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The Anuvrat Movement: Theory and Practice

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

THE ANUVRAT MOVEMENT: THEORY AND PRACTICE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

by

Shivani Bothra

2013

To: Dean Kenneth G. Furton
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Shivani Bothra, and entitled *The Anuvrat Movement: Theory and Practice*, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Christine Gudorf

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Date of Defense: March 28, 2013

The thesis of Shivani Bothra is approved.

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Florida International University, 2013

DEDICATION

I dedicate the thesis to the founder of the Anuvrat Movement, the late Acharya Tulsi of the Jain Svetambar Terapanth tradition on his birth centenary.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
THE ANUVRAT MOVEMENT: THEORY AND PRACTICE

by

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Florida International University, 2013

Miami, Florida

Professor Nathan Katz, Major Professor

The slogan: “Self-restraint is life,” forms the philosophical ideal behind the Anuvrat Movement. The purpose of my thesis is to evaluate the Anuvrat Movement introduced by Acharya Tulsi as a non-sectarian, ethical-spiritual movement. The study considered in some detail the historical context within which the movement emerged. The thesis provides a much-needed analysis of the 11 vows formulated by Tulsi in the model of the traditional vows in Jainism. It explored the question whether these vows are relevant and effective in the contemporary Indian society, and whether Tulsi’s movement can cross the geographical boundaries of the Indian sub-continent to be a part of larger global initiatives. The study explored the social significance of the concepts of nonviolence, social justice and sustainability in the wider global community. The study suggests a positive association between the exemplary charismatic role of a leader and the popularity and longevity of social movements in India.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Having reached the limits of the materialistic vision of the scientific and industrial era ushered in by the Copernican revolution, we are now on the threshold of an ecological era called into being by an Ecological Revolution grounded in a more holistic view of the spiritual and material aspects of our nature. This revolution now calls to each of us to reclaim our political power and rediscover our spirituality to create societies that nurture our ability and desire to embrace the joyful experience of living to the fullest.

David Korten

Introduction

In the lines above David Korten, an economist, author and a prominent critic of globalization, describes the need for a new vision in the emerging global society. The present thesis is the study of the Anuvrat Movement, whose advocates conceive of the movement as a practical form of spirituality and one of the possible solutions that Korten is calling for. The movement arose as a response to the challenges of modernity emerging in the context of the post-independence India.

The founder of the movement was the late Acharya Tulsi, a celebrated monk within the Jain tradition. Accepting the monkhood at the age of 11, he was accredited to be the *Acharya* (His Holiness) of the Jain Svetambar Terapanth¹ tradition at the age of 22. Along the lines of Korten's view as expressed above, Tulsi perceived that modernization contributed to the deterioration of the moral character and value system in the pluralist Indian society. He also observed that there were aspects of his Jain tradition that could be

¹ Terapanth sect is a sub-branch within the Svetambara Jain tradition.

useful in addressing such issues, but they needed to be shared outside the Jain community. Therefore, at the age of 34, he conceptualized and instituted the Anuvrat Movement. The thrust of the movement was to regenerate the character of Indians through individual self-transformation, which would eventually influence the building of a healthy society and the development of methods for fostering social justice, peace and sustainability.

According to Tulsi, one cannot solve the problems of violence, human rights, poverty and the environment all at once. Instead, Tulsi thought that by employing the concept of small vows for the individual, borrowed from the Jain tradition, he could develop the framework for social improvement achieved through personal action. The Jain doctrines of *ahimsa* (non-violence), *aparigraha* (non-possession) and *anekant* (non-absolutism) also served as the foundation for Tulsi's program.

Both non-violence and non-possession are pan-Indic concepts, however *anekant* is unique to Jain philosophy. *Anekant* is the theory that truth and reality are perceived differently from diverse points of view, and that no single point of view is the complete truth.² Inspired by his own study and experiences, Tulsi expanded on *anekant* using it as a core concept to transcend the religious and incorporate concepts of morality into a secular movement.

The movement was initiated in the mid twentieth century, during the time when theories of secularization were being expanded. The main thrust in secularization theory has been "a claim that, in the face of scientific rationality, religious influence on all

² John M. Koller, "Why is Anekantvada Important?" in *Ahimsa, Anekanta and Jainism*, ed. Tara Sethia, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), 85–98.

aspects of life – from personal habits to social institutions is a dramatic decline. [...] The underlying assumption was that people have become or are becoming less religious.”³ However, Peter Berger, in his popular article, *Secularism and Retreat* stated: “The idea that modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion both in society and minds of individual has turned out to be wrong.”⁴ Some sociologists have addressed how modern political and social movements have all tended to diminish the power of churches. Yet another sociologist, Antonio Flavio, notes: “In the last three decades of XX century [sic], the last quarter was the most secularized century of all centuries, religions have regained vigor expanding and multiplying themselves considerably.”⁵ Following from these viewpoints, Tulsi’s approach recognized that the power of religious institutions was diminishing in response to secularization, but spirituality was not. He wished therefore to incorporate spirituality into a secular movement without direct reference to any specific religious institution.

Objective of the Study

My goal was to analyze how a mission of character development led by a leader-monk follows the trajectory of a mass movement. As a member of the Jain tradition myself, I had observed how a relatively small proportion of Indians acknowledge the movement, and those who know of it are either unsure of the methods of practice, do not practice it consistently, or chose not to practice it at all. Therefore, I sought to examine

³ William H. Swatos and Kevin J. Christiano, “Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept,” *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (October 1, 1999): 217, doi:10.2307/3711934.

⁴ Peter L. Berger, “Secularism in Retreat” 46, *The National Interest* (1996): 3.

⁵ Antonio Flavio Pierucci, “Secularization in Max Weber. On Current Usefulness of re-Assessing that Old Meaning” no. 1, *Brazilian Issue of Social Sciences* (October 2009): 131.

the relevance of Tulsi's ideas, once very popular in the post-Gandhian environment, for Indians in the present day. I examined whether the concept of vows, a main component of the movement, could still be an effective tool to bring about social change. My research also attempted to find out whether modern Jains living in diaspora view the Anuvrat Movement as a tradition-based reform movement or as a secular movement that could be a part of a larger global initiative.

Methodology

The questions outlined above stimulated me to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach that uses historical, ethnographic and sociological methods. Hence, I set out to trace the historical origins of the Anuvrat Movement in India. I relied upon the corpus of Anuvrat literature available in Hindi, some translations available in English, biographies, and the publications of some of the 371 Anuvrat regional centers in India operating under the heading of the Anuvrat Mahasamiti (great organization, or headquarters), such as the fortnightly *Anuvrat* magazine, annual reports and newsletters. Along with the historical method, I employed the ethnographic research method to understand the attitudes and perspectives of participants in my study, such as the non-Terapanthi Anuvratists,⁶ the Terapanthi Anuvratists and the non-Anuvrati Terapanth laity⁷ in India and in the diaspora. In order to accomplish my set goals, I conducted 5 interviews among Terapanth monks and nuns and 25 interviews among laity in several Indian small towns and large cities. I took advantage of being an insider to this tradition, and therefore, through a series of associations and contacts, I was able to visit some of the highly active Terapanth centers.

⁶ Non-Terapanthi is Jain or a non-Jain that does not follow the Terapanth Svetambara tradition.

⁷ Terapanthi laity is lay householder who follows the Terapanth Svetambara tradition.

Both my male and female respondents were selected from different social, economic, professional and religious backgrounds. I have used pseudonyms to conceal the identity of my subjects (interviewees). However, I have revealed the identity of scholars and experts in Jainism from my interviews.

Besides these two methodologies, I also conducted a sociological survey. The survey was used to collect data on demographic characteristics, attitudes and behavior of Anuvratīs and non-Anuvratīs as a measurement to determine the effectiveness of the movement. It took me three months to collect the data, starting from May 2012 through July 2012. More than 200 Indians filled out the survey questionnaire⁸ consisting of 30 multiple-choice questions.

Continuing with my fieldwork among the Jain diaspora, I primarily focused on the ethnographic method and conducted nine interviews – six in Miami and three in Los Angeles. The interviewees were laity, professors and scholars of Jainism. Besides these interviews in Miami, I attended monthly Jain study meetings, temple ceremonies, some discourses by the *Samanīs* (liberal-ascetic) and lectures by Jain scholars from India.

Significance of the Study

In the past few decades, there has been a growing interest in Jainism as a significant area of study in religious academic discipline. Some texts of world religions which in the past only covered Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam have now added Jainism as a world religion, because of its global spread as well as its great influence on other major religions, especially Asian religions. As a result, there is a

⁸ See appendices for a sample survey questionnaire.

growing body of scholarly research conducted in this field by both Indian and Western scholars. Most of the works have investigated the core doctrines, the doctrinal differences between Jain sects, Jain logic, Jain art, Jain law, and women in Jainism often through a multi-disciplinary lens. Contemporary scholars have conducted ethnographic studies on rituals and worship among Jains in India. However, until now, the Anuvrat Movement within Jainism has been neglected in modern scholarship.

The study of the Anuvrat Movement is also a study of the impact made by one monk, a leader considered by many to have demonstrated great courage, wisdom and compassion, even in difficult adverse situations. The study of the Anuvrat Movement could be helpful within Jainism itself for a reevaluation of the movement and its strategies and could also assist in answering an important question within the larger field of religion and spirituality: How do people who profess specific moral principles actually act and how do they reinterpret vows over time? The study also explores the social significance of the concepts of nonviolence, social justice and sustainability in the wider global community.

Structure of the Study

My thesis on the Anuvrat Movement is comprised of six chapters. The current chapter introduces the main ideas and the goals of the thesis, its significance and the methodologies employed in order to accomplish the goals. Chapter 2 reviews the movement from a historical perspective. In the light of the interviews conducted with mendicants and the laity, it provides an account of the circumstances in which the movement emerged, along with an outline of its origin, evolution and its expansion.

Chapter 3 investigates how the Anuvrat Movement is in compatible with the Gandhian legacy of nonviolence like many other post-independence movements. Thus, I employed a comparative methodology to analyze the Anuvrat Movement in the light of other pan-Indic movements such as the Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and the Bhoodan Movement. All these comparison is crucial to my analysis as it seeks to find out the role of meditation and the place of monks and nuns within these movements. Chapter 4 introduces each of the 11 vows and provides the perspectives of ascetics and the laity as developed through the structured and non-structured interviews. It analyzes the vows in contemporary Indian circumstances. Chapter 5 is the analysis of the social survey conducted in India among a convenience sample of 200 Indians. The 30 questions in the survey were designed to examine the present effectiveness of the vows and analyze the attitude and behavior of the Anuvratists as compared to the non-Anuvratists. The second part of the analysis is derived from the interviews conducted in the Jain diaspora of North America regarding the diasporic Jain attitude towards a Jain inspired movement. I inquired to see whether the movement really has secular characteristics, broad appeal and individual and social relevance across boundaries. Chapter 6 concludes the study with an analysis of the overall implications of my research.

CHAPTER 2

ORIGIN, VISION AND EVOLUTION OF THE ANUVRAT MOVEMENT

Introduction

On a dark day in January of 1948, Jawaharlal Nehru – the first Prime Minister and the architect of modern India – addressed Mahatma Gandhi’s death to the mourning nation in the following words: “The light has gone out of our lives, and there is darkness everywhere, and I do not know what to tell you how to say it. Our beloved leader Bapu, as we called him the father of the nation is no more.”⁹ Hostility had been simmering between Hindus and Muslims since India’s partition in 1947, and Gandhi’s death led to open violence in post-independence India. The situation of resentment had tremendous adverse effects on the creation of the new nation. When the fresh constitution was being formed, India was declared a secular nation with no official state religion. By means of a secular strategy, India attempted to facilitate tolerance for all religions.

In many ways, the declaring of “a secular nation” was appropriate, especially because the nation’s culture and heritage was largely shaped by divergent religious viewpoints, imprints of various invasions as well as a long history of colonial rule. However, conducive as the decision was, it still could not eliminate the oppressive divisions of castes, untouchability, sectarianism, communalism and disharmony within the country. Such “dark side” led to dissatisfaction in all fields – social, religious,

⁹ Janak Raj Jai, *1947-1980* (Regency Publications, 1996), 45.

political and economic in the new emerging India.¹⁰ In response, multiple post-independence political and non-political movements – for example, the Bhoodan and the Chipko Movement arose concerned with addressing the gloomy side of India. Many social, religious reformers and leaders like Ram Manohar Lohia and Jay Prakash Narayan also came forward with new varied action-plans in the enormous task of rebuilding India.

In a similar vein, was the campaign of the Anuvrat Movement – a spiritual, ethical movement emphasizing character development through self-effort. The movement was built upon the traditional Jain practice of *anuvrat*¹¹ (vows for laity) that had evolved from the original teachings of Mahavira, the 24th Jain preceptor. The Anuvrat Movement was the brainchild of the late ascetic Acharya Tulsi (1914-1997), a socio-religious reformer and the ninth religious leader of the Jain Svetambara Terapanth sect. The *anuvrat* vows were modified versions of the five *mahavrat*, or “great vows” taken by Jain renunciates.

The five categories of vows are constructed as follows: *ahimsa* (nonviolence), in which the renunciates vow not to destroy any life and the laity vow to take care whenever possible and not to destroy life; *satya* (truthfulness), in which the renunciates vow not to lie and the laity vow to take care and not to behave in a deceitful way or to spread gossip; *asteya* (non-stealing), in which the renunciates vow not to take what is not given and the laity vow not to covet or steal the possessions of others; *bracmacharya* (celibacy), in which the renunciates vow to abstain from sexual intercourse and the laity vow not to commit adultery and to be modest; and *aparigraha* (non-possession), in which the

¹⁰ Yuvacharya Mahapragya, *Anuvrat Movement*, ed. S. L. Gandhi, Second (Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati, n.d.), 16.

¹¹ They are small vows for the Jain lay followers evolved out of the teachings of Mahavira.

renunciates vow to renounce all interest in worldly things and the laity vow to limit their possessions to only what is essential whenever possible. The *mahavrat* are meant to be absolute and permanent, whereas the *anuvrat* are goals that laypersons strive to attain and could be undertaken for limited periods of time, depending on one's capacity, in order to bring one closer to the ideal way of life exemplified by the renunciates. Because these five categories of vows have been so pervasive in many religious traditions in India, Tulsi used them as a foundation for his movement.

In tracing the birth of the movement, I straightaway begin with the response received from one of the early Anuvrati interviewee: "Acharya Tulsi was disenchanted by human psyche rooted in selfishness, over-competiveness, over-consumerism, and maximization of profits by wrong means. Such conditions in post-independence India were the immediate inspiration for the emergence of the Anuvrat Movement."¹² Thereupon, Tulsi adopted an innovative perspective and modified the existing traditional *anuvrat* vows with a hope-for major impact of the movement. His strategy was twofold: on the one hand, the movement was geared towards creating a platform for interfaith dialogue by overcoming the cultural and religious barriers between Jains and non-Jains. On the other hand, he did not want to limit the movement to the Terapanth sect, as Jains are already a minority group in India and Terapanth a minority within Jainism. The small, close-knit group of Terapanthis may have formed Tulsi's core base of followers, but his goal from the beginning was to address social ills of the wider Indian society.

¹² Alope Roy, interview by Shivani Bothra, trans. Shivani Bothra, August 7, 2012.

Origin

The Anuvrat Movement was initiated in Sardarshahar in Rajasthan, India in the mid-twentieth century as a nonviolent, non-sectarian and spiritual mass movement. In the words of a devout Terapanthi, “the Anuvrat Movement was enacted by *Gurudev*¹³ Tulsi to bring ethics in the lives of people. *Gurudev* Tulsi prescribed some code of conduct, which was most non-sectarian. The aim of Anuvrat was to make human being better than what he is.”¹⁴ The movement as understood by the Sanskrit professor and Vedanta scholar Dayananda Bhargava, “is a social extension of an ancient spiritual tradition going back to Mahavira.”¹⁵ The above view, relatively common among Indologists, implies the social expression of a religious phenomenon and a symbiotic relationship between ascetics and society. Such perspective reflects what the German sociologist and philosopher Max Weber said of religious prophets, saints and sages – that while remaining at one level continuous with their social world, they introduce something radically new.¹⁶

The Secular Model

From the beginning, Acharya Tulsi, along with his core group of monks and nuns, designed the model for the movement while keeping three factors central – the religious diversity within India, secularism in India, as well as the philosophy of small vows. Many senior respondents recalled Tulsi’s movement as a new ray of light that would give them

¹³ The Terapanthi lay followers revere their religious leader by the term *Gurudev*.

¹⁴ Mitesh Gajwani, interview by Shivani Bothra, May 11, 2012.

¹⁵ Dayanand Bhargava, interview by Shivani Bothra, July 18, 2012.

