain a center where two intermediary monastics may live and teach. These characteristics of a community are necessary for the successful dissemination of *preksha* for two reasons: *preksha* is built upon a particular Jain dualist ontology linked to a Jain ascetic soteriology, which attracts Jain (and sometimes Hindu) practitioners but few others who are interested in modern yoga; and the *samanis* function as mediators of the guru and thus as conduits of his charisma insofar as they disseminate *preksha* according to his guidelines and mediate devotion between devotees in diaspora and the guru.

Thus *preksha*'s attractiveness to a limited segment of modern yoga practitioners

¹⁷ Some Hindus in diaspora also attend *preksha* classes, especially at the London JVB center.

necessitates a Jain community to acknowledge them as authoritative mediators of the guru, but not all Jains in diaspora recognize their status as such. In fact, some Jains argue that the *samanis* are not “legitimate Jain nuns.”¹⁸ During several visits between 2006 and 2009 to the Jain Society of Houston, which is home to a “non-sectarian” Jain temple and community center in Houston, Texas, I discussed my dissertation research with many Jain men and women. Of those with whom I discussed my project, about one quarter of them expressed concern, arguing that the *samanis* are not “real” Jains because they claim to be monastics but “do not follow all monastic rules,” and they “focus too much on yoga and meditation,” which are not “legitimate” Jain concerns.¹⁹ This is in line with the position of many non-Terapanthi Jain *acharyas* who argue that the innovations introduced by Tulsi and Mahaprajna are illegitimate. When I asked the *niyojika* (chief *samani*) about whether or not contemporary non-Terapanthi Jains were valorizing yoga in the same way that Tulsi and Mahaprajna have valorized it, she responded:

I think now maybe some other acharyas they are considering and thinking about meditation, but I can say very little not too much... They are thinking about performing the puja, this is the primary activity... Yoga, they are not considering this is a part of religion, except Terapanth, no other is thinking that yoga is a part of religion.²⁰

My own experience with non-Terapanthi Jain monastic figures confirms her observation. Thus the fact that many lay Jains disapprove of the Terapanthi concern with yoga reflects the general tendency on the part of their monastic authorities. Of course, none of the Jains who expressed such opinions were Terapanthis. The extent to which the JVB Centers function as non-sectarian spaces for the practice of yoga does have quite a large range,

¹⁸ Repeated personal communications with self-identifying Jain men and women at the Jain Society of Houston, 2006-2009.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Samani Madhur Pragya, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 22, 2009.

and different locations pose unique problems or benefits. For instance, in London, almost all of the yoga students are Hindu, and, according to Samani Rohit Pragya, “there is a lot of inter-religious dialogue and support amongst the Indian community.”²¹ She contrasts her situation in London with that of the *samanis* in Iselin, New Jersey where nearly all of the yoga students are Jain. She explained that the diaspora community in New Jersey is “more sectarian” and “traditional” and for that reason it is more difficult to get non-Jains, and sometimes non-Terapanthi Jains, to come to a *preksha* classes.²² The situation of the JVB center in Houston seems to fall in-between the non-sectarian character of JVB London and the highly sectarian character of the JVB center in Iselin. But the important point is that the dissemination of *preksha* necessitates the presence of a self-identifying Jain community as well as the presence of the *samanis* as yoga teachers and yet, even under those conditions it is difficult to attract a large-scale following. Most Jains are unfamiliar with “semi” monastics and an active concern with yoga and meditation, since such practices more closely resemble modern movements within Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

The *samanis* have little control with regard to making changes that might appeal to larger audiences. After all, they are responsible for the dissemination of *preksha*, and yet they have very little formal authority with regard to how they go about pursuing and achieving this goal. Rather, they work under the authority of Mahaprajna, who makes all decisions with regard to where the *samanis* travel, to whom they teach, and how they teach. Mahaprajna is now ninety years old. Nobody knows how much longer he will live, but it will be interesting to see how authority with regard to the construction and

²¹ Samani Rohit Pragya, personal communication, London, Britain, July 30, 2009.

²² Ibid.

dissemination of *preksha* either moves or does not move into the hands of the *samanis* upon his death and the initiation as *acharya* of his successor, Yuvacharya Muditkumar.

