



Journal Homepage: - [www.journalijar.com](http://www.journalijar.com)

## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/16357

DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/16357>



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### THE FEMALE: SILVER LINING IN JAINISM

Dr. Ekta Dhariwal

#### Manuscript Info

##### Manuscript History

Received: 31 December 2022

Final Accepted: 31 January 2023

Published: February 2023

##### Key words:-

Women in Jainism, United Nations,  
International Women's Year,  
International Women's Day

#### Abstract

Religion and society are closely bound together in Indian entity. Among the widespread religions, Jainism has contributed some original ideologies to the world. It's most consequential aspect is that it has always respected the smallest of the insects among living organisms and this attitude extends even to the insentient world. It is a religion of phenomenal equality of all souls, termed 'Abvait' in 'Shwetashwar Upnishad' also, devoted to a recognising the rights of all leaving creatures. Therefore it is but natural for such a religion to cultivate an attitude of respect towards women. So not surprisingly, it accepts that women are equally important as men. Hence, this research paper mainly focuses on status of women in Jainism.

Copy Right, IJAR, 2023,. All rights reserved.

#### Introduction:-

There were numerous women in Jainism who were of strong character and fought against all kinds of odds and hurdles and emerged with flying colours. They were tempted by various means and passed through crucial tests, encountered physical and mental torture and ultimately were able to maintain their integrity and virtues. The United Nations (UN) declared the year 1975 as an International Women's Year (IWY) and March 8th is celebrated as International women's Day (IWD) which indicates the fair and equal treatment of women for their all-round development.

#### Women In Early Vedic Society

In early Vedic society women had an equal status with man. A man was considered complete only if united with his wife, who was supposed to be the source of happiness, wealth and glory. But in the patriarchal system man acquired more money and power; resulted that women lost her status and were degraded. The birth of a girl was considered as unwelcome event and this gave rise to practices like female infanticide and the neglect of female children. As the Jain philosophy is based on the main principle of ahimsa or non-injury to living beings so we do not find that female children were purposefully neglected even though they might have been regarded as a burden on the family.

#### Women Participation In Jain Practises

Religious achievements and self-development are related to the spirit rather than to the body. Jainism is an emancipation oriented religion. It primarily emphasises the values of renunciation, detachment and liberation. In Jainism both men and women are equally entitled for liberation by freeing themselves from the bondage of Karma caused by desires and passions. The early Agamas like, 'Uttaradhyayana Sutra', 'Gnantadharmakatha,' 'Antakṛddasa' mention that both men and women are equally eligible for the ultimate goal i.e. liberation. According to the Svetambara tradition Jain Tirthankara Malli attained 'Kevalajnana' or 'Stri Yoni' itself. Since prehistoric times the Jain Shramanas (ascetics) are outnumbered by Jain Sadhvis. Similarly the number of women Shravikas is far greater than that of Shravakas. Brahmi, Sundari, Candana and such other Sadhvis are worshipped

even today and the names of sixteen 'Satis' (pious women) are remembered along with the names of the Tirthankaras. During the time of Lord Parshvanath, sixteen thousand Shravikas attained spiritual upliftment through initiation or 'Diksa' under the inspiring guidance of Sadhvi, 'Pusyacula'. Apart from this women participated equally with men in religious ceremonies, gave donations as per their desires and collaborated in the construction of temples. Thus, the Jainism is committed to the equality without any discrimination of caste, creed or colour.



**Figure 1:-** Celebrating Jain festivals related to life events of Thirthankaras in Jain Dadabari, Kota (Rajasthan).

### **Women Education In Jainism**

In the field of education Jain women were given equal treatment with men. They have significantly contributed to the field of literary creation and in the exercise of the power of memorising. From the early period of Lord Rishabdev, education was imparted to young daughters. 'Jnatadharmakatha' and 'Jambudvipa Prajnapti' give an account of 64 arts of women who used to acquire mastery in dance, music, fine arts and culinary art besides language, mathematics and writing. Brahmi and Sundari daughters of Lord Rishabdev were intelligent and virtuous and had profound knowledge of science and mathematics. Sadhvi Yaksha had the power to repeat verbatim, Arya Poyani played a significant role in the conference organised in the early years of the fourth centenary of Lord Mahavir's 'Nirvana', Jain Princess Auve of Cher state in South India was a poetess of ancient Tamil literature. Thus the role of women in Jaina religion has been very significant.

### **Jain Women: Warriors And Administrators**

A number of Jain women distinguished themselves in various spheres of life other than religion. They not only acquired skill in administration, but also fought battles to defend their native land. Lakshminati, the wife of general Gangaraja, was known all over as the 'Lady of Victory' for her bravery. Udaya Vidyadhara's wife Saviyabbe died fighting in the battle of Begepur along with her husband. There is an edict at Sravanabelagola which gives an account of this courageous woman having a sword in her hand and mounted on the horse. An equally courageous woman was Candravallabha, wife of King Rajamal II. She ruled over her territory and established huge Jain idols.