¹⁶ James C. Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion*, 3rd ed (Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall, 1998), 161.

hope for a continuation of the popular socio-political ideas that had been introduced during the Gandhian era. In this way, Tulsi's revolutionary ideas brought him and his Terapanth community into the limelight of the diverse Indian society. According to the noted Jain scholar, Paul Dundas: "He [Tulsi] founded the Anuvrat Movement dedicated to raising the moral tone of Indian public and commercial life by taking Jainism beyond the Jains, which was to become the best known *Terapanthi* enterprise in India."¹⁷ Along the lines of Dundas statement, the head nun of the Terapanth sect, Sadhvi Pramukhashri, in her interview said, "Anuvrat is the most powerful secular Terapanth activity, which is like a gateway, to connect with political leaders, thinkers, media, and religious organizations."¹⁸ She further drew attention to the fact that Anuvrat is not a slogan; it is a secular path genuinely emphasizing a nonviolent lifestyle. Her views imply that in order to succeed and reach out beyond the Jain community, the founding members of the movement might have needed the support of popular thinkers, media or even other organized religious institutions. Here historian Domenic Marbaniang offers some perspectives on why Tulsi's movement was successful after choosing the secular path, as he notes that "India cannot be united religiously; however, it can stand united politically and secularly."¹⁹

Combating Evils of Modernity through Self Control

What was behind Tulsi's mission of social reforms? The response regarding Tulsi's primary focus came like a chorus of recorded messages from the respondents. To

¹⁷ Paul Dundas, *The Jains*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2002), 223.

¹⁸ Sadhvi Shri, interview by Shivani Bothra, trans. Shivani Bothra, May 26, 2012.

¹⁹ Domenic Marbaniang, *Perspectives on Indian Secularism* (Domenic Marbaniang, 2009), 6.

begin with, Tulsi endeavored the making of a healthy nation through building of ideal societies. Then in order to clarify the meaning of ideal society, Tulsi emphasized to free the society from the maladies of modernity; his main emphasis was on character development and self-transformation through self-control, ultimately resulting in individual regeneration. He stressed upon honesty in all walks of life; thus, he constituted distinct code of conduct for students, teachers, politicians, businessmen, and everyone else. He gave priority to the removal of social evils like dowry and *purdah* and took radical measures to elevate the political status of women and the oppressed milieu. In this manner, the accounts of Tulsi's industrious undertakings were without significant variations.

Empowerment of Women

Tulsi's views on the advocacy of women's rights in the political, social, and economic arenas in a male-dominated society were different from the then ongoing feminist movements worldwide. Tulsi's views on women's development are described in his biography as follows:

Women have been unfairly treated, remained in constraint, forced to follow useless customs and deprived of education for a long time. Acknowledging the active feminist movements in the West, he continued, the view that women should have equal rights as men is gaining strength. He further stated, ripples of western movements are observed in India also. However, he stated his viewpoint by taking women's development in a different direction. He said women's progress in the society should not be measured by men's progress, as man has not reached the summit of all developments. He has not progressed in the real sense and in many ways still lags behind. Thus, women should not idealize men and women should think independently regarding her status in the society giving equal priority to character development.²⁰

²⁰ Yuvacharya Mahapragya, *Dharma Chakra ka Pravartan (Achary Shri Tulsi ki Jeevan-Katha)*, ed. Muni Dulahraj, 1st ed. (Rajsamand: Acharya Shri Tulsi Amrit Mohatsav Rashtrya Samiti, 1986), 33.

The above quotation apparently conveys the significance Tulsi placed on women's education, not only among the lay community, but also among the women ascetics within his sect. He conceived that an educated woman will educate the entire family and this will reflect in the development of a healthy society.²¹ The idea that western feminism understood equality, as sameness with men is widespread but prioritizing education was perhaps the major part of western feminism. Even though Tulsi went in precisely this direction, his efforts of empowering women were inclined towards motivating women to overcome the traditional mind-sets towards their own social status.

Besides the aforementioned characteristics of Tulsian vision of society, he also wished to see the entire nation free from drugs and intoxication. Tulsi's foresightedness for an ultimate society reflected both his secularly inspired ideals and the recognition of individual potentiality. He believed the value system ought to be rooted in ethics and compassion towards all sentient beings, including oneself.

Many respondents remembered Tulsi's charisma and the unusual power he demonstrated as a young leader of the religious sect. He was fearless yet very conscious of every step he took towards actualizing his mission. As a fundamental theory for the movement, Tulsi embraced nonviolence, which according to Anne Vallely, is the quintessential norm of Jain ethics.²² Tulsi analyzed that nonviolence is the essence of religions and truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possession are the extrapolations of nonviolence. As it is appearing, his vision for an ideal society was also in keeping with

²¹ Muni Sukhlal, *Anuvrat Ke Paanch Dashak* (Anuvrat Mahasamiti, 1999), 30.

²² Anne Vallely, *Guardians of the Transcendent: An Ethnography of a Jain Ascetic Community*, 1st ed. (University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2002), 35.

Gandhian ideals and the overall social developments that were taking place at various levels in post-independence India.

Gandhi and Tulsi: Intersecting Paths

Mahatma Gandhi and Acharya Tulsi never met, but their views were exchanged through having read each other's works. Their perspective was shaped by similar socio-religious ideas common to many Indian philosophical traditions as well as by their shared pluralistic cultural backgrounds. In his book on the origins of the Anuvrat Movement, Tulsi notes:

I desired to meet Gandhi, but my exposure and journey was limited to the Bikaner district. Nevertheless, we met each other through our writings. Gandhi read and commented extensively on my two books: *A Message of Peace For the Unrest World* and *Ahimsa*. In the end, Gandhi wrote: How good would it be, if the world followed this saint's ideas and theories.²³

It did come to pass that many Terapanthis, first involved with Gandhi's movement or inspired by Gandhi's philosophy, later joined Tulsi's movement. Some respondents I interviewed highlighted names like Mohan Lal Jain, Shri Devendra Karnawat, and Hulasi Devi Bhutoria as being examples of those who followed such a path.

Tulsi's Unique Approach as an Exemplar

Tulsi, both a monk and a saint, in keeping with Jain rules for renunciates, limited his travels (in upholding the *mahavrat* of *ahimsa*, Jain ascetics do not use transportation and travel only on foot, so as not to cause injury to living beings), not even crossing the border of Rajasthan in India until 1948. Yet, he was an incredibly innovative and visionary leader of an emerging sectarian tradition who was able to spread his influence despite his religious constraints. One major feature of Tulsi's hypothesis was if religion

²³ Acharya Tulsi, *Anuvrat Andolan Ki Pristhbhoomi* (New Delhi: Anuvrat Mahasamiti, 2012), 5.

were to be perceived merely as the sum of practiced rituals its moral impact would be limited to the individual. However, he theorized that through proscribed non-ritualistic (secularized) action, it might be possible for him to influence modern culture by demonstrating how internalized moral viewpoints could be pervaded in a wider Indian society. Therefore, Tulsi advocated for the creation of a movement that utilized external practices as exemplified by his pilgrimage on foot to promote and introduce ways to change internal states of being.

Religious Response to Modernization

Tulsi viewed modernization as a factor in the degradation of a value systems and a cause of the deterioration of character, but how could he transcend the limitations of his own tradition? An additional well-known example of a religious response to modernization in India that occurred prior to Gandhi and Tulsi, can be seen in Raja Rammohun Roy's forming of the Brahma Samaj in pre-independence India. The key aspects of Brahma Samaj were the abolition of *suttee* (the immolation of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres) as a social evil, and the strengthening of the disintegrating Hindu society by reviving the Vedas and Upanishads.²⁴ All three examples – Roy, Gandhi and Tulsi, evince what Max Weber (one of the principal architects of modern social science) stated: "Religion is a powerful casual factor influencing social action and social structure."²⁵ Tulsi's allegiance to the small vows implies his firm faith in the power of religion as expressed by Weber in the above quotation. However, the opposite of this

²⁴ Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-religious Reform Movement in British India*, The New Cambridge History of India III, 1 (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 30.

²⁵ Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, 161.

is also true as it is not compulsory for a movement to be conditioned by a religious philosophy to bring about social change.

The Anuvrat Movement: Reinterpreting the Role of Religion

As the orientalist William Robertson Smith notes: “Religion did not exist for saving of soul but for the preservation and welfare of the society.”²⁶ Smith’s view implies a behavioral function of religion; likewise Tulsi’s approach was not transcendental. He neither explicitly associate his movement with any religion, nor did he reject religion; instead he reinterpreted religion according to contemporary needs. One senior nun associated with the movement from its early stages authoritatively summed up Tulsi’s approach as follows:

Acharya Tulsi sought to give behavioral aspect to religion. According to him, people maintain strong faith towards their religion, but often there is a gap in their theory and practice. He unraveled three fundamental aspects of a religion: First religion is ritualistic and limited to a sacred space like temple, church, synagogue or a monastery where people offer prayer or worship. Secondly, religion is ethical, which guides one to distinguish between right and wrong deeds. Thirdly, religion is spiritual which leads a practitioner to raise his consciousness to lead a pure life. The Anuvrat Movement does not interfere with any ritualistic practice. However, it only seeks to inspire people to adopt ethical values like restrain from telling lies, cheating people, violence etc. to lead a spiritual life.²⁷

Tulsi then was seeking not to replace or compete with existing religious institutions, but to supplement existing practices with a broader moral framework that would bridge the religious with the secular. As Zygmunt Bauman, the global social postmodern thinker states: “In such [postmodern] life we need moral knowledge and skills more often, and

²⁶ William Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (Adamant Media Corporation, 2005), 29.

²⁷ Sadhvi Shri, interview.

more poignantly than either knowledge of the ‘laws of nature’ or technical skills. Yet, we do not know where to get them; and when (if) they are offered, we are seldom sure we can trust them unswervingly.”²⁸ Tulsi recognized that religion could and should be a source of this “moral knowledge” but to be effective in responding to modernization, it must transcend the merely ritual, and it must focus on universal moral themes common to many different traditions in order to inspire trust and not cause division.

The Construction of Tulsi’s Modified Anuvrat Vows

The majority of monks and nuns I interviewed emphasized the slogan: *Self-restraint is life*. Interestingly, one female ascetic in her interview quoted Mahapragya²⁹ and said: “Self-restraint is life and an unrestrained life is death. Vows develop self-control and modern-day’s diseases are caused due to an unrestrained life style.”³⁰

Her response entails that the movement professed a way to respond to modernization through self-restraint. In the course of my previous interviews, I had heard multiple versions of the already stated above theory. Thus, my next question was more direct: What is the difference between the traditional vows and the modernized vows for the contemporary Indians? A senior monk’s response was intellectual but complicated. He stated: “One who has *Samyag Drishti*³¹ can accept the traditional 12 *anuvrat* vows. However, the Tulsian version is the 11 vows, which anyone following any religion giving

²⁸ Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Blackwell Pub, 1994), 16–17.

²⁹ Mahapragya was a monk named Nathmal, who later, became Tulsi’s successor in 1995 as the tenth Acharya of the Jain Svetambara Terapanth tradition.

³⁰ Sadhvi Shri, interview.

³¹ According to the Jain philosophy, *Samyag Drishti* (Right Faith) is one of the three jewels of Jainism, the other two being Right Knowledge and Right Action.

due importance to benevolent character can adopt.”³² An alternative response made by Professor Bhargava, was simple and potent. According to him, “there is a metaphysical difference between the two sets of vows. The prime objective of the *anuvrat* vows as elucidated in *Sravakachara*³³ is liberation of soul (*moksha*), whereas the objective of the Anuvrat Movement is purification of soul.”³⁴ On further inquiry, he explained that the traditional vows are tied to a belief system and require a higher degree of self-restraint as compared to the Tulsian version of *anuvrat* vows. These views convey that the Anuvrat Movement has deviated from the traditional understanding of the Jain path and its goals for the laity. Thus, the Tulsian vows were a new approach to generate the spirit of self-restraint among the masses.

From various conversations and discussions on vows, I found that initially when Acharya Tulsi launched the movement there were 84 vows. Subsequently, there were vigorous analyses of the vows formed on the basis of feedback drawn from the early Anuvratists. As a result, the vows were reduced to 45. They were further consolidated to the present form, which is a code of conduct comprising of 11 vows. The reason given by a senior nun regarding the descending figure of the vows was:

Earlier Anuvrat was targeted towards big social problems like dowry, *pardah* etc. The quantity of vows reduced in the light of changing socio-cultural circumstances in India. Secondly, people feared keeping such a long list of rules in their already busy lives. To be an Anuvrati, one has to possess a strong will power and hold on to their vows. Generally, an Indian mind is dedicated to the sacredness of a vow. He/she is reluctant to

³² Muni, interview by Shivani Bothra, trans. Shivani Bothra, July 19, 2012.

³³ A Classic Jain Text on the Householder’s conduct by an 11th Century Jain Acharya Amitgati.

³⁴ Bhargava, interview.

violate the accepted vows for fear of the consequences, but do not hesitate breaking a civil law.³⁵

The above reasons asserted by the nun indicate that the original 84 vows were presently less effective because of changes in social life. However, my inferences from her view are that while the problems of dowry and *purdah* might have been reduced, they have not disappeared from Indian society. The dowry amounts have increased from the past and *purdah* is still normative in some parts of India. The second point as understood by me is that people do not want a long list, only a simplification of vows in view of the increasing complexities of life. On the other hand, according to many respondents, the present generation is more educated and spiritually aware; and future generations may be even more cognizant of their spirituality. So far, the vows have demonstrated great flexibility and have been open to modification depending upon the circumstances.

Regarding the accepting of vows, it would be instructive to bring in an example of the Quaker Movement from the Christian tradition, to provide contrast and similarity between different cultures. Self-improvement forms one of the core values for the Quakers too. However, unlike the Anuvrat Movement, the Quakers will not take formal oaths, or engage in “promises” since they say: if you say you will do something, you should do it (let your yea be yea and your nay be nay).³⁶

The Ethics of Tulsi’s Anuvrat Vows

Here I will briefly digress from my description of the history of the movement to list Tulsi’s vows and to reflect on how a subject as broad as ethics can be expressed

³⁵ Sadhvi Shri, interview.

³⁶ Alan Aldridge, *Religion in the Contemporary World: a Sociological Introduction*, 2nd ed (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007), 49.

through an action-oriented program of 11 vows. Ethics is the science of conduct. It considers the actions of human beings with reference to their righteousness or wrongness, their tendency to good or evil.³⁷ Tulsi's 11 modified Anuvrat vows are as follows:

(1) not to intentionally kill moving, innocent creatures; not to commit suicide and not to commit feticide; (2) not to attack anybody; not to support aggression; to endeavor to bring about world peace and disarmament. (3) not to take part in violent agitations or in any destructive activities; (4) not to discriminate on the basis of caste, color etc., not to treat anyone as an untouchable; and to believe in human unity (5) to practice religious toleration and not to rouse sectarian frenzy; (6) to observe rectitude in business and general behavior; not harm others in order to serve any ends and not to practice deceit; (7) to set limits to acquisition; (8) not to resort to unethical practices in elections; (9) not to encourage socially evil customs; (10) to lead a life free from addictions; not to use intoxicants like alcohol, hemp, heroin, tobacco etc.; (11) to be alert to the problems of keeping the environment pollution-free; not to cut down trees and not to waste water.³⁸

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the basis of Tulsi's 11 Anuvrat vows is the five precepts commonly found in eastern traditions: nonviolence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possession. However, as explained by Acharya Mahapragya, the successor of Acharya Tulsi, the vows of the Anuvrat Movement were also meant to reflect the ethical concepts of compassion, equality, human unity, integrity, living in present and the moderate consumption of resources.

Tulsi consciously designed the language of the vows to demonstrate the tradition of the Jain theory of negation (to restrain negative actions is more effective than to proscribe positive action). Yet, the wording also reflects an effort to modernize by

³⁷ John S. Mackenzie, *A Manual of Ethics* (Cosimo Classics, 2005), 1.

³⁸ *Anuvrat - A Code of Conduct for Building a Healthy Society* (Anuvrat Mahasamiti, 1999), 4–5.

mentioning specific, contemporary ethical problems. Further expanding on the implication of the Tulsian vows another senior nun responded:

Anuvrat states, whether you are capable of being a celestial being or not but at least do not be a hellish being. Whether you are capable of observing complete nonviolence like an ascetic or not, at least do not be a cruel human. Whether you are able to practice complete celibacy or not, at least do not engage in illicit sexual activity. Even the first President of India extended his support to the movement and commented that it is like religion stepping out of its traditional boundaries to the behavioral aspect of everyday living.³⁹

On the basis of the above quotation, it is hard to claim that Jainism exclusively inspires the movement's philosophy. Tulsi's movement was developed on a syncretic ideology whose goal was the universal welfare of all. Many philosophical Indic traditions have commensurated the concepts of celestial and hellish beings. However, during the gloomy transition period of post-independence India, the Anuvrat Movement was one of the first initiatives to address the socio-economic crisis by utilizing pan-Indic, age-old wisdom.

