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Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature

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Edited by

[Bron Taylor](#)

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Topics included the environmental crisis, ecological degradation, and unrestrained consumerism. A conference held at Harvard University in 1998 examined the topic of Jainism and ecology, and included representatives and scholars of various sects of Jainism. These activities reflect some ways in which the tradition has been newly interpreted to reflect ecological concerns.

At first glance, the Jaina tradition might seem to be inherently ecologically friendly. It emphasizes non-violence. It values all forms of life in their immense diversity, not merely in the abstract but in minute detail. It requires its adherents to engage only in certain types of livelihood, presumably based on the principle of ahimsa. However, if we look at both the ultimate intention of the Jaina faith as well as the actual consequences of some Jaina businesses, we might detect a need for in-depth critical analysis and reflection. First it must be noted that the observance of ahimsa must be regarded as ancillary to the goal of final liberation or *kevala*. Although the resultant lifestyle for monks and nuns resembles or approximates an environmentally friendly ideal, its pursuit focuses on personal, spiritual advancement. In a sense, the holistic vision of the interrelatedness of life is no more than an eco-friendly by-product.

In terms of the lifestyle of the Jaina lay-person, certain practices such as vegetarianism, periodic fasting, and eschewal of militarism might also be seen as eco-friendly. However, some professions adopted by the Jainas due to their religious commitment to harm only one-sensed beings might be environmentally disastrous, such as strip-mining for granite or marble, unless habitat restoration accompanies the mining process. Likewise, how many Jaina industries contribute to air pollution or forest destruction or result in water pollution? The development of a Jaina ecological business ethic would require extensive reflection and restructuring, a tradition well known within the Jaina community. Nonetheless, the Jaina community, despite its relatively small numbers, is extremely influential in the world of Indian business, law, and politics. If Jainas speak with a united voice on environmental issues, their impact can be quite profound.

Due to their perception of the "livingness" of the world, Jainas hold an affinity for the ideals of the environmental movement. The Jaina observance of nonviolence, as practiced by monks, nuns, and lay-people, has provided a model for a way of life that respects all living beings, including ecosystems. The Jainas are well suited to reconsider their traditions in an ecological light, particularly because of their successful advocacy against meat-eating and animals sacrifice, as well as their success at developing businesses that avoid overt violence. Many Jainas identify themselves as environmentalists. Through a rethinking of contemporary industrial practices, and concerted advocacy of environmental awareness through religious teachings and the secular media, the Jaina

tradition might help bolster the environmental movement not only in India but also throughout the world.

Christopher Key Chapple

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- See also: Ahimsa; Gandhi, Mohandas; Goshalas (Home for Aged Cattle); India; Jataka Tales; Religious Environmentalist Paradigm.

James Bay Cree and Hydro-Quebec

For the James Bay Cree people of northern Quebec province in Canada, the watershed event was the decision in

1971 to develop the hydro-electric potential of their rivers. Facing one of the largest energy development projects ever built, the Cree people and their Inuit allies in the Hudson Bay area demanded recognition of their Aboriginal rights and went to court to assert their authority over the land.

The James Bay hydro project was a watershed event also for the evolution of Aboriginal land claims in Canada, and for the critique of large development projects. A powerful coalition of environmentalists and Aboriginal leaders, assisted by a well-publicized and prolonged court case in 1972–1973, was successful in initiating public discussion on some of the themes important in this volume: the role of humans in the environment, and the idea that humans can be a part of nature. The events triggered public discussion on the notion of a traditional ecology in which humans and nature are in a symbiotic relationship, with mutual obligations leading to “respect,” a central idea in the relations of many Amerindian groups with nature.

The Cree and the Inuit found not only a receptive public, but also a court sympathetic to their cause. They were successful in obtaining an injunction to stop development in 1973. However, this decision was overturned only a few weeks later by a higher court, forcing the Cree and Inuit to the negotiating table for the surrender of their Aboriginal claims and to open the way for hydro development. In 1975, the Cree and Inuit signed the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*, the first of the modern comprehensive land claims agreements in Canada. Under the *Agreement*, the Cree and Inuit obtained ownership rights to areas around their communities, exclusive hunting and fishing rights over a large territory, regional self-government powers, cash compensation and other privileges, in exchange for allowing Hydro-Quebec, the power company, to proceed with development.

The 1975 *Agreement*, signed under duress, left the Cree leadership with strong and ambiguous feelings about development. In the 1980s, the Cree allowed a series of alterations of the original hydro development plans. But in 1993, the Cree successfully fought and blocked a multi-billion dollar extension of the James Bay hydro project, known as the James Bay II or Great Whale development after the name of the Grande Baleine (Great Whale) River which is to the north of the James Bay I development.