I asked Muditkumar for his thoughts on the future of *preksha*, and he was unsure.²³ He did, however, assert that if more centers for the practice of *preksha* open outside of India, then the *samanis* cannot be responsible for running them all and added: “Perhaps lay people from those places can run them.”²⁴ When I asked about his own interest in *preksha* and whether or not he would continue Mahaprajna’s lineage by writing and instructing on *preksha*, the successor showed little interest and said, “I am not so much a scholar but am focused on public relations.”²⁵ This leads me to doubt future growth in the dissemination of *preksha* since, as argued above, it requires the presence of the *samanis*, and the *samanis* are under the authority of the *acharya*, so if he decides to put an end to their traveling to new locations to teach *preksha*, most likely, that will be the end of its dissemination.

The head of the *samani* order, Samani Madhur Prajna, concurs with my assessment. Upon listening to me recount my conversation with Muditkumar, she said:

I don’t think that centers will run without *samanis*. People there are mostly concerned with physical fitness and looks and not with spirituality but our priority is spreading Jainism. Preksha is about spirituality but most don’t get that. We tried in Houston to just offer meditation in a few evenings per week and for a couple weeks four of five people came and then none.²⁶

In other words, the *samanis* are the only Jain teachers of modern yoga who link it to a characteristically Jain religio-cultural heritage. If the *samanis* are not the teachers, then the students will go to one amongst numerous other modern yoga classes in order to

²³ Muditkumar, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 29, 2009.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Samani Madhur Pragya, personal communication, Ladnun, Rajasthan, June 29, 2009.

enhance their physical bodies and thus physical appearance but will not practice yoga in the larger ideological context of Jain thought. The *samanis* thus link *preksha* to a religio-cultural heritage, which both deters its dissemination (to those beyond the Jain diaspora) and makes it possible (to those within the Jain diaspora). Thus, although the Terapanth adopted a number of innovations with regard to the construction and dissemination of *preksha* as an act of adaptation to the transnational yoga market, such innovations were offset by those aspects of Terapanthi religiosity that were not compromised and instead remained consistent with a Jain dualist ontology and ascetic soteriology.

Final Thoughts

Processes of adaptation to new socio-historical circumstances are not new to Jain traditions. Olle Qvarnstrom, Christopher Key Chapple, Padmanabh S. Jaini, John Cort, and Paul Dundas have all demonstrated the extent to which Jains, in line with the history of religions in general, made seemingly necessary changes in order to adjust to the cultural climate of the medieval period of Indian history. Of course, the tradition portrayed such adaptations as original to an eternal Jain teaching. Jain doctrine and practice are considered part of an eternal system and not a product of history.²⁷ But, as articulated by Qvarnstrom, the fact that we find syncretism between Jain and non-Jain sources despite the real threat of being called heretical indicates the necessity Jains ascribed to an adaptive strategy for keeping their tradition alive and well.²⁸

²⁷ Olle Qvarnstrom, "Stability and Adaptability: A Jain Strategy for Survival and Growth," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 41 (1998): 33.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 34; see also, Christopher Key Chapple, "Haribhadra's Analysis of Patanjala and Kula Yoga in the Yogadrstisamuccaya," in *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, ed. John E. Cort (New York: SUNY Press, 1998).

In the Introduction, we discussed the ways in which Jains appropriated tantric thought and practice into its fold during the medieval period, but they also appropriated aspects of *bhakti*.²⁹ According to Jaini, during the growth of the *bhakti* movement in the medieval period, Jains adopted goddesses into their doctrine and worship in order to compete with the Vaishnava and Shaiva *bhakti* movements for the laity's attention.³⁰

Jains also appropriated the popular objects of Hindu devotion, Rama and Krishna, into their own tradition. Jaini argues:

In 'accepting' Hindu figures as part of their own mythology, Jaina writers denied any notion that these beings were, as was often claimed, manifestations of the divine. Nevertheless, they were able to portray the heroes in a popular manner that satisfied the desire of the laity for such tales, probably helping thereby to reduce the number of Jainas who actually left the faith and allied themselves with one or another of the *bhakti* cults.³¹

Qvarnstrom comments on such adaptive processes on the part of Jains: "Nevertheless, it did not imperil the singularity or doctrinal stability of Jainism, since neither the cult practice itself nor the goddesses were capable of helping anyone to attain liberation."³²

Likewise with tantra. The Jains adopted aspects of Hindu tantra by regarding it as a system of different means (*sadhana*) for attaining *bhukti* or mundane objectives rather than for the attainment of *moksha* or release from the cycle of rebirth.³³

According to the scholars discussed above, the innovations during the medieval period did not threaten Jain doctrinal stability. Qvarnstrom thus refers to such changes as "cosmetic." Such cosmetic changes left the core of Jain soteriology intact but

²⁹ "*Bhakti*" refers to the highly emotionally charged devotional religiosity that became increasingly popular in Medieval India and is the most popular expression of South Asian religiosity today.