Tulsi Introduces the Anuvrat Movement

To revert to the background of the movement, I will now address: how the movement began and spread; what were the ascetic contributions; who the initial Anuvratists were and what was their role in strengthening of the movement. In the morning discourse, on a bright day in October 1948, Tulsi, along with his 600 monks and nuns, addressed the lay Terapanth community:

Religion has to reflect in our lives. To overcome the widespread violence, unrest and corruption in the society, there is a strong need for an ethical movement. Today I launch a social revolution for the development of character on humanitarian grounds and I need 25 supporters from the lay community who gives prime importance to character building. These 25

³⁹ Sadhvi Shri, interview.

initial Anuvratīs are like 25 lamps that would spread the light of the movement along with my ascetic force.⁴⁰

Hearing the rousing speech of their Guru revered as Acharya, 25 people voluntarily came forward. Many respondents said that Acharya Tulsi himself, waiting with a blank sheet and pen in hand, noted down those initial names. The initial 25 Anuvratīs were all Terapanthis; they were 23 laymen and 2 laywomen. Furthermore, they came from highly modern cities of India, while some others belonged to major Terapanth-centered small towns like Ladnun, Sardarshahar, Gangashahar and Rajsamand and some among them were Gandhians, doctors, industrialists, and traders. However, as the movement gained momentum, it expanded and crossed the sectarian boundaries to influence all spectrums of culture and profession, applying to men and women, rich and poor alike.

In the next phase of the movement, Tulsi, followed by his caravan of monks, nuns, and laypeople, walked through the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent. As quoted in his biography, he walked over 35,000 miles in 35 years. He set out to reach all people from the remotest village to the most developed cities without any barrier of religion, caste, sex or culture.⁴¹ From the humble beginnings of 25 Anuvratīs, the movement grew to an estimated figure of millions of Anuvratīs in few decades. Anticipating this rise in numbers, Tulsi stated, “I am not impressed by the fast increasing numbers. Quantity has its significance but I am interested in the quality of Anuvratīs.”⁴² Such an account is found in Tulsi’s biography and later compilations of the movement.

⁴⁰ Devendrakumar Karnawat and Mahendra Karnawat, *Anuvrat-Itihas Pratham Khand*, 1st ed. (New Delhi: Anuvrat Mahasamiti, 1999), 3–4.

⁴¹ Mahapragya, *Dharma Chakra ka Pravartan*, 10.

⁴² Karnawat and Karnawat, *Anuvrat-Itihas Pratham Khand*, 28.

On the surface, Tulsi's movement had appeared to win wide acceptance, but it lacked the organizational skills necessary to fully integrate it into the multi-cultural Indian society. In addition to the above setbacks, Tulsi's own adherents and thinkers criticized him and challenged his movement. Some of the fundamental issues raised were – whether it was a Jain movement or a secular one; was Acharya trying to convert the masses into Jains by making them Anuvratists? His radical stances on women's development and on the raising of the *Dalits* (untouchables) community were criticized as well. Some of the clarifications as given by Tulsi were:

The social movement is not to convert anyone into Jainism or to the Terapanth tradition. From the very beginning, the approach had been nonsectarian. The only purpose of the movement is purification of character through individual self-effort. The movement clings to the term Anuvrat, which is irrefutably drawn from the Jain tradition because it best represents the spirit of self-control and small vows.⁴³

Apparently, the movement faced more challenges because followers of Tulsi's own tradition as well as the majority of Indians viewed it through a religious lens. According to Weber's theory of social action: Religious action would appear to be included in at least three categories of social action (rational, traditional, and effectual), but nonreligious action is also encompassed within these categories, and the framework does not provide us with a clear notion of religious action.⁴⁴ Despite this overlap, if the means and the ends are virtuous, and contribute to combating the inner evils, then such debates can be avoided. According to some respondents, Tulsi greeted his critics with equanimity

⁴³ Mahapragya, *Dharma Chakra ka Pravartan*, 14.

⁴⁴ Stephen Sharot, *A Comparative Sociology of World Religions: Virtuosos, Priests, and Popular Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 22.

and his primary concern was to see an ethical, spiritual New India, which transcended politics and religion.

Conclusion

I will conclude the chapter by representing a dialogue from Tulsi's biography between Mr. Alvira (a representative from UNESCO) and Tulsi. The following conversation is helpful in understanding Tulsi's perspective on the vows as well as to interpret the ripple effect of the movement outside India.

AT: Have you seen the rules laid out in Anuvrat Movement?

Alvira: Yes, I have seen them. Why is the construction of these so negative?

AT: To restrain something, it is important to negate it. There is no limit to 'Do this, Do that.'

Alvira: Even in the Bible, the rules laid out have punitive tone, but it also says: love your neighbor.

AT: Such an explanation is also there in the Anuvrat Movement, extend amity *Maitri* to all. However, this is a teaching not a vow.

Alvira: Indians have a strong belief in nonviolence and want to integrate in their lives. They are fortunate to have such a living inspiration like you. Can it be spread in the Western countries?

AT: Why not, who does not want to live an ethical life and especially, if we have supporters like you.

Alvira: I am always there with you in this noble cause.⁴⁵

A ship is safe in a harbor but that is not what ships are built for. Acharya Tulsi was the ninth Acharya of the Terapanth lineage and one of the most talked about monks of the mid twentieth century in India. He took painstaking efforts to be inclusive and realized that religious "teaching" alone is not enough, "action" is also required, and that the idea of vows as action, which had its roots in Jain traditions, could be an effective tool to create social change in secular society as well.

⁴⁵ Ibid 29.

CHAPTER 3

THE ANUVRAT MOVEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF CONCURRENT PAN-INDIC MOVEMENTS

Background

Given that the Anuvrat Movement places emphasis on the moral and spiritual foundation of an individual, the second President of India S. Radhakrishnan said, “Freedom from fear (*abhaya*), nonviolence (*ahimsa*) and non-attachment (*asanga*) are three essentials of a spiritual life. The Anuvrat *sangha*⁴⁶ has established this and is working for the moral improvement of the individual, and therefore, of society.”⁴⁷ The above quotation, which serves as evidence for the widespread recognition of the movement in its first few decades, was certainly echoing the pan-Indic values of mainstream Indian spirituality. Another significant factor that contributed to the success of the movement was Tulsi’s charismatic leadership and the support of many other politicians and intellectuals who contributed to the developing ideology of the movement.

In order to understand the success of Tulsi’s movement, I will now examine how Tulsi’s movement compared in its origins and philosophy to several other contemporary movements that were either continuations of the efforts of Gandhi’s followers or inspired by Gandhi’s efforts. From my early research, some important questions arose: Was the charismatic quality of a leader essential to the success of the movement, and how effective were each of these movements in addressing the difference between philosophy and action?

⁴⁶ Community.

⁴⁷ S. L. Gandhi, ed., *Anuvrat Movement*, 2nd ed. (Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati, 1992), 31.

Furthermore, in this section, I will delve more deeply into the Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Movement, which is rooted in Buddhist philosophy and inspired by Gandhi's *Sarvodaya*. There are more similarities than differences in this alternative model of social activism relative to our ongoing discussion on the Anuvrat Movement.

Gandhian Heritage

Mahatma Gandhi was the first to popularize the term *Sarvodaya*, meaning “Welfare of All” by using as the title of his translation of John Ruskin’s work, *Unto This Last*. By way of choosing this word, he wanted “to translate Ruskin’s message [his vision of a future society], and later, [...] to symbolize the spiritual revolution prescribed by Gandhian utopia.”⁴⁸ Many of these pan-Indic movements focused and shared the ideals of nonviolence, truth and self-reliance. In an effort to broaden our understanding of Tulsi’s contemporaries, I will examine four such movements that aspired for a better society and shared Gandhi’s heritage – either in his philosophy or in his legacy. They are the Anuvrat Movement (1949); the Bhoodan Movement (1951); the Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Movement (1958) and the Chipko Movement (1971). The prime objective of these post-colonial movements was to regain social stability by reconstituting the social life.

The Anuvrat Movement

Acharya Tulsi was a pioneer of these reconstituting movements, beginning his movement as early as 1949. His platform evolved out of traditional Jain values and he was able to demonstrate a well-fortified Gandhian paradigm. As the Indologist Peter Flugel observes: “Tulsi created the nonreligious Anuvrat Movement for the

⁴⁸ Richard Gabriel Fox, *Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1989), 42.

implementation of nonviolence and morality in social life.”⁴⁹ Mahatma Gandhi singled out nonviolence from the scriptures and applied it effectively as a technique for political change, whereas Tulsi carved out nonviolence from the scriptures for fostering social change.

The Bhoodan Movement

Vinoba Bhave, the spiritual heir of Gandhi, launched the Bhoodan Movement in 1951 in the Pochampalli village in the Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh.⁵⁰ The movement’s mission was to persuade wealthy landowners to voluntarily give a portion of their land to poor peasants, a concept strongly tied to the Eastern religious practice of non-possessiveness. Raghavendra Nath Misra, in his book, *An Economic Assessment of the Bhoodan Movement in India*, notes that Vinoba derived his philosophy for the movement from the classic Hindu text the *Gita*.⁵¹ Vinoba, a layman demonstrated great asceticism, and like Tulsi, he walked on foot across the Indian sub-continent in order to persuade landowners to gift their land to the landless. Even though both the movements were action-oriented, the main difference between the two was that: Vinoba focused on “gifting land,” and Tulsi focused on “small vows” for self-restraint. Vinoba Bhave, through his movement attempted a social-economic development of post-independence

⁴⁹ Peter Flugel, “Terapanth Svetambara Jain Tradition,” in *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*, ed. J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann (ABC-CLIO, 2002), http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/7443/1/Terapanth_Enc-rel_02.pdf.

⁵⁰ Rajendra Singh, *Social Movements, Old and New: a Post-modernist Critique* (New Delhi; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 2001), 263–64.

⁵¹ R. N. Misra, *Bhoodan Movement in India: An Economic Assessment* (S Chand, New Delhi, 1973), 17.

India whereas Acharya Tulsi's purpose was the regeneration of humans on spiritual-ethical grounds.

The Sarvodaya Shramdana Movement

A. T. Ariyaratne, a Buddhist layman, launched the Sarvodaya Shramdana Movement in Sri Lanka in 1958. He notes: "We in Sri Lanka were inspired by this Sarvodaya thought of Gandhi and the Bhoodan-Gramdan action of Acharya Vinoba Bhave."⁵² In forming the ideology of the movement, Ariyaratne believed that the Buddhist Dhamma teachings would provide a blueprint for a new social order and a nonviolent revolution.⁵³ Interestingly, he redefined Gandhi's Sarvodaya "Welfare of All" as "Awakening of All."⁵⁴ As noted by a human development theorist Dennis Goulet: "Sarvodaya reinterprets the Middle Path for the technological age."⁵⁵ Goulet's assessment implies that Ariyaratne adopted appropriate technology in his developmental projects while remaining true to his Buddhist tradition.

The Chipko Movement

By 1970, the Chipko Movement, which had a great impact in Northern India, was led by two followers of Gandhi – Sunderlal Bhauguna and Chandi Prasad Bhatt. "Chipko," loosely translates as *hug*, was a movement that originated in the Indian

⁵² Ē Ṭī Āriyaratna, *Buddhism and Sarvodaya: Sri Lankan Experience*, Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica Series no. 168 (Delhi, India: Sri Satguru Publications, 1996), 3.

⁵³ George D. Bond, *Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Re-Interpretation and Responses* (Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1992), 243.

⁵⁴ George Doherty Bond, *Buddhism at Work: Community Development, Social Empowerment and the Sarvodaya Movement* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2004), 2.

⁵⁵ Denis Goulet, *Survival With Integrity: Sarvodaya at the Crossroads* (Marga Institute in association with Overseas, 1981), xviii.

Himalayas and was dedicated to saving trees by hugging them, if necessary, when loggers came to cut them down.⁵⁶ It was yet another example from the post-independence India of how the non-violent resistance and struggle of thousands of ordinary people without the presence of an especially charismatic leader could succeed under certain circumstances.⁵⁷ The Chipko movement explored nonviolence for the protection of the environment.

Ecumenical Spirituality

The aforementioned movements, therefore, have demonstrated the need for a new model of collective action, a fresh vision for the society and a regenerated human consciousness. They all resemble Gandhi's example in their practices and their actions, yet each of them is unique in the way they cultivate their respective movements in light of their own traditions. An element that distinguishes each of the above movements is their relationship to different scriptural texts of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The Hindu text the *Bhagvada Gita* inspires the Gandhian movements, the Jain scripture *Acharanga* inspires the Anuvrat Movement and the Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Movement draws inspiration from the Buddhist scriptures of the *Tipitaka*.⁵⁸

To further develop the understanding of the Anuvrat Movement, I will now compare it with the Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Movement. Both of these movements are drawn from two distinct *sramanic* (ascetic) traditions and have many similarities in their

⁵⁶ Thomas Weber, *Hugging the Trees: The Story of the Chipko Movement* (Viking, 1988), 11.

⁵⁷ Jeffrey Haynes, *Politics in the Developing World: A Concise Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 230.

⁵⁸ Yanandam V. Nithl, *Buddhist Philosophy of Social Activism* (Global Vision Publishing House, 2005), 116.

nature. To explore how these *sramanic* movements have been able to sustain members for more than five decades, I will examine the practices of meditation and asceticism, which were believed to have developed the integrity of the movements.

Meditation in Anuvrat and Sarvodaya

Ariyaratne, the founder of the Sri Lankan Sarvodaya, maintains that in classical Sri Lankan culture, the awakening of the personality was based on four principles:

Sarvodaya interprets the first principle, *metta*, as respect for all life, cultivating love for all beings. This principle leads to second, *karuna* or compassion, which Sarvodaya understands as compassionate action. The third principle, *mudita* or sympathetic joy, results from acting on the first two principles. As well as, the fourth principle, *upekha* or equanimity becomes important for developing a personality, which is unshaken by praise or blame, by gain or loss.⁵⁹

With Sarvodaya's psychological connections to these traditional *Brahma Viharas* (observances), it leaves me to ask what place meditation holds in the movement. In view of Ariyaratne: "Meditation helps to purify one's mind and generate an energy of love."⁶⁰

In a similar way, Tulsi laid stress on incorporating meditation in the movement when the Anuvrat Movement was at its peak. According to one respondent: "Preksha Meditation, a Jain form of meditation, was introduced in the Anuvrat program to develop will power among the Anuvratists that would allow them to smoothly follow the vows. A method of inner purification was needed that could give them the requisite strength."⁶¹ In terms of the Sarvodaya movement, Joanna Macy contends that, "Sarvodaya has brought

⁵⁹ George D. Bond, "A. T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka," in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 127.

⁶⁰ A. T. Ariyaratne, *Collected Works Volume II* (Sarvodaya Research Institute, 1980), 56.

⁶¹ Ravi Sharma, interview by Shivani Bothra, May 27, 2012.

another innovation to Sri Lankan Buddhism by wedding meditation and social action.”⁶² However, on many occasions both the movements have claimed in different tones that the constitution of meditation is only to support the social ethical actions of the movement’s philosophy. Does Anuvrat or Sarvodaya require meditation to reach its goal? Is meditation merely a means to the end or an end in itself? I will further see how the mendicant Tulsi merges his movement with meditation and how Ariyaratne, the layman, integrates the Buddhist practice of *metta* meditation in social activity.

The Anuvrat Movement and Preksha Meditation

Some of the questions that Tulsi encountered regarding the Preksha Meditation (Insight meditation) were: “How did it originate and why? What values do you wish to establish through it in society? Is this also an extensive movement like Anuvrat?”⁶³ Tulsi stated that Preksha Meditation was the next logical step following the Anuvrat Movement. He explained his point in the following way:

Anuvrat and Preksha dhyana originated almost together. Though, at that time, I had no conception of '*preksha*' in my mind. But, for the creation of the kind of ground I required for Anuvrat, it was not possible to ignore the inevitable requirement of *dhyana-sadhana*. The sapling of Anuvrat bloomed earlier because it was connected with the gross world and the behavioral aspect of life. But, *preksha* is concerned with the subtle world, the inner aspect of life, and it took a long time to develop. As the conception of moral values took root among the people, the spiritual thirst increased.⁶⁴

⁶² Nithl, *Buddhist Philosophy of Social Activism*, 85.