### **Socio Status Of Women In Jainism**

It is emphatically said that a compound of brick and mortar does not make a home but the wife who follows the family traditions constitutes a home. In the domestic sphere she wielded all powers and was regarded as the presiding mistress of the house. It will be noticed from Mahapurana, Santipurana, Padmapurana, Harivamsapurana and other Puranas that when the queens used to visit the Durbars, the king; themselves used to welcome them by standing and to allow them to sit by their side on the throne. It can be said that inspite of traditional practices of early marriage and widowhood persisting in the Jain community, the granting of religious independence to women has very healthy repercussions on their social status. They commanded voice in their family affairs and wielded uncommon influence in the shaping of their children's destiny. Moreover, they enjoyed many legal rights of inheritance and possession of property and had ample opportunity of managing their domestic business independently.



**Figure 2:-** Celebrating Women's Day in Jain Temple. Kota (Rajasthan).

### Position Of Women In Present Era

Women empowerment can be defined to promoting women's ability to determine their own choices and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. The social construction of gender has influenced the role of women in Jainism. In a society where exploitation has reached its height and a man is making the highest profit at the expense of others, where there is no social justice and equal opportunities for all, where women are deprived of their rights and are entirely dependent on the sweet will of men, the status of women cannot be enhanced. If the mission of Mahavir's Jainism preaching equality of man and woman is to be really fulfilled, a woman has to be provided with social and economic equality in various spheres of life. Then only she can feel liberated and inspired to help in the task of building up the nation.

### Findings

1. Status of women was unaffected in spite of Vedic religion and philosophy. This does not change general view of Jainism regarding their uniformity with men.
2. Both men and women are equal in the eyes of Jainism. The role played by both of them is equally important for the welfare of their children, family, society and nation.
3. Anywhere in Jain literature women not seen in any undermined position.
4. Jains encourage their women to get higher education and enable them to take part in social, economic, religious and cultural activities.
5. From the beginning until date, women proved her ability in the areas of education, organization, social welfare activities, practising daily rituals and even in economic status.

### Conclusions:-

Thus, the role of women in Jainism has been very progressive and ennobling on the whole. The findings reveal the fact that women contributes to the society in the form of protecting culture, awakening and educating society, producing academicians together women social entrepreneurs. As mothers they have given birth to 'Trithakaras', as wives they have provided inspiration to their husbands; as individuals they have managed large trade and commerce independently. In the Jaina way of life, woman has always been bold enough to protect her chastity and defeat the enemy. Jain Sadhvis have set an example for the society in matters relating to the ultimate achievement of spiritual progress. The liberation, freedom and the advancement of women are integrated in Jaina religion. These principles are sure to guide and lead the people in the ensuing decades towards the new path of attainment of the liberty of women.

**References:-**

1. Jain J.C (1987). The Status of Women in Jain Literature. Printwell Publishers, Jaipur
2. Dr. M. Chidandamurthy (1979). Kannada Shasanagala Samskrutika Adhyayana, Prasara, Mysore University, Mysore
3. Dasgupta, D.C (1999). Jaina System of Education. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi
4. Singh, R .B (2008). Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi
6. A. R. Nagaraj & A. N. Chandrakeerthi (1987). Status of Women, Gommatavani.
- Sethi, Manisha. ㊦Escaping the World: Women Renouncers among Jains  
㊦  
. Routledge, 2012.
- Sharma, Arvind. ㊦Religion and Women (McGill Studies in the History of Religions)  
㊦  
. State  
University of New York Press, 1994.
- Smith, Connor, et al. “The Roles of Gender.” ㊦Jainism at a Glance  
㊦  
,  
jainismhistory.weebly.com/the-roles-of-gender.html.
- Sethi, Manisha. ㊦Escaping the World: Women Renouncers among Jains  
㊦  
. Routledge, 2012.
- Sharma, Arvind. ㊦Religion and Women (McGill Studies in the History of Religions)  
㊦  
. State  
University of New York Press, 1994.
- Smith, Connor, et al. “The Roles of Gender.” ㊦Jainism at a Glance  
㊦  
,  
jainismhistory.weebly.com/the-roles-of-gender.html.
- Sethi, Manisha. ㊦Escaping the World: Women Renouncers among Jains  
㊦  
. Routledge, 2012.
- Sharma, Arvind. ㊦Religion and Women (McGill Studies in the History of Religions)  
㊦  
. State  
University of New York Press, 1994.
- Smith, Connor, et al. “The Roles of Gender.” ㊦Jainism at a Glance  
㊦  
,  
jainismhistory.weebly.com/the-roles-of-gender.html.
7. Sethi, Manisha (2012). Escaping the World: Women Renouncers among Jains. Routledge.
8. Sharma, Arvind (1994). Religion and Women (McGill Studies in the History of Religions).  
State jainismhistory.weebly.com/the-roles-of-gender.html. University of New York Press.