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No God, just natural laws

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July 14, 2006

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Jainism does not accept the concept of a god who created the universe and who for that reason wields a kind of authority to which the whole of his creation, including people, must submit itself. The idea that religious scripture is a kind of lawbook and that there is a god who functions as a kind of judge, is thoroughly alien to Jainism.

Jainism can be considered a kind of system of laws, but natural rather than moral laws. However, nature is thought of as something that encompasses more than the average modern person tends to think.

In Jainism, actions that carry moral significance are considered to cause certain consequences in just the same way as, for instance, physical actions that do not carry any special moral significance. When one holds an apple in one's hand and then lets go of the apple, the apple will fall: this is only natural. There is no judge, and no moral judgement involved, since this is a mechanical consequence of the physical action.

Jainism teaches that in the same manner consequences occur when one utters a lie, steals something, commits acts of senseless violence or leads the life of a debauchee.

Rather than assume that moral rewards and retribution are the work of a divine judge, the Jains believe that there is an innate moral order to the cosmos, self-regulating through the workings of karma. Morality and ethics are important not because of the personal whim of a fictional god, but because a life that is led in agreement with moral and ethical principles is beneficial: it leads to a decrease and finally to the total loss of karma, which means: to ever increasing happiness.

The more the effects of *karma* are diminished, the more the innate qualities of the soul, including its innate selfsufficiency and happiness, manifest themselves. The Tirthankaras are considered extremely important because they understood the working of the moral universe and taught the correct darshana and right conduct, *acara*.

Extracted from Jainism Today & Its Future, Manya Verlag, Munchen, 2006