⁶³ Acharya Tulsi, *Transmutation of Personality Through Preksha Meditation*, ed. Sadhvipramukha Kanakprabha, (Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati, n.d.), 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

In order to comprehend Tulsi's response, I asked my respondents about Preksha Meditation and how its practice (*sadhna*) assists the Anuvratists in realizing the goals of the movement. As I gathered from my responses, the technique called Preksha Meditation was developed by the monk Mahapragya (who later became Tulsi's successor as Acharya in 1995) in 1970 to provide a holistic aspect to the growing Anuvrat Movement. Mahapragya, in an article, gives the reason for incorporating meditation in the movement. He writes: "Mental tension has emerged as a dreadful disease of the age of industrial progress. To remedy it, the Anuvrat Movement has added a new chapter to itself in the form of Preksha Meditation."⁶⁵ Elaborating on the benefit of his new experiment Tulsi stated: "Meditation affects the secretion of the endocrine glands and this in turn brings about an inner transformation of the individual."⁶⁶ Another monk (who has been guiding the movement's activities since few decades), I interviewed, sheds light on the position meditation holds in the movement: "The practice of Preksha Meditation helps in the purification of emotions and a transformation from negative thinking to positive thinking. Unless these are purified, people are not able to maintain vows."⁶⁷

The above explanation led me to ask, with Preksha Meditation holding such a central, transformative role in the movement, what was the need for the vows? An Anuvrati responded that the "Anuvrat vow means self-control and meditation is the technique for strengthening these vows."⁶⁸ Several of my informants also said both

⁶⁵ Yuvacharya Mahapragya, "The Anuvrat Movement in Restropect," in *Anuvrat Movement*, ed. S. L. Gandhi, 2nd ed. (Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati, 1992), 27.

⁶⁶ Gandhi, *Anuvrat Movement*, 8.

⁶⁷ Muni, interview by Shivani Bothra, Hindi, trans. Shivani Bothra, June 3, 2012.

⁶⁸ Shrikant Verma, interview by Shivani Bothra, May 20, 2012.

Anuvrat and Preksha complement each other. However, what is more intriguing here is to see that when the Anuvrat Movement was growing rapidly during the first two decades, Preksha Meditation was still an undeveloped concept. Twenty years later as Preksha developed, it came to be understood as a part of the Anuvrat Movement. In fact, it was such an over-powering aspect that Acharya Tulsi, in later years was painfully aware of the weakening force of the Anuvrat Movement. According to another informant, “Preksha Meditation was the second stage of the movement, and the third stage was the Science of Living.⁶⁹ It was introduced for children to complement the education system and the development of an integrated personality.”⁷⁰ From the various responses I collected with regard to Preksha’s role in the movement, it seems that it has largely overridden the focus from the vows. Having seen the gradual shift in the Anuvrat Movement from vows to Preksha Meditation, let us now look at how Ariyaratne blends his Sarvodaya movement with *metta* meditation.

Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and Metta Meditation

The Sarvodaya movement started with the aim of building a Buddhist centered society in postcolonial Ceylon.⁷¹ The founder of the movement, Ariyaratne, annotates his movement as: “The Sarvodaya *Shramadana* Movement drew abundantly from the wealth of Buddhist thought which we have attempted to apply to the realization of socio-

⁶⁹ Jeevan Vigyan, that is, Science of Living, aims to add a new dimension to the field of education based on the idea that intellectual development alone does not provide any solution for the burning ethical problems of the time.

⁷⁰ Verma, interview.

⁷¹ Nithl, *Buddhist Philosophy of Social Activism*, 110.

economic ideals in harmony with moral and spiritual ends.”⁷² Unlike Tulsi’s Anuvrat Movement, Sarvodaya is a layman’s movement promoting meditation for social reform. Ariyaratne reinterpreted the Buddhist virtue of *dana* for his social movement. *Dana*, traditionally referred to almsgiving for the Buddha or to the *sangha* (community of monks) as a merit-making practice. The reinterpretation of this virtue in the movement is: “*Dana* becomes the social ideal of sharing; sharing one’s wealth and one’s labor, as in *shramadana*, for the welfare of all.”⁷³ Here a reflection of Vinoba Bhave’s Bhoodan movement is observed as concurrent to Ariyaratne’s movement. Furthermore, an element of comparison here with Tulsi’s movement is that Anuvrat laid emphasis on non-possessiveness by cultivating *sanyam* i.e., self restraint and Sarvodaya focuses on non-possessiveness by integrating the virtue of *dana* i.e., charity within their movement.

Ariyaratne laid emphasis on *metta bhavana* (meditation) and regarded it “an energy of love that counteracts the negative thoughts in our psychosphere.”⁷⁴ He emphasized the pragmatic role of meditation and stated: “The short periods of meditation at *shramadana* camps are intended only as reminders to the people that this movement has a spiritual base and is not like just any other rat race.”⁷⁵ Yet another point Ariyaratne made is that “meditation is as an activity for its own sake leading to higher consciousness and does not constitute a central pursuit in Sarvodaya.”⁷⁶ Thus, Sarvodaya’s approach is

⁷² Ibid., 112.

⁷³ Ibid., 124.

⁷⁴ Bond, *Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka*, 277.

⁷⁵ Nithl, *Buddhist Philosophy of Social Activism*, 86.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

in contrast with the primary role of meditation for the Anuvratists. The Anuvratists laid a greater emphasis on the practice of Preksha Meditation for advancing the movement's philosophy of human regeneration through individual transformation. For Ariyaratne and other Sarvodaya leaders "meditation plays a secondary, but a useful, role in the movement."⁷⁷

Even though the two movements uphold different propositions and significance to meditation, albeit agree upon the fact that the component of meditation complements their movement. Both reformers, Tulsi and Ariyaratne, were optimistic in recognizing what Mary Douglas has called "the human potential for sustaining great spiritual achievements."⁷⁸ As analyzed from the various viewpoints, the addition of meditation to their social-ethical movements was in accord with the spiritual goals of Tulsi and Ariyaratne.

The Role of Buddhist Bhikkhus *vis-à-vis* Terapanth Monks

I will now discuss the Sinhalese *bhikkhus* within the Sarvodaya movement as a comparison to the role of the Terapanth ascetics, in the Anuvrat Movement. Both the *sramanic* traditions engaged ascetics within their movements as the "agents of change."

Buddhist Bhikkhus

Sarvodaya points to the ancient and traditional role of Buddhist *bhikkhus* as "the active leaders for social progress."⁷⁹ Right from the beginning, Sarvodaya's aim was to reawaken the society, which included the *bhikkhus*. From time to time, *bhikkhus* were

⁷⁷ Bond, *Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka*, 278.

⁷⁸ Mary Douglas, "The effect of Modernization on Religious Change," *Daedalus* 3, no. 1 (n.d.): 4.

⁷⁹ Detlef Kantowsky, *Sarvodaya: The Other Development* (New Delhi: New Delhi, Vikas, 1980), 125.

also trained to develop their leadership qualities. A renowned Buddhist scholar Ratnapala notes that: “*bhikkhus* needed to learn modern approaches to modern problems.”⁸⁰ The *bhikkhus* in return worked in close collaboration with Sarvodaya workers, including the introducing of the goals to the community people and teaching of *dhamma* during family gatherings. Ariyaratne reminded his followers from the old canon, *Vinaya Pitaka*, in which the Buddha sends his *bhikkhus* from place to place to spread the *dhamma*: “For the benefit of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world.”⁸¹ Ariyaratne sought to justify the concept of engaged Buddhism for social activism and to realize his goal by engaging the *sangha*. Such a relationship of *bhikkhus* to the movement has been positive in advancing the Sarvodaya Movement.

Terapanth Monks and Nuns

Even though the Anuvrat Movement was a dream of the solo charismatic monk, but his entire monastic community supported him. The leadership of the movement remained with Tulsi and the responsibility of spreading the activities was gradually dispersed among the other monks, nuns and the laypeople. As the movement expanded, branches and sub-branches were formed to efficiently manage the enterprise. Even then, it was not isolated from the ascetic communities, primarily because the ascetics are bequeathed with the philosophical background for convincingly explaining the concept and benefits of taking vows to the lay community.

From my observations, I understood that individuals felt pride in accepting the Anuvrat vows in an auspicious setting or in the presence of monks and nuns. If that is so,

⁸⁰ Nithl, *Buddhist Philosophy of Social Activism*, 93.

⁸¹ Hermann Oldenberg, ed., *Vinaya Pitaka*, vol. 1 (London Pali Text Society, 1964), 1:21.

then what roles do the laypeople have in the movement's activities? According to one senior Anuvrati: "The lay community possess great organizational skills and the capacity to secure funding for the effective functioning of the Anuvrat activities. But they were not successful role models in inspiring others to accept the Anuvrat vows."⁸² Therefore, the above statement implies that the source of inspiration lays within the ascetic community as they continue to influence whoever comes in their contact.

From several of my Indian interviews and informal discussions, it seemed to me that the movement lost focus and was diverging in different directions. Some of the respondents were sympathetic while some others were bitter in their responses about the present status of the movement. Eventually, Terapanth activities increased significantly under the banner of the Anuvrat Movement. Some respondents chorused the following statement: "Over time however, the focus shifted to Preksha Meditation and Science of Living and interest in the Anuvrat Movement declined."⁸³ Such statements led me to conclude that initially, though both these innovations were conceived within the Anuvrat Movement with the intention to strengthen it, they ended up diverting focus away from the original purpose of taking vows. Moreover, people also found meditation as a more effective approach to remedying their everyday problems than accepting vows.

What has become clear from the monastic community is that they have responded better in fulfilling the requirement of teaching meditation to the lay followers than in explaining and promoting Tulsi's practice of taking vows. In my own experience, I wondered why no monk or nun ever approached me to become an Anuvrati, like I had

⁸² Amreesh Dubey, interview by Shivani Bothra, trans. Shivani Bothra, August 12, 2012.

⁸³ Verma, interview.

been approached several times for the practice of meditation. When I asked this question during my research, I was told that the monks and nuns just assumed that I was a practicing Anuvrati already.

In succinct summation of this section, I bring in the quotation of an Indian professor of Philosophy from my interviews, who articulated the effective role monks and nuns play in inspiring the masses: “Monks and nuns are in a blissful state without any possession, their way of living makes a statement of simplicity. They have the moral authority to preach, and their impact will be far more extensive and deeper. A common person is impressed and has a sense of reverence for them.”⁸⁴ In this manner, the statement made by the professor is in akin to the trajectories of how the monastic community have influenced the progress of the movement in the past and may be able to influence its success in the future.

⁸⁴ Kusum Jain, interview by Shivani Bothra, August 7, 2012.

CHAPTER 4

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ANUVRAT VOWS AND THEIR CONTEMPORARY EFFECTIVENESS

As a part of outlining the Anuvrat path of self-transformation from its historical foundation to the current practices, I will now examine the 11 vows, which Tulsi considered mandatory for an Anuvrati. Therefore, I will demonstrate the theory behind the Tulsian vows and discuss some of the challenges encountered by the Anuvratists in practicing them. Furthermore, my focus for this section is also to analyze the effectiveness of Tulsian vows in the contemporary Indian society today.

Vows

As said earlier, within Jainism there exist two sets of vows: the *Mahavrat* for the ascetic and the *Anuvrat* for the lay community. In the eleventh century text, *Sravakacara*,⁸⁵ Acharya Amitagati enumerated the vows and conduct prescribed for the lay disciple. According to the noted Jain scholar, Padmanabh S. Jaini, the rules of lay conduct are severe and thus the number of persons able to adhere to such conduct would be small. Some contemporary Jains have suggested, along the view of the above statement, that Acharya Tulsi was well aware of the prevailing laxity among Jains in keeping up with the traditional vows. Therefore, he developed the Anuvrat Movement as a way of making the rules outlined in the *Sravakacara* both easier to follow and more relevant to a modern audience. However, this reformation did not diminish the significance Tulsi placed on the traditional vows.

⁸⁵ Padmanabh S Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (University of California Press, 1979), 80.

Although, the more conservative Jains have criticized Tulsi's reforms, calling the resulting vows "inferior vows," they were still very much in line with Tulsi's goal of encouraging greater involvement of laity while remaining true to traditional Jain practices. As an illustration, I will now present how my respondents in India viewed Tulsi's vows in greater depth, and address the relationship between Tulsi's 11 vows and the 5 categories of the *Sravakacara's Anuvrat* vows: *ahimsa* (nonviolence), *satya*, (truthfulness), *asteya*, (not stealing), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), and *aparigraha* (limiting possessions).

The Vows of Tulsi's Anuvrat Movement

Vow One: I will not intentionally kill any innocent creature. I will not commit suicide and I will not commit feticide.

The first vow clearly belongs to the category of *ahimsa*, exhibiting great reverence for all living beings. The traditional *ahimsa* vow entails five infractions: "the treatment of humans and animals in one's care and include holding beings in captivity, beating, mutilating or branding, loading excessive weight on the back or head and providing insufficient food or water."⁸⁶ The vow centered on the protection of animals was relevant when conduct for the household was dependent on agricultural activities in a predominantly agricultural India. In the Anuvrat Movement of the mid twentieth century, Tulsi expanded on the *ahimsa* vow by specifically singling out the issues of suicide and abortion, as he was aware that they were topics of great public debate in modern Indian society than the issues related to animals.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 173.

In respect to the first part of the vow, *I will not kill any innocent creature* – I wondered how an Anuvrati who complies with a vow of non-killing rids their house from unwanted cockroaches and other insects. Does the vow, not to kill living beings mean sharing one’s food and bed with insects, mice and rats? To this question an Anuvrati housewife responded in the following way:

We discussed this problem with the nuns, and according to them, if these creatures are troubling you or infecting your food and grains, then they cannot be considered as innocent. The Anuvrat vow refrains you from killing innocent creatures. At least by taking this vow, one develops the consciousness of limiting the act of killing insects of one’s house.⁸⁷

The argument that only the innocent are protected from all killing is, of course, an old one, appearing in most treatments of just war (non-combatant immunity) as well as in classical justifications of capital punishment. The aforementioned response, typical of my respondents, demonstrates the ability of Anuvratists to allow some flexibility in interpretation. An Anuvrati can be conscientious about not harming innocent life, but still able to address a situation that may be harmful to themselves or their family. On the other hand, this seems a somewhat simplistic answer. For one could make the same argument about killing insects or rodents in the yard, around one’s house that bite or otherwise could harm children.

Along the same lines in the application of *ahimsa*, I wondered: can a non-vegetarian be an Anuvrati? Many respondents, along with the above interviewee, rejected the idea of non-vegetarians being Anuvratists. However, the antithesis of this view given by another respondent was: “Food and personal eating habits do not obstruct an initiate

⁸⁷ Meenu Agarwal, interview by Shivani Bothra, trans. Shivani Bothra, June 5, 2012.

from taking the vows of moral upliftment.”⁸⁸ Such contrasting views regarding the criteria of vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism for the Anuvratīs was not exclusive to the laity but was also reflected among my ascetic respondents. Perhaps, it raises the question of why there should be an absolute line between animals/insects on the one hand, and plants on the other, especially since we know of all the virtually invisible forms of life, down to the size of viruses that exist and can be killed by our activities. If we have the right to take medicine to kill infections or viruses in our bodies, do we also have the right to research how to exterminate such infections or viruses? What does “innocent” mean here – anything that is of potential harm to humans?

Coming to the vow, *I will not commit feticide* – in a strongly patriarchal society like India, abortion is principally sex selective abortion of females. New data from the 2011 Indian census show that there are now 914 girls aged 0-6 years old for every 1,000 boys of the same age. [...] Anyhow ratio has deteriorated from the 2001 ratio of 927 girls.⁸⁹ To counter these social issues, the Akhil Bhartiya Terapanth Mahila Mandal (ABTMM), a women’s association has been working actively since 1966. The women’s association was formed with the inspiration from Acharya Tulsi to increase public awareness on gender exploitation, issue of female feticide and other challenges of modern society. One respondent, who presided over ABTMM for several consecutive terms, said: “Our nationwide *Save Girl Child* movement is running very successful. We organize workshops, campaigns, rallies, press releases, banners on the subject,

⁸⁸ Verma, interview.

⁸⁹ The Economist online, “Sons and Daughters,” *The Economist*, April 4, 2011, http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/04/indias_sex_ratio.

advertisements, awareness seminars in school and colleges, counseling sessions for newlyweds etc.”⁹⁰ Whereas, in an interview, Muni Sukhlal (the monk who currently oversees the Anuvrat Movement) said: “*Save Girl Child* movement is under the Anuvrat banner.”⁹¹ However, the ABTMM carries the spirit of the movement but does not credit Anuvrat in its initiatives.

The indefinite response of Akhil Bhartiya Terapanth Mahila Mandal (ABTMM) raises questions like: How does one define success, and it is still unclear whether the increased awareness is having a real impact on the statistics or not. Secondly, one needs to consider how wise it is to attempt to deter people from a practice without changing the circumstances that cause such practice to be chosen; for example, what are the reasons behind son preference?

As for the vow, *I will not commit suicide* – Suicide is a more difficult subject to address as the reasons for committing suicide vary greatly among different socio-economic groups and cultures in India. In a country where poverty is a key reason for suicide, globalization and affluence are also contributing factors to the seemingly high suicide rate in India. Some respondents held opinions on how the Anuvrat Movement might be able to address the issue of suicide. They emphasized upon meditation to manage stress, incorporation of the Science of Living in schools for developing an integrated personality and combine income generation programs. One example as narrated by Muni Sukhlal (monk) is as follows:

⁹⁰ Agarwal, interview.

⁹¹ Muni, interview, June 3, 2012.