³⁰ Jaini, "Is there a popular Jainism?" in *The Assembly of Listeners: Jains in Society*, ed. Michael Carrithers and Caroline Humphrey (New York: Cambridge, 1991), 196.

³¹ Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Jaina Path of Purification* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), 306.

³² Qvarnstrom, "Stability and Adaptability," 37.

³³ *Ibid.*

simultaneously adapted the tradition to the cultural climate in order to appease the laity and attract converts.³⁴

The changes I find in the Terapanth also do not change the soteriology of classical Jain doctrine but contribute to the marketability of the Terapanthi tradition in its present-day encounter with the transnational yoga market in the late capitalist context.

Mahaprajna and the *samanis* seek to transnationally disseminate “ancient” yoga that I argue is in part a product of a series of late twentieth-century encounters and the transnational exchange of ideas. To refer to such changes as “cosmetic,” however, would undermine the significance of such shifts with regard to spiritual cultivation and practice. Practitioners of *preksha* “consume” it because they endow it with meaning. *Preksha*, in this way, embodies the sacred, and even physical enhancement has value as part of the process of self-development. Furthermore, for devotional practitioners of *preksha*, the practice is sacred insofar as the charismatic guru, Mahaprajna, prescribes it. Others ascribe sanctity to *preksha* because it is tied to the soteriological path of classical schools of yoga.

In the late capitalist context, an analysis of *preksha* as “cosmetic” would result in its equation with commodification, thus failing to account for the ascription of sanctity to its practice. In late capitalist culture, we do find consumers choosing religious practices in a similar way that they choose commodities, from a plurality of products and according to individual desires and needs, and *preksha* does fit this model. However, as I argued in Chapter Five, to reduce such phenomena to economic calculation would ignore the significant metaphysical meanings these practices have for the practitioner. In other words, I maintain that the consequences for individuals of adaptive religious processes go

³⁴ Ibid., 40.

beyond the socio-economic model, although the cultural processes of adaptation themselves can be understood vis-à-vis that model.

One of the mottos of Preksha International is as follows: “Comprehend the SOUL, Transform your LIFE.”³⁵ From a strictly Jain ideological perspective, such goals are antagonistic to one another. Bikshu taught that, in order to comprehend the soul, one must reject life. In other words, in order to pursue the *lokottara* or spiritual realm of values, one must renounce the *laukika* or worldly realm of values. Yet even monastic members of the Terapanth demonstrate worldly concerns, such as the bodily health and psychological well-being of themselves and the masses, while simultaneously upholding Bikshu’s argument that a full world-rejecting asceticism in the form of withdrawal from society and the limitation of bodily action is necessary for a quest down the path to spiritual release. It seems that in order to overcome the dissonance between the cultural ideals of the contemporary socio-historical context and the soteriological ideal of classical Jain thought, the Terapanth introduced a new form of religiosity that affirms the sanctity of the body but ultimately ends up in a Jain ascetic soteriology. The ascetic ideal remains, and Mahaprajna and the *samanis* consistently assert that only when the yogic practitioner chooses the life of an ascetic is she ready to renounce the body and step onto the *moksha-marga*, but for most practitioners of *preksha*, this is either not an immediate goal or not a goal at all. Rather, yoga is about the immanent enhancement of life by means of the enhancement of the body.

The Terapanth’s late twentieth-century innovations are in line with a particular socio-historical reality: a transcendent anthropology based in a dualist ontology and concomitant ascetic soteriology is not compatible with consumer culture in the age of

³⁵ See, for instance, Preksha International, www.preksha.com.

globalization. Consumer culture demands accessibility. Whereas classical Jain thought, and especially Terapanthi thought, sustains a radical transcendent anthropology that considers the sacred human to be pure soul radically and eternally distinct from the profane body, consumer cultural demands an anthropology of immanence that considers human sanctity to be available here and now in this body. The Terapanth responds to that demand in their dissemination of a transnational product, *preksha dhyana*, a sacred practice for the cultivation of the body as part of the Self, and, though practiced by few, it is prescribed for all and for immediate consumption.

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