A woman from a remote village near Mumbai was deserted from her husband's family. Out of desperation, she was intending to commit suicide. On her way, she met an Anuvrati woman worker. This poor woman was taken to the Anuvrat center. First she was trained in Preksha Meditation to stabilize her mental state. Eventually she was provided with a sewing machine and training in stitching. She went back to her family as an empowered woman.⁹²

The above example as narrated by the monk-respondent demonstrates material, social and spiritual assist provided to the woman. Thus it implies, how along with the changing time, the movement has redirected from being solely a concept of vow, to embrace a more holistic approach for self-transformation.

Vow Two: I will not attack anybody. I will not support aggression. I will endeavor to bring about world peace and disarmament.

The second vow is also a continuum of the commitment to *ahimsa*, nonviolence. Here Tulsi is again acknowledging a widespread modern concern about combating the fears of terrorism and traumas of war inflicted upon humanity. Tulsi imagined that Jain experiences with the action of taking vows could possibly be beneficial to secular society when combined with a willingness to be consciously aware of how actions, whether they are actions of an individual or of a whole nation, affect other beings. Mahapragya provides an analogy of a house in which these small vows are like screens or covers, which protect the interior against the detriments of variable weather patterns. By undertaking a vow, an individual re-directs his or her energy inward and attempts to fight the coercive power of hatred, jealousy, anger and greed that reside within oneself.

The question that springs up in mind is what does Tulsi mean by endeavoring world peace. Since my respondents did not contribute much on the vow, I looked into the

⁹² Ibid.

available written material and discovered that one way the movement contributed in promoting peace was by holding multiple national and international conferences on peace and nonviolent action. The conferences were held in Ladnun and Rajsamand in Rajasthan, India and the participants were representing more than 20 countries. These conferences could create a theoretical atmosphere of peace among the intellectuals but what about the practical implications upon individuals? To answer my own question, I found an article helpful, from the yearly special issue of the *Anuvrat* magazine titled *In Pursuit of Peace*. The author of the article states: “To achieve peace means to change both individuals and systems.”⁹³ In the same article, the author further quotes a British peace-leader: There is only one person in the world I can disarm – myself.⁹⁴ Views obtained from such quotations re-emphasize Tulsi’s unwavering confidence in human potentiality for cultivating an atmosphere of peace.

Vow Three: I will not take part in violent agitations or in any destructive activities.

This third vow, once again in the category of *ahimsa*, reflects another modern social concern in India’s pluralistic, post-Independence society. When I inquired about the meaning and significance of this vow from my respondents, one female Anuvrati with a PhD in Anekantvada (Jainas doctrine of non-absolutism) responded in the following way: “The burning of police vehicles or buses on the road, breaking of tables and chairs in the college are a few examples of such violent agitations. It is an outcome of extreme emotional disturbance. Tomorrow these people will need buses to travel and chairs to

⁹³ John Ferguson, “In Pursuit of Peace,” *Anuvrat*, 2000.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

sit.”⁹⁵ Hence, in her opinion, undertaking this kind of vow would at least restrict an individual from voluntary involvement in such destructive activities. In the light of gross violence, it seems my respondents fail to shed light on the widespread prevalent domestic violence against women and children. Even though the vows are marked by the theory of nonviolence, they do not speak about domestic violence.

Vow Four: I will believe in human unity. I will not discriminate on the basis of caste, color etc., I will not treat anyone as an untouchable.

The fourth vow is also grouped in *ahimsa*, but it even combines some of the category of *satya* (truth telling). Tulsi poses a question as noted in the philosophy of the movement, “An evil may be untouchable, dirt or an ailment may be untouchable, but how can a man [or a woman] be untouchable?”⁹⁶ It is a significant question for humanity to think about because the conditions of our birth is not within anyone’s choice, so how can there be a disparity of caste, creed, color or sex because of birth. Which theory purports such differences within humanity? The caste system in India, rooted in religion have pervaded throughout Indian societies. It was originally determined either by birth or by one’s profession, for example, a *Brahmin’s* (priestly class) son would be a *Brahmin*. Eventually, the way the caste system was interpreted and implemented served as the root cause of disparity.

During my research, I came across many incidents in several literatures where Tulsi motivated his monks and nuns to visit the *harijan* (untouchables) dominated

⁹⁵ Neera Tharar, interview by Shivani Bothra, trans. Shivani Bothra, May 14, 2012.

⁹⁶ Acharya Tulsi and Mahendra Karnawat, *The Clarion Call Of Anuvrat*, trans. Narendra Sharma, Edition (Anuvrat Mahasamiti, 2010), 30.

neighborhoods for discourses. How successful was Tulsi in his attempts of bridging the gap between the caste and class differences in his own community and larger Indian society? As time goes along, the old caste ideas are changing because of social, economic, cultural developments and the spread of education, albeit such caste attitudes are not rooted out from the Indian societies or from the Anuvratīs.

For example, an informant illustrated an incident of a family member: “My sister-in-law would not allow her bathroom cleaner (considered to be a *harijan*) inside the other spaces of her house. However, while she was getting her dental treatment, the doctor’s assistant was administering her anesthesia. Later she discovered that the assistant doctor was a *harijan* by background and the son of her bathroom cleaner.”⁹⁷ Such a case of caste and class is equivocal yet supporting in a developing country like India. Even if the patient found out earlier, would she have changed her doctor? Could being an Anuvratī have influenced her decision?

Vow Five: I will practice religious toleration and not to rouse sectarian frenzy.

This fifth vow is very similar to the fourth vow, but here Tulsi is again modernizing by highlighting a specific issue in pluralistic Indian society: violence between inter-religious groups, and conflicts within intra-religious groups. Even more importantly, he is also promoting a secular viewpoint by calling not just on those outside the Jain community to emulate the Jains, but also challenging the members of his own community to raise awareness of their own prejudices.

A majority of my informants felt a compelling need to modify the vows. However, they did not give specific information on what these changes might be.

⁹⁷ Rashmi Jhunjunwala, interview by Shivani Bothra, trans. Shivani Bothra, June 13, 2012.

Although situations have changed, problems of hatred and disregard for other sects remain. From my observations and several interactions with the Jains, I see issues of sectarianism and minor disputes prevalent even within Jainism. For example, some *Svetambar* guesthouses are not very open to allowing *Digambar* guests and vice versa. Whenever I raised a question regarding this issue, my informants rejected even acknowledging such disputes. How can one be an example to non-Jains to inspire tolerance for different religions when there is not even recognition of conflicts existing between their own Jain sects?

Further emphasizing Tulsi's untiring efforts to resolve sectarianism within Jainism one Anuvrati informant said: "Tulsi renounced consuming *Mithai* (Indian sweets) or anything which contained sugar as a penance in order to mitigate some of the sectarian differences prevailing within Jainism."⁹⁸ He never did have sweets for the remainder of his life. In Tulsi's view, his movement sought to develop an atmosphere of good will towards all religions. In this case, taking an oath for him was presenting a model for his own society to remind them to stay conscious of their own deficiencies as well. Though this example is well known as a part of the holiness for which Tulsi is revered, it is not clear that his renouncing sweets actually served to reduce sectarianism among Jains.

Vow Six: I will observe rectitude in business and general behavior. I will not harm others in order to serve any ends and I will not practice deceit.

Like the fourth and fifth vows, the sixth vow combines the categories of *ahimsa satya*, and also hem in *aparigraha* (non-possession). The sixth vow is meant to restrain people from employing unethical, immoral means to maximize profit. My informants

⁹⁸ Mini Khanna, interview by Shivani Bothra, trans. Shivani Bothra, July 10, 2012.

understood righteousness in business as Tulsi's predominant concern. Hence, keeping the business community in mind an individual who embodied this vow would not trade stolen merchandise, use false weights and measures, adulterate or substitute their products with inferior quality commodities, fail to pay the required taxes, or take bribes.

A number of informants quoted the example of a very famous, late Terapanthi lay businessman, Sumer Mal Dugar. I was told that Acharya Tulsi himself quoted Dugar's example to motivate the business community. I am recounting the following description about him from the book titled, *Ajaatshatru Ki Jeevan Gatha*:

On October 20, 1969, Sumermal Dugar was awarded the title of *Pramanik Shravak*⁹⁹ for his exemplary practices of keeping up with the Anuvrat vows. His example glorified the Anuvrat Movement. He and his family had been practicing Anuvrat. They did not purchase anything from the black market, did not hoard consumables, and did not steal electricity from the government supply, followed righteous behavior in business and trading activity. He declared all his possessions of silver and gold to the government in order to pay full taxes.¹⁰⁰

It makes some sense to understand why many of my respondents recalled this example. However, from the date mentioned in the above quotation, it is likely possible that this businessman was already practicing traditional Anuvrat vows. The question remains what about the later generation business community? How does Tulsi's movement influence them? I did not come across many such examples, old or new, during my research. It seems the business community may be reluctant in accepting Tulsi's vows.

Expressing concerns over the business community, one nun responded: "The main obstacle faced by the business community is the present bureaucratic system, as

⁹⁹ Title given to a laity for integrity by Acharya Tulsi.

¹⁰⁰ Acharya Mahapragya, *Ajaatshatru Ki Gaatha* (Jain Vishva Bharati, 1998), 32.

they cannot get their work done smoothly without giving bribes.”¹⁰¹ The issue of bribery is dealt with detail in the following chapter. The spectrum and scope of business in the present time has changed. I would think that advertising would also be a concern for businessmen jewelers, for instance, wants women to desire jewels, and so advertise that they make women look beautiful and show that they are loved and desirable. Advertisements support consumerism in all areas (cars, houses, jewelry, etc). However, they are also part of “just doing business.” How can a businessman live and still keep the spirit of the vows? In addition to these issues, concerns arising from the growing number of industries and the issues of unfair treatment of laborers also need to be addressed by the Anuvrati. Such questions imply that the vows are not sufficiently targeted to the present problems.

Vow Seven: I will set limits to the Practice of Continence and Acquisition.

The seventh vow is similar to the sixth, but it addresses more directly *aparigraha* (non-possession) and is also the only vow that addresses the category of *brahmacharya* (celibacy) or limiting sexual behavior. Therefore, accepting of the seventh vow entails much more than just non-attachment and limiting one’s external material possession. It also means one must overcome internal emotions like anger, ego, greed and deceit. Acharya Tulsi taught that the symptoms of violence emerge out of these detracting passions. The vow sets limits on passions, not totally overcoming, but restraining the negative emotions, so that they do not control one’s actions.

I received some interesting and somewhat contrasting viewpoints on this vow from my informants. Most of the women respondents commented that they never faced

¹⁰¹ Sadhvi Shri, interview by Shivani Bothra, trans. Shivani Bothra, July 19, 2012.

any difficulty following this vow. The reason was simple as some women were already practicing the 12 traditional vows from *Sravakacara*. I suspect a better reason is that their own sexual desires and acquisitions are already limited by their husbands, so that little decision-making in these areas is left to them. Does this make women virtuous or does it mean they have not been tested? Although some of their male counterparts were extremely appreciative of the flexibility the vows allowed, yet, they never became Anuvratīs. The reasons most commonly given were along the lines of: they never thought about it and no one approached them with the Anuvrat pledge form. Such an attitude is reflective of some of the deeply held cultural practices in India regarding the separation of roles for men and women.

Those who did practice the vow though held it as being “timelessly relevant.” Thereupon, a question springs up – how a vow that is so “timelessly relevant” for women can be made more relevant for men, maybe by emphasizing on the spiritual benefits and increasing awareness of the vows.

Vow Eight: I will not resort to unethical practices in elections.

The eight vow addresses the same ethical concerns as the sixth vow belonging to the categories of *ahimsa* and *satya*. But the sixth vow focus on business whereas the eighth vow specifically calls attention to the power of politics to effect change. Tulsi recognized that the post-Independence atmosphere of corruption and instability had the potential to enormously affect the quality of life of the individual for the worse. His hope for positive change, inspired by his vows could be harnessed to improve conditions.

In practice, though, this vow was difficult to translate into concrete action. The movement lays down the parameters for a healthy democracy and some of the key

pointers for choosing a trustworthy candidate to vote for. The vow dictates that a worthy candidate should be honest, free from drug addiction, a man of character, efficient and not promote sectarianism.¹⁰² Aside from the knowledge of these parameters, though, there was not much comment or discussion with my respondents regarding the vow. Apparently, their response indicates the significance of this issue in Indian society.

My experience has been that there is a predominant feeling of disempowerment, that the ordinary person is primarily concerned with following local trends but it is difficult to make the connection between one individual's vote and the larger concerns of the country's politics. Gandhi may have demonstrated that individuals uniting could effect change, but this had its own down side as well. As I developed my understanding of Tulsi's movement, I came to see the value of emphasizing a secular, pluralistic approach that reflected the Jain concept of *anekant*, or equanimity, but also to realize that there were significant challenges to overcome. It even gave the impression that a movement can be successful only in the presence of a strong leader.

Vow Nine: I will not encourage socially evil customs.

The ninth vow is difficult to categorize, in that "socially evil" can refer to behavior contrary to any of the Anuvrat: *ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya*, *aparigraha* or *brahmacharya*. Instead, I interpret this vow to be an attempt by Tulsi to focus attention more on the potential harmfulness of "customs" and tradition. Acharya Tulsi felt a strong need for changing some of the customs and traditions prevailing in the Indian society. He viewed customs like *purdah* (the practice of covering women's faces and limiting their access to public space); dowry (the requirement that families pay money to the grooms

¹⁰² Tulsi and Karnawat, *The Clarion Call Of Anuvrat*, 49.

family upon the marriage of their daughters) which can lead to the practice of female feticide if the family feels a daughter would be too much of an economic burden; and the practice of forbidding remarriage and limiting other rights of women who have been widowed, as obstacles to a developing society. Hence, he introduced many reforms through his movement such as: simplifying birth, death and marriage ceremonies; encouraging women's literacy, and removing *purdah* are among a few from the list. Tradition may have a valid role to play in formulating social identity, but Tulsi encouraged his followers to examine customs, increase their awareness of the potential harm, and to be open to adjusting harmful customs when necessary.

Many of the reforms initiated by Tulsi lean towards women's rights. Perhaps it is inter-connected with the fact that many of the female respondents were conjured to express their deepest reverence to the founder. Sometimes I asked them did the then leaders of India not facilitate similar changes also. Out of many, an impactful reply that I received was: "Acharya Tulsi was certainly not the only one to introduce social reforms, but he definitely was one of the first to address them among the masses."¹⁰³ Apparently such a statement derives from a personal admiration for the Guru.

My respondents reported that these reformative changes had significant impact first within the mainstream of the Terapanth sect and gradually grew elsewhere. However, it is hard to claim that the movement has achieved its goal of eradicating social evils from Indian society. For example, within the more educated, economically higher strata of the population, dowry may not be promoted as openly but it is still a subtle method of exchanging commodities and among the less educated communities, dowry is

¹⁰³ Khanna, interview.

still viewed as an economic burden for families with female children and a potential source of economic opportunity for families with male children. Nevertheless, the examples set by those people who have chosen not to follow traditions like *pardah*, dowry and female feticide have been leading to a slow but steady overall shift in society's attitudes towards these practices and a growing recognition of their potential harmful effects.

Vow Ten: I will lead a life free from addictions; I will not use intoxicants like alcohol, hemp, heroin, tobacco, etc.

The prohibition of intoxication is an uncompromisingly strict criterion for an Anuvrati. Such a criterion was particularly surprising given the flexibility adopted by the movement regarding the issue of non-vegetarianism. The basis for the prohibition of intoxications, according to Tulsi, was his belief that intoxicants cloud the mind and character of a person. An intoxicated person is more likely to commit undesirable or punishable acts such as suicide, rape or mass killing.¹⁰⁴ Thus, he applied the concept of vow to mete out the problems of alcohol and intoxication widely prevalent in the society. Even the government of India has attempted to address similar issues by observing the three national holidays as dry days throughout India; these national holidays are: Republic Day (January 26), Independence Day (August 15) and birth day of Mahatma Gandhi (October 2).

According to several informants, the tenth vow is a major obstacle for contemporary potential Indian adherents. Consumption of alcohol is increasingly becoming more common. The reasons have been attributed to a combination of an

¹⁰⁴ Tulsi and Karnawat, *The Clarion Call Of Anuvrat*, 59.

upwardly mobile society with increasing exposure to western influences that promote rather than stigmatize liquor consumption. On the other hand, within the low-income groups, alcoholics and people with tobacco addiction are exhausting their already low incomes.

Along with the consumption of alcohol, drug addiction is an equally serious problem according to Tulsi. The dangers associated with such intoxicants highlight the importance of the vow and of preventing addiction from occurring in the first place. My informants felt that addicts' priority is to satisfy their addiction and that they sometimes even choose to buy alcohol tobacco or drugs over giving their children education. All the above reasons indicate why Tulsi was firm regarding the criteria he chose to set for an Anuvrati.

Vow 11: I will be alert to the problems of keeping the environment pollution-free; I will not cut down trees and not waste water.

The final vow is also under the category of *ahimsa* but expands the concept further by including nature as well. Regarding the final vow, it seems Tulsi draws inspiration from Mahavira's theory of "interdependence;" i.e., all living beings render service to one another. According to Mahavira, "One who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, fire, water and vegetation disregards his own existence which is entwined with them."¹⁰⁵

The practice of Anuvrat vows is a stark contrast to the resource intensive, consumerist lifestyle. The vow of not cutting trees is in accord with many environmental movements such as the Chipko Movement discussed in the previous chapter, but how

¹⁰⁵ Acharya Mahaprgya, *Acharang Bhashyam* (Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati, 2001), 50.

many urban dwellers in India or the United States are in a position to cut trees? In examining this vow, I felt that it inadequately prohibits those actions that are the most common ways in which individual Anuvratīs might be damaging the environment. For example: If it is wrong to cut trees, is it wrong to buy wood products? What kind of wood products should be avoided? What kind of awareness exists among the society regarding the use of paper?

Another contemporary example that comes to mind, because it falls under the category of waste, is the extravagance of food and resources involved in the wedding and related ceremonies of the affluent classes of Indian society. Therefore, I asked some of my informants about Tulsi's views regarding this issue and found that, during Tulsi's time, strong measures were taken within the Terapanth tradition to overcome such prodigal habits. One such example was the limiting of the number of choices of food items from hundreds to 25 per meal. The tradition of the offering of hundreds of types of food items at a wedding was done sometimes out of a personal desire to display wealth and often out of social pressure, but Tulsi again worked to bring awareness to the harm that lack of self-restraint can cause to the environment.

Some of the early Anuvratīs considered his advice, however, the tradition is deeply rooted in Indian culture and the force of such measure seems to have weakened over time and evidently getting worse. Recently, there was an article in the leading newspaper, *Times of India*, titled "Wedding Food Worth 339 Crore Goes Waste." It gave reference of a study by a team of 10 professors from the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore. The study concluded:

The team, under the guidance of UAS vice-chancellor K. Narayana Gowda, surveyed 75 of Bangalore's 531 marriage halls over a period of six months. They concluded: About 84,960 marriages are held at 531 *kalyana mantapas* (marriage halls) in Bangalore every year. About 943 tonnes of high-calorie quality food is wasted in these halls annually. At an average cost of Rs 40 per meal, the total food wastage in the city is estimated at Rs 339 crore.¹⁰⁶

My own experience of attending Jain weddings also supports this viewpoint. While food waste at weddings is just one example causing environmental deterioration, it demonstrates the significance of the 11th vow, and also underlines a need for some reforms to make the vow more relevant in contemporary times.

The last part of the 11th vow is to use water wisely. The vow related to the usage of water is a practical application, though a difficult one to measure. What kind of toilets and showerheads do people buy? How often do they wash their cars or water their lawns? These are big water wasting activities. A BBC news article from 2009, titled “India’s Water Use Unsustainable,” noted the finding of a study conducted for six years: “Parts of India are on track for severe water shortages, according to results from Nasa's gravity satellites. The Grace mission discovered that in the country's northwest – including Delhi – the water table is falling by about 4cm (1.6 inches) per year.”¹⁰⁷ The above example is one of countless such studies conducted at both governmental and other institutional levels that apparently conveys the problems of water usage. In order to be relevant and effective, should the vows aim at ongoing contemporary issues, such as water usage, in

¹⁰⁶ Hetal Vyas, “Wedding food worth Rs 339 crore goes waste,” *The Times Of India*, October 12, 2012, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-10-12/bangalore/34411336_1_food-wastage-quality-food-marriage-halls.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Black, “India’s Water Use ‘Unsustainable’,” *BBC*, August 13, 2009, sec. Science & Environment, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8197287.stm>.

world society? Since the Terapanth community is the genesis of the movement, it holds a key responsibility for demonstrating the exemplary behavior of conserving resources for the rest of the society. Belonging to the same tradition, it has become apparent to me in my ongoing research that the community itself needs to rethink some of its strategies of the excessive use of paper involved in publishing and promoting the Terapanth activities.

Conclusion

In keeping with the discussion of Tulsi's code of modified vows, I will conclude the present section by quoting a scholar of Jainism and the professor of Ecology, Michael Tobias, whose views on self-restraint echoed Tulsi's movement: "We humans are equipped with a conscience; we can make intelligent and sensitive choices. [...]. Amid the tumultuous sea of nature, we are like an island of choice. [...] We can self-destruct or carry on. But we will not live on as a species if we fail to co-exist harmoniously with all other creatures sharing this island."¹⁰⁸

Tobias's quotation is in accordance with Tulsi's dominant theme of *ahimsa*, and the personalized practice of the small vows. As clearly manifested, each of the above-described 11 vows emphasize on making wise choices for personal spiritual growth and for world sustainability. The eternal nature of vows and the rudimentary of ethics suggest the relevance of Tulsi's movement though, these vows are tenuous in keeping pace with the critical juncture of socio-economical and environmental state. The following chapter presents a survey analysis of the practices of these vows through the data obtained from a small sample group of conveniently selected 200 people from various backgrounds.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Tobias, *Life Force : The World of Jainism* (Jain Publishing Company, 2000), 8.

CHAPTER 5

THE ANUVRAT VOWS: INDIAN AND DIASPORIC PERSPECTIVE

Discussions in the previous chapters were limited to the responses obtained from my thirty interviews with Indian scholars, monks, nuns and laity. In the present chapter, I will analyze the responses elicited from the survey conducted in India of the demographic characteristics, attitudes and behavior of Anuvratists and non-Anuvratists regarding vows and the effectiveness of the Anuvrat Movement. Majority of my informants were followers of the Terapanth tradition, which is the origin of Tulsi's movement. Yet, I was personally impressed by their willingness to be self-reflective and honest in the way they answered the questions, even about weaknesses in the present state of Tulsi's Movement. For example, many of them in their interviews remarked that the promotion of the vows has been weak, and they were unsure whether that was a consequence of a lack of focus among the mendicants or the laypeople.

For the Jain diasporic communities in the United States, I had planned a similar survey. However, in my preliminary research my interviewees in the United States told me that they did not think there was sufficient knowledge of the Anuvrat Movement among diaspora Jains to make my survey useful. While their feedback answered one part of my research questions, I wanted to delve deeper, and so conducted nine interviews among Jain practitioners and scholars of Jainism from various backgrounds in both Miami and Los Angeles. In addition to this, I also participated in numerous informal conversations, observations, temple visits and meetings with the Jain diaspora during my two years of study at Florida International University and particularly during the last six

months of my research work. Hence, in this chapter I begin my discussion with the Indian survey data and interview responses and conclude with the Jain diasporic responses.

Background of the Survey

The survey is comprised of thirty questions related to demographic information, religion, diet, and views on a variety of socio-ethical and moral issues. The survey was conducted among a convenience sample of 200 literate Indians settled in the metro cities such as Kolkata, New Delhi, Jaipur as well as small towns in Rajasthan; I met these participants during the course of my research through personal contacts and references. They were both male and female adults from different social, economic, professional and even religious backgrounds, although most were Jains.

I have organized the outcome of the survey around several themes derived from the categories of Tulsian vows. However, before I present the survey findings, I will give a demographic overview of the participants according to the data result.

Demographic Overview of the Participants

Out of 200 Indian respondents, there were 105 male and 79 females. Out of them, 44% fell between the ages 30-50; 25% were between the ages of 18-30; 18.5% were above 60 years; and 12.9% were between 50-60 years of age. Among them, were 153 Jains, 35 Hindus, six Muslims, and one Sikh. Further, out of 153 Jains, there were 139 Terapanthis and 116 Anuvratīs. In summary, of 200 respondents, the majority of respondents were Terapanthis; out of 139 Terapanthis, there were 91 Anuvratīs, which means that little above 50% of the whole group was Anuvratīs.

Views of the Anuvrat Movement

One survey question asked, “Is the Anuvrat Movement: 1. a religious movement, 2. a spiritual movement, 3. an ethical movement, 4. a spiritual and ethical movement, 5. all three (religious, spiritual and ethical)?” The reason why I asked this question was to compare the views of my respondents to what I understood were Tulsi’s objectives in the creation of the movement. If the movement was truly secular as he intended, then the majority of respondents should have chosen “ethical” or “spiritual and ethical.” My data show that a large majority of respondents, Jain, Hindu and Muslim, did think of the movement as “religious” to some degree, whether they chose “a religious movement” or the category of “spiritual, ethical and religious.” Such a result was despite Tulsi’s clear aims for the movement.

Table 1. “What Is the Anuvrat Movement?”

	Religious	Ethical	Spiritual	Ethical & Spiritual	Religious, Spiritual & Ethical	Total
Jain	4 2.8%	12 8.3%	17 11.7%	15 10.3%	97 66.9%	145 100.0%
Hindu	2 5.7%	4 11.4%	5 14.3%	0 0.0%	24 68.6%	35 100.0%
Sikh	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 100.0%
Muslim	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 16.7%	1 16.7%	4 66.7%	6 100.0%
Total	6 3.2%	16 8.6%	24 12.8%	16 8.6%	125 66.8%	187 100.0%

In connection with the previous question, I also examined the survey results on the question, “In your opinion, is the Anuvrat Movement: 1. primarily aimed at Jains, 2.

intended principally for Jains but open for all, 3. intended for persons of all beliefs, 4. not sure?” A majority of the responses for this question differ in their opinion in comparison to the previous question. The majority here agrees with Tulsi that The Anuvrat Movement is intended for all. Only 6.2% thought it was only for Jains, but these were equally Anuvrati and non-Anuvrati. The table below depicts the figures from the survey data.

Table 2. “Who is the Anuvrat Movement Intended for?”

	Aimed at Jains	Intended for Jains but Open for All	Intended for Persons of All Beliefs	Not Sure	Missing	Total
Anuvrati	7 6.2%	39 34.8%	61 54.5%	3 2.7%	2 1.8%	112 100%
Non-Anuvrati	4 6.2%	26 40.6%	31 48.4%	3 4.7%	0 0.0%	64 100%
Total	11 6.2%	65 36.9%	92 52.3%	6 3.4%	2 1.1%	176 100%

Data on Social Justice and Environment

Vegetarianism

As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, there were several discussions on the topic of vegetarianism with both the Indian groups – mendicants and laity. Their mixed opinions raised my curiosity and caused me to note that none of the 11 vows specifically forbids the intake of a non-vegetarian diet. In fact, one Muslim respondent from my interviews stated: “I accepted the Anuvrat [Tulsian] vows in 1966 because I did not have

to compromise on my eating habits.”¹⁰⁹ From my informant’s statement, it seems that Tulsi’s decision not to interfere in anyone’s diet facilitated the growth of the movement. According to the data, out of 115 Anuvratīs, there are 104 vegetarians; out of 64 non-Anuvratīs, there are 61 vegetarians. A similar proportion of the respondents are vegetarians irrespective of the vow status. In this way, reflects a co-relation between the dominant religion in India and the role of vegetarianism within it. Even more interesting is to find that there are seven non-vegetarian Anuvratīs. The above datum thereby supports the statement made by my Muslim respondent and demonstrates Tulsi’s inclusive strategy. An intriguing follow-up question would have been to what extent the non-vegetarian Anuvratīs experience any pressure to eschew animal protein.

Dowry

One of my survey questions was designed to address the potential effectiveness of Tulsi’s ninth vow to not participate in socially evil customs. To examine the present views of dowry among my respondents, I ran some cross-tabulations on the data from my questions on dowry including the variables of: gender, age, household income and Anuvratī versus non-Anuvratī status. The dowry question was: “Have you ever accepted or offered a dowry?” As displayed in Table 3, nine out of thirteen respondents in the youngest age group (18-22 years old) said “no.” I found that many young respondents did not answer to the dowry question at all. One reason for the lack of response could be that the group of young respondents have not yet experienced the situation of accepting or rejecting a dowry. However, in keeping with the majority of respondents in this group who answered “no,” it could also be a reflection of the changing attitudes in Indian

¹⁰⁹ Ahmed Khan, interview by Shivani Bothra, trans. Shivani Bothra, August 2, 2012.

society, which would indicate that the younger generation is rejecting cultural traditions and adopting more modern views of marriage as an institution. In total, 25 out of 174 responded, “yes” to having accepted or offered a dowry. An interesting finding is that 24% of those who reported “yes” were Anuvratīs and 10% were non-Anuvratīs. Such a finding is significant if only to observe that some of the Anuvratīs, those who had taken a vow not to participate in dowry, still said they had participated. The data also may represent some ambiguity in terms of the definition of dowry in Indian society. Some Anuvratīs explained to me in interviews that for their sons’ marriages, they followed the vows and did not take any dowry from the bride’s family, but for their daughters’ marriages, they did give “gifts,” but not as a dowry. Thereupon, such attitudes demonstrate just how strong the cultural pressures are to participate in dowry.

Table 3. “Have You Ever Accepted or Offered Dowry?”

	Yes	No	Yes Before Becoming Anuvrati	Not Relevant to my Situation	Missing	Total
Anuvrati	19 17.2%	72 65.4%	7 6.3%	11 10.0%	1 0.9%	110 100%
Non- Anuvrati	6 9.3%	45 70.3%	1 1.5%	12 18.7%	0 0.0%	64 100%
Total	25 14.3%	117 67.2%	8 4.6%	23 13.2	1 0.5%	174 100%

The next variable I examined was household income. As presented in Table 4 below, I observed that the majority of the participants in dowry exchange were from either the lowest or highest income groups. The participants from the middle-income groups had almost no participation in dowry. From my experience I have found that those in the middle-income group tend to be comparatively well educated and experience less

social pressure to participate in dowry. In contrast, in the lower groups dowry is viewed as an important source of income for the family and represents potential for upward economic mobility. In the upper income group, dowry is often viewed as an opportunity to compete for status through a display of wealth.

Table 4. Household Income and Participation in Dowry

Household Income	Yes	No	Yes Before Becoming Anuvrati	Not Relevant to My Situation	Missing	Total
20,000 or Less	7 30.4%	31 25.8%	3 37.5%	3 12%	1 100%	45 25.4%
20,001-35,000	3 13.10%	20 16.7%	0 0%	4 16%	0 0%	27 15.3%
35,001-50,000	0 0%	18 15%	1 12.5%	3 12%	0 0%	22 12.4%
50,001-75,000	0 0%	7 5.8%	0 0%	4 16%	0 0%	11 6.2%
75,000+	6 26.1%	21 17.5%	2 25%	4 16%	0 0%	33 18.6%
Rather Not Say	7 30.4%	23 19.2%	2 25%	7 28%	0 0%	39 22%
Total	23 100%	120 100%	8 100%	25 100%	1 100%	177 100%

Bribery

Many respondents had expressed their frustration and stated that corruption is prevalent at all levels of social, economic and political life. For example, one has to bribe the officers to get a passport or ration card, to get a loan approved, to reduce taxes, and in almost any official interaction from hospitals to school admissions to permits for driving. However, I came across a few people, both Anuvrati and non-Anuvrati, who persevered through several obstacles and were delayed in getting their work done, but never paid bribes. Nevertheless, such examples were rare. The bribery question asked: “How many

times have you offered a bribe in the past five years?” The subsequent question asked the reasons for offering bribes.

The first set of data, presented below, was significant in the same way as the dowry data. While the overall numbers of Anuvratīs who had given bribes were slightly lower than the number of non-Anuvratīs, the interesting point was that despite having taken vows not to participate in bribery, still 34% of the respondents said they had participated. I will note also that because a large number of my participants were women, who have far fewer opportunities to engage in bribery, the overall percentage of Anuvratī men who engage in the behavior may be even higher. This again reflects the strength of the social pressures in India to conform to such a practice.

Table 5. “Have You Accepted or Offered Bribery in the Past Five Years?”

	None	2-5 Times	6-10 Times	11-20 Times	Regularly	Total
Anuvratī	70 66%	17 16%	7 6.6%	1 0.9%	11 10.4%	106 100%
Non-Anuvratī	36 56.2%	12 18.8%	6 9.4%	2 3.1%	8 12.5%	64 100%
Total	106 62.4%	29 17.1%	13 7.6%	3 1.8%	19 11.2%	170 100%

The second set of data, presented below, demonstrates a clear trend in that the higher the socio-economic status, the higher is the rate of engaging in bribery.

Table 6. Household Income and Bribery in Five Years

Household Income	None	2-5 Times	6-10 Times	11-20 Times	Regularly	Total
20,000 or Less	34 77.3%	3 6.8%	4 9.1%	0 0%	3 6.8%	44 100%
20,001-35,000	16 66.1.5%	6 23.1%	0 0%	0 0%	4 15.4%	26 100%
35,001-50,000	15 68.2%	3 13.6%	2 9.1%	1 4.5%	1 4.5%	22 100%
50,001-75,000	7 58.3%	2 16.7%	1 8.3%	0 0%	2 16.7%	12 100%
75,000+	14 46.7%	8 26.7%	4 13.7%	1 3.3%	3 10%	30 100%
Rather Not Say	21 55.3%	9 23.7%	2 5.3%	1 2.6%	5 13.2%	38 100%
Total	107 62.2%	31 18%	13 7.6%	3 1.7%	18 10.5%	172 100%

Environment

According to one respondent, Tulsi added the 11th vow relating to the environment in light of the increasing ecological problems. Although an average person does not cut tree, though all uses water and so I wanted to find out the respondents' attitude towards the consumption of water. The most interesting finding obtained from the chart below is not that so many respondents describe their water usage as "above average" and "below average," but that the majority of respondents categorized their water usage as "average" or "don't know." That so many of the population are unaware of their usage may reflect a lack of education and awareness in Indian society as a whole regarding environmental issues. Such data reemphasize my claim that accepting the vows does not necessarily make one environmentally responsible. Table 7 represents the participants' responses from different religious backgrounds regarding the usage of water.

Table 7. Water Usage Among Participants from Different Religious Backgrounds

Religion	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Don't Know	Total
Jain	19 12.8%	64 43%	23 15.4%	43 28.9%	149 100%
Hindu	1 2.9%	11 31.4%	8 22.9%	15 42.9%	35 100%
Sikh	0 0.0%	1 100%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 100%
Muslim	0 0.0%	5 83.3%	0 0.0%	1 16.7%	6 100%
Total	20 10.5%	81 42.4%	31 16.2%	59 30.9%	191 100%

The next questions in the survey were: “Do you need more information on what you could do to be more environment friendly?” and “Do you need more information on what you could do to be more socially responsible?” The survey data shows that 195 respondents attempted both of these questions. 84% of the responses were “yes,” 9.4% “no” and 6.5% were not sure. Such a results conveys an eagerness to get information, but is that enough? The following tables 8 and 9 presents the survey output and provides yet another comparison between an Anuvrati’s attitude and a non-Anuvrati’s attitude.

Table 8. “Do You Need More Information on What You Could Do to be More Environment Friendly?”

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Anuvrati	105 69.15	4 28.6%	5 45.5%	114 64.4%
Non-Anuvrati	47 30.9%	10 71.4%	6 54.5%	63 35.6%
Total	152 100%	14 100%	11 100%	177 100%

Table. 9 “Do You Need More Information on What You Could Do to be More Socially Responsible?”

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Anuvrati	96 64.9%	8 57.1%	7 53.8%	111 64.4%
Non-Anuvrati	52 35.1%	6 42.9%	6 46.2%	64 35.6%
Total	148 100%	14 100%	13 100%	175 100%

Data in the above table present marginal differences in the behavior between those who accept the vows and those who did not accept. One analysis which I draw from such a result is, since many of these non-Anuvratists were from the Jain background, they might not have accepted the vows (for several reasons discussed in the previous chapter) but might be conscious in the use of natural resources and willing to learn more. Hence, I conclude the analysis of the behavior and attitude of Anuvratists and non-Anuvratists by quoting a Muslim Anuvrati respondent: “People might not fill the Anuvrat form and pledge to be an Anuvrati, but when the Anuvrat concept is explained to them, it makes a strong impact upon them. Spreading the concept is more important than getting the forms signed.”¹¹⁰ His view is in accordance with Tulsi, who wanted to see change, not just the increasing number of pledges.

My personal conclusion from this study is that Acharya Tulsi recognized many social ethical issues and attempted to create awareness of them in the Indian society.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Tulsi's vows were focusing on issues of war and disarmament at the same time there were vows related to social issues and environment. It seems he started his movement with what were perhaps too many agendas for changing the society. What if he had either focused on a single vow related to dowry, bribery or one category like social justice and promoted it? If he had altered his strategy, could there have been more significant results within these 60 years?

Responses from the Jain Diaspora

I had intended to further investigate to see whether the Anuvrat Movement has secular characteristics, broad appeal, individual and social relevance among the Jain diaspora. During my fieldwork in India, some respondents had pointed out to me that as the Anuvrat Movement was meant for the Indian masses, they were not sure what specific roles the Jains in the diaspora could play. I understood their perspective, but I felt that as the Jains in the diaspora are not disconnected from their origins, why would it not be possible for the movement to be relevant outside of India as well?

When Jains in the diaspora informed me that there was not sufficient knowledge of the Anuvrat Movement among American Jains to persuade them to take the survey on the movement, I decided to substitute a limited number of interviews. I started interviewing among those Jains who do know the movement with the following questions: How do they understand the Anuvrat Movement? Does the Jain immigrant community in the United States, which is much less sectarian than Indian Jains, feel the relevance of the movement against the global background of social, ethical and environmental crises? Could the prescribed Anuvrat code of conduct apply in the same way to their diasporic setting? Lastly, are there opportunities that come from an

increasing number of Jains in the American diaspora, to succeed in transcending the movement's tradition-based religious and geographical boundaries and, if so, how?

Jain Communities in North America

Since the time that Mahavira first established the Jain *sangha*, Jains have for the most part remained in close-knit communities and they have chosen to limit their travel, both because their rigorous cultural and dietary habits required the support of a culturally like-minded community and because of Jain philosophies which associated the means of travel with *himsa* (violence). Only in the last two centuries have Jains begun to move out of India in significant numbers. In 1893, Virchand Gandhi was officially the first Jain delegate to visit the United States and represent Jainism in the first-ever Parliament of World Religions.¹¹¹

The first wave of the Jain diaspora occurred before Independence and involved very small numbers of merchants and government officers traveling to England and to other British held territories. It was not until the late 1960s that Jains began emigrating in large numbers, still to England, which has the largest Jain population outside of India, however, now also to other places, including a significant number coming to the United States. The immigrant Jains were largely from the higher socio-economic classes and came not just out of professional requirements but also to actively pursue new global educational and business opportunities.

¹¹¹ Prakash C. Jain, *Jains in India and Abroad - A Sociological Introduction* (Delhi: International School for Jain Studies, 2011), 98.

The Harvard University's Pluralism Project has identified 107 Jain centers in the United States including about two-dozen Jain temples.¹¹² With so many Jain centers, it was initially quite difficult to decide where to begin my fieldwork. Eventually I decided to begin where I study in Miami and continued my research in Los Angeles at the Jain Center of Southern California (JCSC). The JCSC was organizing a series of ten special lectures during the period of Das Lakshan¹¹³ (the Festival of Ten Virtues) in September 2012. Taking advantage of this occasion, I set forth to find out how Jains immersed in ritualistic practices were responding to the non-religious Anuvrat Movement.

My first interview was at the residence of Professor Tara Sethia, a Jain by background, professor of History, and founder and director of the Ahimsa Center at California State Polytechnic University Pomona. She is also the author of recently published book *Gandhi: Pioneer of Nonviolent Social Change*.

I wondered whether she had gotten the inspiration for the Ahimsa Center from Tulsi's Anuvrat Movement, Mahapragya's Ahimsa Yatra¹¹⁴ or from Gandhi's nonviolent action. When I asked her from where the inspiration came, to my great surprise she replied: "My own discipline of History, my students and my *samskara*."¹¹⁵ Explaining further, she said "I was disappointed the way college history textbooks explain historical change by focusing largely on the role of violent revolutions, conflicts and warfare. This leads students to associate power with coercion, control and violence. The educational

¹¹² Ibid., 100.

¹¹³ This is the festival where Jains practice vows and fast.

¹¹⁴ It is a nonviolent journey, another Terapanth activity initiated by Acharya Mahapragya.

¹¹⁵ Tara Sethia, interview by Shivani Bothra, September 20, 2012.

initiatives of the Ahimsa Center are therefore modest ways of exposing our students to the role of nonviolence as a source of and force for social change”¹¹⁶

Although Professor Sethia comes from the Jain tradition, which believes nonviolence to be the highest religious virtue, her views on *ahimsa* (nonviolence) were strikingly different from traditional Jainism but very close to the Anuvrat stance. She does not believe *ahimsa* is only a religious concept. Her vision for the Center was to delink the concept of *ahimsa* from any religion and make it into a subject of ethical values that students could examine critically as they would any other discipline. She reiterated with conviction: “Today nonviolence stands on its own. Religion needs nonviolence; nonviolence needs no religion. Even an atheist can be nonviolent without subscribing to any religion.”¹¹⁷

Since Professor Sethia’s views echoed the movement’s philosophy, I asked: “Do you incorporate the Anuvrat program in your curriculum?” She lucidly replied: “No, integrating the Anuvrat program into curriculum can be perceived by some as prescriptive because of its emphasis on vows. The Center’s mission has been to keep its initiatives exclusively educational in nature.”¹¹⁸

Her conviction echoed the views of other respondents, suggesting the movement as a religious activity. Such an impression is despite the fact that, early in a public speech on the secularity of the movement, Tulsi said: “Anuvrat is free from any religion, and it is

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

simply a message for ethical living. In the present times, those shrinking away from religion and fearing to be part of any sect will find Anuvrat attractive.”¹¹⁹

The Anuvrat Movement: Contemporary Relevance in Diaspora

Many of the concerns related to violence are relevant not only India, but in the United States, as demonstrated in the two incidents of December 2012. One is the gang rape that took place in India and the other is the example of the gun culture and the massacre of twenty innocent children and their six teachers in Newtown, USA. Such incidents are perceived as the negative consequences of modernization and globalization.

The question that I will now explore is whether the Jains in diaspora view these contemporary problems from a different perspective than the Jains that I interviewed in India. I made three central observations about the Jains I have met in the United States. Firstly, I noticed that they come from a higher socio-economic class than many of the Jains in India. Secondly, they more often placed a greater emphasis on education and the need for open-mindedness. Thirdly, I observed that many of our conversations touched on the process of creating new identities as “American-Jains,” and they were very conscious of how this new identity may differ from their Jain identity in India.

For example, some of my interviewees thought that the wording of Tulsi’s vows was too old-fashioned and that the Jains in the West incorporate more modern ideas in their practices than do the Jains in India, so some of these vows are not suited to the western context. For example, one respondent said: “Dowry is not a social evil in this country.”¹²⁰ There was much similar consensus regarding five vows concerning violent

¹¹⁹ Mahapragya, *Dharma Chakra ka Pravartan*, 7.

¹²⁰ Neptune Srimal, interview by Shivani Bothra, October 10, 2012.

agitation, female feticide, dowry, business rectitude and sectarian frenzy which to them seemed specific to India. Many of my respondents reported feeling that they are much better off in the United States than their counterparts in India.

Anne Vallely, a prominent scholar of Jainism, characterizes the views of second-generation American Jains as follows: “They reject the social dimensions of the tradition and espouse a universalistic, modern interpretation. They emphasize the values of vegetarianism, animal rights, environmentalism, meditation and non-sectarianism and actively promote interfaith activities.”¹²¹ I agree with her assessment and found that many of my respondents wished to discuss the ways in which these values were important to them in formulating a distinct American-Jain identity.

Vegetarianism

In my interviews, I inquired whether, a modern diaspora movement should make vegetarianism a requirement or not. Vegetarianism is a requirement for being a Jain, but how should it apply to non-Jain Anuvratists? The following response from a *samani* (liberal-nun) addressed my question. She said: “Anuvrat is concerned with basic human values. It does not expect people to give up their culture, tradition or religion.”¹²² She meant that being a vegetarian is not a strict criterion for the movement. It seems that Terapanth’s drive to transcend religious and geographical boundaries significantly influenced their view in favor of allowing non-vegetarians’ to participate.

¹²¹ Anne Vallely, *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life* (Center for the Study of World Religions, 2002), 195.

¹²² Samani, interview by Shivani Bothra, August 22, 2012.

It was interesting to note that many lay Jains in the United States disagreed. For example, a secondary school teacher conveyed a forceful message in favor of vegetarianism: “People used to eat meat for survival in war situations or uncivilized areas. In the present time there can be no excuse for eating meat.”¹²³ I then asked her if she thought there should be a criterion for Anuvrati to be vegetarian. She said: “Definitely; if you do something then do it completely. Anuvrat Movement should not compromise on its core Jain principles in order to spread across the Indian boundaries.”¹²⁴ The conservative view of some of the Jain diasporic members is in contrast with the liberal strategy that the movement adopts.

Environmentalism

In a recent article in *Economic Times*, one of India’s leading business newspaper, the author poses a significant question: “How on earth will we live together sustainably and in harmony?”¹²⁵ The same article suggests adopting ways that is moral and visionary, practical and scientific. Anuvratists see Tulsi’s seventh vow of setting limits to acquisition as one practical solution to the above question and the eleventh vow as dealing with issues related to the environment. The Jain scholar, Professor Christopher Chapple commented: “The ecological movement and the Anuvrat Movement are parallel; both are more about raising conscience than delivering specific results.”¹²⁶ In a view expressed by one respondent in Miami, “There should be broader guidelines of the vows like not

¹²³ Mrinal Kedia, interview by Shivani Bothra, September 8, 2012.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ “Globalisation Takes A Dive,” *Economic Times*, July 9, 2012, Jaipur edition.

¹²⁶ Christopher Key Chapple, interview by Shivani Bothra, September 23, 2012.

cutting trees and to what extent household could do necessary violence to rid their homes from bugs and cockroaches.”¹²⁷ Such responses make clear that if the movement aspires to reach outside of India, where mostly monks and nuns do not travel, and then the vows need to be explicit and self-explanatory.

All the interviewees, without any exception, expressed the belief that Tulsi’s concept of incorporating vows as part of an organized movement could still have significance in the present time. One such comment made by a Jain professor of Earth and Science is: “The significance of a great movement is its timelessness. The vows of Anuvrat are as significant today as they would be a 1000-years from now or as they were 1000 years before now. However, from an earth scientist's point of view, I feel that the vows of Anuvrati's will help in creating a more sustainable world.”¹²⁸

In the course of my fieldwork in Miami, I attended several monthly Jain *Swadhaya* (spiritual reading) meetings of two groups. Interested Jain members periodically gather in one member’s house for a social get-together dinner followed by a spiritual discourse from the *Samanis*. I noticed that even though none of the members were Anuvrati, they were still trying to consciously follow eco-friendly practices. In the manner that one group, with an average of 50 members, does not use any disposables for serving while the other group, with an average of 15 members, uses disposable plates, bowls, and glasses. Observing this different pattern, I inquired upon the reasons from the two groups. The wife of my respondent from the bigger group, which did not use disposables said: “For our little convenience, it is appalling to be a part of the

¹²⁷ Ramesh Sharma, interview by Shivani Bothra, August 26, 2012.

¹²⁸ Srimal, interview.

environmental hazard by using disposables plates and glasses.” On my similar question to the other much smaller group, one member commented: “We use disposable not just for convenience, but also to save a lot of water from being used while cleansing in a dishwasher.”¹²⁹ The responses reflect that their intentions could be similarly positive but the latter action, while perhaps well intentioned, actually has much more negative environmental impact than the other. Clearly much more focused education is needed to make these vows effective in addressing ecological concerns.

Meditation

Abstaining from drugs and alcohol was a major aspect of the Anuvrat Movement in India, and Preksha Meditation was proposed as a way of addressing the problem of addiction. Knowing this, I sought to explore amongst my respondents how they viewed these issues in the United States. I was informed that first generation Jains are very much connected to their home country; they keep enforcing Indian Jain culture and cultivate values by actively discussing and periodically taking their children to *Pathshala*.¹³⁰ Although children are introduced to Jain values, there is still concern amongst the parents about the threat of possible addictions.

Many respondents voiced concerns discussed in the previous chapter the physical and mental harm of consuming these substances is markedly similar across the national boundaries. One respondent in India asked me, “Tell me which country is not facing the problems of violence in all its manifestations as an outcome of the increasing problems of

¹²⁹ Sharma, interview, August 26, 2012.

¹³⁰ Pathshala is Sunday school to ensure Jain philosophy and practices among the present and future generations and to inculcate ethics and morality from the young age.

intoxications, alcoholism and addictions.”¹³¹ Such consumables are legal or illegal in the United State depending on the state, but according to the movement, undertaking a vow raises one’s consciousness about the dangers they pose. Meditation is emphasized by Jain diaspora as being an important value, and my respondents were very aware of Mahapragya’s promotion of Preksha Meditation as a technique with potential to help aspirants in renouncing such intoxicants.

Nonsectarianism and Interfaith Activities

While observing Jains of Los Angeles throughout my stay, I noticed they are more inclined to the ritualistic worship of the image of Tirthankaras than they are to attending the explanatory discourses. So I asked Vikash Mehta an active coordinator of the Jain Pathshala in JCSC how would the diasporic Jain, so profoundly involved in the ritualistic practices and ceremonies, respond to a movement based on the concept of vows? In response he said: “Definitely people are more engaged in ritualistic practices, but this does not mean they will not do anything else. If they find value in something else, then they will accept it.”¹³² He continued, “The movement is independent of any religion, and is related to everyday ethics. It can make a great impact on the Western societies.”¹³³

Another Jain commented in an informal conversation in Los Angeles: “The Anuvrat Movement is like the Yoga Movement; even Yoga had faced many challenges in its initial stages of expansion. Any creative program which is good for humanity will be

¹³¹ Tharar, interview.

¹³² Vikash Mehta, interview by Shivani Bothra, September 23, 2012.

¹³³ Ibid.

accepted gradually by the seekers of spirituality.”¹³⁴ In terms of young American Jains, the movement could possibly fill the gap for those who flinch from the ritualistic practices of their parents but would be open to a spiritual movement that gives importance to ethical living.

However, I am astounded by my findings. The Jain experts in the United States see great potential for expanding the Anuvrat Movement though few Jains in diaspora are Anuvratists. On the other hand, the Anuvratists in India are in large numbers, and have seen a rich historiography of the Anuvrat Movement (beginning with Tulsi and Mahapragya). Yet, my informants’ responses convey uncertainties in the present effectiveness of the movement. Furthermore, Tulsi’s distinct vision for the movement (as understood from the historical background of the movement) was to cut across the boundaries of religion, caste and sect. Despite his clear vision, my small sample reveals that the majority viewed the movement from a religious lens. Those people who view the movement as ‘religious’ naturally exclude the ‘others.’ In summation, I pose a question: Who bridges the gap between the theory and the practice?

¹³⁴ Saleshe Jain conversation by Shivani Bothra, September 22, 2012.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Initially, I started the research with some deeply held assumptions regarding the Anuvrat Movement. I was personally inspired by the past success of the movement under Tulsi's administration. Therefore, I was hoping that by analyzing the spread of the Anuvrat Movement within India, I could explore the potential for the movement to be influential in the Jain Diaspora, in ways similar to how the yoga movement was able to spread from India to the West. As I progressed with my interviews though, I came to see the topic in a new light. In choosing to write about the Anuvrat Movement, I had known I was exploring a fresh area of inquiry within Jainism. At the conclusion of my analysis, I have come to realize that although the evidence collected from my interviews does not support my initial premise, I have gained other valuable insight into the relevance of Jain traditions in addressing post-modern social issues.

Acharya Tulsi explored the use of vows as a vehicle for individual regeneration of character and also incorporated a number of reformative concepts on issues ranging from orthodox social customs to environmentalism. "Self-restraint is life." This three-worded slogan formed the philosophical ideal behind his movement.

From my historical research and from my interviews about the present state of the movement, I observed that under the personal leadership of Tulsi, the movement was successful in touching the lives of individuals from a wide variety of religious and political backgrounds and from different socio-economic classes. From this I came to think that, it was Tulsi's charismatic personality, and the example he gave to others through his own actions, which influenced his followers and earned him the respect of

many Indians. I am making such a claim because a majority of my interviewees remembered Tulsi's personality and his courage with great reverence, but lacked the ability to express specific ways on how accepting the vows had personally transformed their lives or made them better human beings. I was confused by some of the responses, in that it seemed to me that my interviewees were not giving specific answers to my questions about how the vows were relevant to them, but expressing general views on how Tulsian vows were very good. Their views lead me to say that the vows are good but *for others* to practice.

Here I feel it might be helpful to explain how I arrived at my conclusions if I grouped my Indian respondents into three categories. The first category is of those Anuvratīs who were associated with the movement when it was under Tulsi's leadership, but are not as active today as they once were. Their responses were clouded with pain and agony towards the present state of affairs, and the deviation of the movement's activities. The second category is those Anuvratīs who are still very active today, and may or may not have begun their practice under Tulsi. They still feel personally inspired to action, but often expressed to me their frustration at their inability to inspire their own children and family members. The third category is of those who are well aware of the movement, profusely praised the movement, but lack self-motivation to practice it themselves. From these categories, I was able to observe an historical progression that suggests that the movement in India has reverted from an action that effect social change to a concept of bringing awareness. I feel this was a very important issue, in that it led me to contemplate the importance of an action as a philosophical concept in Jainism and the role of the

exemplar within the Jain tradition, which I will explore further in the remainder of the chapter.

In the fourth category I will include all of the diasporic responses in that there were almost no practicing Anuvratī and overall much less awareness of the Anuvrat Movement. Here I observed that what awareness there was centered on two things. First was the symbolic attention that the movement had garnered from internationally acclaimed peace-building bodies. Hereby implies the effectiveness of the movement in transcending global boundaries. The second was a greater appreciation of the movement as being free from strong sectarian influences. In fact, in many of the Jain meetings I attended, the members were singing the Anuvrat song composed by Tulsi even though they themselves were not Terapanthi. I attributed such an outcome to the periodic visits of the *Samanis* from India to the United States, who travel to almost every center in North America and sometimes give reference to Tulsi's movement. Thus also ties into my thoughts about the role of the exemplar.

Another observation from my interviews that I found of interest was the rhetorical nature of some of my respondents' answers. Earlier I referenced Tulsi's remark that he was not interested merely in the increasing number of Anuvratīs but on the quality of the Anuvratīs. However, during my interviews and conversations in India, my respondents often resorted to hyperbole, describing the numbers of modern Anuvratīs as being in the "millions." While I do not have an accurate figure to dispute this, the opposite is also true. They do not have an accurate figure to support it. Throughout my interviews, I also heard the following statement parroted: "The Anuvrat Movement is more significant and relevant today." It seems to me that these respondents judged the movement as significant

in light of the popularity of such contemporary world issues as social justice, environmentalism and world sustainability without actually questioning the effectiveness of the method it employs. I found that there was a general lack of depth of awareness regarding the utmost value of the vow as action, the meaning of why Tulsi chose to structure his vows the way he did and the relationship of the methods he employed in formulating his movement to his goal of facilitating the growth of healthy societies.

At this juncture, I began to question if the Anuvrat Movement was able to be effective under Tulsi's leadership not as much because of what he said, or told others to do, but of what he himself did through his actions. Action is important, as in Jainism; the central concept of *ahimsa* is viewed not as something passive. Jain karma theory states that to stop the influx of negative karma, one should avoid harming any living beings, but once the karma is affixed to the soul, there is no way to remove it besides manifesting it. One can only speed up the process by which it is manifested through nonviolent action. Subsequently, the action is most often like prayer or fasting, but Tulsi's pilgrimage on foot to spread his movement was also a means of cleansing his own soul. Tulsi was a charismatic Acharya, but he was also a renunciate and although his example was so well known throughout India, he was not the only example of nonviolent action. Every monk or nun in Jainism serves this purpose within the Jain community and often beyond, to some degree or another.

While I was disappointed to discover that many of my respondents felt that Tulsi's original vows were no longer as accepted as they once were, I was also hopeful to discover that three other initiatives, conceived by Tulsi and carried out by his followers, are still expanding. One is Preksha Meditation, which begun as a secular, non-religious

way of helping the Anuvrati to cultivate self discipline and develop mental control in order to practice the vows. The second is the Science of Living, which was designed to provide a secular, non-religious curriculum to teach children about nonviolence, self-discipline and moral character. The third is the *Samani* order, which was instituted specifically to allow some monks and nuns, who have not taken the full *Mahavrata*, to travel and teach.

During my research work in India, I saw many daily discourses of Acharya Mahashraman¹³⁵ broadcast on the *Sansakar*¹³⁶ channel in television on various topics related to Jain doctrine, meditation, morality etc. The discourse is viewed by millions of Indians daily. Moreover, for the past several years, the title song before the discourse begins has been the Anuvrat Song.¹³⁷ Even though monks and nuns have composed over a thousand songs on various themes, the Anuvrat Song is the one I have heard the most in secular programs.

What I have concluded from my analysis then is that, although Tulsi's Anuvrat Movement may no longer effectively be serving its original specific purpose to bring about social change to combat certain negative influences of modernization in post-Independence India, Tulsi's general underlying belief that some of the core concepts in Jainism could be applied to create forms of actions that could have a positive influence on the improvement of secular society is still very relevant. Both within India and in the

¹³⁵ Acharya means the monk-leader or His Holiness of the Jain sub-sect. In this case, it is the Terapanth sect. The current Acharya of the Terapanth sect is Acharya Mahashraman.

¹³⁶ A television channel in India dedicated to Indian spirituality encompassing religion, culture and heritage.

¹³⁷ See appendices for the translated Anuvrat Song.

Jain Diaspora, I observed that Preksha Meditation and the Science of Living are increasing in popularity. Within India, I observed that the monks and nuns are still playing an important role as exemplars. While there may not be any one individual monk or nun who is gaining such widespread devotion as Tulsi, they are still having significant influence on the local level by modeling good practices, and from following the example of Tulsi, they are working to formulate their teachings to be applicable not just to the Jain community but to a secular audience as well.

What is even more interesting is what I discovered occurring in the Jain Diaspora. In the United States, Jains do not have monks and nuns to hold up as exemplars. Even though, the numbers of *Samanis* are few relative to the Jain population here, they are quite popular among all Jain sects in the United States, not just the Terapanthis. Instead, there is a feeling here, especially among second-generation Jains as described in the earlier quotation by Anne Vallely, that there is an opportunity to become their own kind of exemplar in American society by emphasizing Jain practices. Maybe the children born here will not aspire to become monks and nuns, but they do aspire instead to incorporate Jain values by becoming lawyers for social justice, or ethical business owners, or engineers of new environmentally friendly products.

There is a positive association between the exemplary charismatic role of a leader and the popularity and longevity of social movements in India. In my interviews, the Terapanthis have emphatically glorified the past success of the movement and presumably anticipated the current Acharya's role in reviving Tulsi's movement – the Anuvrat Movement. Even though the spirit of Tulsian movement is continuing, the current set of vows may no longer be very effective. Tulsi gave a concept applicable to

all to cultivate their own garden of self-development through the seeds of simplified small vows. The spirituality embedded in Tulsi's theory needs to be interpreted accurately and sympathetically through a wider kaleidoscopic lens.

I conclude my study with the following observations: Acharya Tulsi, though a Jain Acharya, was viewed by the majority as a "*jan acharya*," that is, a "leader of the masses," and his movement was meant to be a "*jan*" movement, a movement of the masses; however, it remained largely a Terapanth based Jain movement. My survey data also support that the majority of respondents who considered the movement to be "religious" were Jains. Such a concern would apparently need to be addressed in any future application of Tulsi's theories.

My research was limited to a small and concentrated group in north and western India as compared to the widespread presence of Anuvratists in various regions throughout India. However, Acharya Tulsi's movement could be further examined in the future with larger sample groups employing ethnographic fieldwork and other methodologies. I hope this is done because; I regard Tulsi's idea of a radical change in individual imperative for social change, as nested in the Anuvrat Movement, a viable basis for positive action that will have the potential to continue for as long as the concept of *ahimsa* perseveres.

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APPENDICES

Survey Questionnaire

Please circle your answer. Please answer all of the questions to the best of your ability.

1. What is your age?

- a. 18-22 b. 22-26 c. 27-30 d. 3-40
e. 41-50 f. 51-60 g. 60+

2. Sex: a. Male b. Female c. Other

3. Select the category in which your monthly household income would fall:

- a. Rs. 20,000 or less b. Rs. 20,001- 35,000 c. Rs. 35,001-50,000
d. Rs.50,001-75,000 e. Rs. 75,000 + f. Rather not say

4. Religion:

- a. Jain b. Hindu c. Sikh d. Muslim. e. Christian f. Other

5. Sect: a. Non-Jain b. Svetambara c. Digambara

6. Member: a. Terapanthi b. Non-Terapanthi

7. Citizenship: a. Indian b. United States c. Other

8. Vow Status: a. Anuvrati b. Non-Anuvrati

9. Diet: a. Vegetarian (with dairy) b. Vegetarian (with egg)
 c. Vegetarian (with fish and egg) d. Non-vegetarian

10. Is the Anuvrat Movement

- a. Religious movement
b. Spiritual movement
c. an Ethical movement
d. Spiritual and ethical movement
e. All three: religious, spiritual and ethical movement

11. In your opinion is the Anuvrat Movement

- a. Primarily aimed at Jains?
for all b. Intended principally for Jains, but open
for all

c. Intended for persons of all beliefs d. Not sure

12. Are you well informed about the Anuvrat Movement?

a. Yes b. No c. Not sure

13. Do you practice Anuvrat code of conduct?

a. Yes b. No c. Not sure

14. How relevant do you think the Anuvrat Movement is to the current world problems?

a. Very relevant b. Relevant c. Somewhat relevant d. Not very relevant

15. How important are caste or economic class in your decisions about whom to socialize with or invite to your home?

a. Very important b. Somewhat important
c. A little important d. Not important at all

16. Have you ever offered or accepted dowry?

a. Yes b. No
c. Yes, before becoming Anuvrat d. Not relevant to my situation

17. In choosing where to do charity, in which situation are you most likely to give?

a. Where the names of donors are permanently attached to the charity project
b. Where donors are publicly honored for their donations
c. Where other close associates are also donors
d. Where giving is anonymous

18. In the last five years, have you ever hosted a meal or social function that included:

a. More than 25 food items b. More than 50 food items
c. More than 100 d. None of these

19. How many times have you given bribery in the past five years?

a. None b. Two to five times c. Six to ten times
d. Eleven to twenty times e. Regularly

20. If you have given bribes, is it because:

a. I have not given bribes
b. There is no alternative in some business situations
c. Without bribes everything takes longer and is much more inconvenient.
d. Bribes are sometimes a form of charity to the poorly paid.

21. In the past two years, how many times have you participated in agitation?

- a. Two to five times b. Five to ten times
c. Ten to twenty times a year d. Regularly
22. In the last two years, to which of the following have you provided financial assistance?
a. Scholarship funds for the poor b. Educational institutions c. Charity Hospitals
d. Community building funds e. Food, clothing or shelter funds for the needy
f. Other charities
23. Do you think your Anuvrat vows made you more spiritual?
a. Yes b. No c. Not sure
24. How often do you go to temple or interact with monks and nuns?
a. Frequently-weekly b. Two or three times a month c. Monthly d. Rarely e. Never
25. In the past two years, how often have you foregone a desired purchase you could have afforded because of your Anuvrat non-possession commitment?
a. Never or once b. Two to five times c. Six to ten times
d. About monthly e. More than monthly
26. How well do you think Anuvrati vows prevent thoughts of suicide from being acted on?
a. Very well b. Usually c. Sometimes d. Rarely e. Not sure
27. How protective are you of the environment in your water and energy usage?
For a family of our size:
a. Our household usage is above average b. Our household usage is about average
c. Our household usage is below average d. I don't know how our usage compares
28. Have you ever denied your children's desire to purchase things or experiences in order to educate them in non-possessiveness?
a. Yes b. No c. Not sure
29. Do you need more information on what you could do to be more environment-friendly?
a. Yes b. No c. Not sure
30. Do you need more information on what you could do to be more socially responsible?
a. Yes b. No c. Not sure

Anuvrat Song - One

Let with temperance imbued our life be

Dipped in the holy stream of morality

Let every mind reach pristine purity.

Anuvrat stands for disciplining the self by self,

Its Dharma's language free from caste color or creed,

May there be a change of heart through vows small.

May our friendly feeling for all increase day by day,

May equality, coexistence and conciliation ever succeed,

Let our means be pure for the end that's pure.

Be it a student or a teacher, a worker or a business man,

A man or a woman – let everyone tread the virtue's path,

Let there be parity in what we say and what we act.

God we can adore only by attaining ourselves a godly state,

Through integrity alone can we cross the sea of vicissitudes,

With valor, vigor and *ahimsa* blended our life's philosophy be.

If a man's character improves, society and nation by themselves will improve,

The mighty voice of Anuvrat throughout the world will resound,

Let our body and soul stand dedicated to human code of conduct.

Let the temperance imbued our life be.

Song Composed by Acharya Tulsi, the founder of the Anuvrat Movement

English rendering by Dr. Narendra Sharma '*Kusum*'

Anurat Song - Two

Let us turn the era-flow
With modified vision, New order grow,
Through Anuvrat-code let wisdom glow
Away from life, let evils go
Let us turn the era-flow ...
Preservation of values
The Anuvrat (s) ensure

Spirituality and integrity make heart pure
Set darkness be dispelled through Anuvrat cure
And end of violence be made dead sure.

Let us turn the era-flow1

Worshipper is he, but man moral not
Bizaree is the play of such actor's plot;
Religion sans Morality is an odd thought
Revolution in Religion holds the key to clot

Let us turn the era-flow2

Esteem of self-discipline is the only way
In value-education, it has the role to play;
Let Truth-Ahinsa be in Masses hopeful ray
The Consumerist-Cyclone would no more led as tray,

Let us turn the era-flow3

Moral health in one will society healthy make
From come of selfishness, man will made awake;

Spirit of Highest Good will fill the hearty lake

Indebted will be All to Anuvrat for this sake,

Let us turn the era-flow4

Let's strive strenuously to awaken faith in all

Inner hearts of all be joined by compassion whole;

“Let Amity prevail forever” – that's The Tulsi's call

Like North-pole star in sky to end the Final Fall.

Let us turn the era-flow5