Subsequently, in 2001, the Cree leadership signed an interim deal for the development of the Rupert and Eastmain rivers to the south of the James Bay I development. The action triggered a bitter fight that pitted community leaders against one another, with the chief of one of the directly affected communities, who was initially a key supporter, declaring, “I have little enthusiasm for going down in history as the Waskaganish chief who signed the death warrant for the Rupert River” (*Montreal Gazette*, 10 December 2001). As long as undeveloped hydro-electric potential exists in the region, these battles are

likely to continue. But the important questions for our volume are, who are these Cree people who talk about rivers as if they were alive, and what is their belief system really like?

The eastern James Bay Cree are part of the largest Aboriginal group in Canada. Their lands cover a good part of the boreal forest zone that stretches across Canada, and part of the northern plains. The Cree groups of the boreal forest were traditionally hunters, and many of them still obtain a large part of their protein diet from the land. Their hunting ethics and belief systems are rich, and have been documented extensively by anthropologists such as Harvey Feit, Richard Preston, Adrian Tanner and Robert Brightman.

The central belief of the James Bay Cree and some other groups of the boreal forest is that animals make themselves available to hunters who treat them properly. Those who break rules of proper conduct are punished. This punishment usually takes the form of hunting failure, and it can be individual or communal. For example, the Chisasibi Cree believe that the disappearance of caribou from their area for some seventy years is related to a disastrously large and bloody hunt that took place in 1914 when the repeating rifle first became available (Berkes 1999).

The rules of proper conduct are expressed as practices to follow, such as practices of showing respect for the animal. For example, the bones of important animals have to be disposed of in certain ways, as in placing of beaver skulls on trees. Tanner lists the many ways in which the Mistassini Cree show respect for black bears, from hunter’s initial approach with an attitude of humility, to offerings made to the dead animal, to the butchering, consumption of the meat, and the disposal of the remains. Some of the rules are expressed as practices and attitudes to avoid. For example, it is widely believed that fish will avoid a person who boasts about his/her skills and previous successes. How do they know? Because the land is alive and animals are sentient beings.

Religion may be broadly defined as encompassing issues regarding the meaning of human life and engagement with transcendent powers, such as forces that impinge on people’s lives. Most Cree are Christians, but their “religion” in the above sense indicates a belief system that differs considerably from the mainstream Western society. The Cree believe in a nature that pulsates with life and meaning. Their ecology is spiritual, rather than impersonal and mechanistic. Landscapes “know” people, rather than people knowing the land. Animals control the hunt and can retaliate by “returning the discourtesy.” Humans, animals and other beings in the environment share the same Creator; hence, just as one respects other persons, one respects animals. Social relations such as mutual obligations and reciprocity are extended to non-human nature. Respect and humility are important, and

Cree culture is rich in rituals that symbolize respect and remind the hunter of his/her ethical obligations.

Fikret Berkes

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See also: Aboriginal Environmental Groups in Canada; Harmony in Native North America; Indigenous Activism and Environmentalism in Latin America; Indigenous Environmental Network; Inuit; Traditional Ecological Knowledge; Traditional Ecological Knowledge among Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.

James, William (1842–1910)

William James, the oldest of five children born to Henry James, Sr., and Mary James, was immersed from his youth in the family's romantic hopes to find spiritual significance in the natural world. The elder James read the mystic Emanuel Swedenborg's works extensively, lectured widely on his idealistic solutions to contemporary religious and social issues, and firmly believed that the material world was a mere shadow compared to the reality of spiritual forces that would bring about a more righteous and democratic society. In his young adulthood, William resisted these spiritual insights, especially when he began his own career in the wake of Darwinism by studying chemistry, anatomy, physiology, and medicine at Harvard in the 1860s.

The young James did not remain satisfied for long with the scientific and secular insights that surrounded him during his first career steps in the New Psychology. A traumatic personal crisis signaled his return to the issues his father had taught because he felt repulsed by the notion that material nature possessed only mundane physical reality. Although he worked in mainstream professions, as a teacher at Harvard throughout his career and

as a respected and popular psychologist, philosopher, and social commentator, his own commitments remained on the margins because of his drive to understand spiritual meanings in nature.

James' commitments remained fairly muted in his first major publications. He wrote his influential *Principles of Psychology* (1890) "from a natural science point of view," with comprehensive references to the experimental psychology of Europe and America and with a working assumption that reflected the scientific orthodoxy that mental life could be understood with physical explanations. However, his guiding motivation was to find the relation between brain and mind, between things material and impulses immaterial.

Those interests grew even as the psychology profession took an increasingly laboratory orientation in the 1890s. James quickly turned his attention to philosophy and to spiritual, psychical, and other exceptional experiences of human consciousness. He expressed his commitment to religious belief against the withering criticism of agnostics in his declaration of the importance of a "Will to Believe" (1895) in ideas that satisfy our need for commitment even when they cannot be empirically verified. He wrote *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) to document the extraordinary depths of personal religion and to showcase the profound impact of belief on human saintliness and mystical insight. In the essays collected as *Radical Empiricism* (1912), James proposed to show the intimate relation between subjective ideas and empirical objects. In *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), he argued for looking at the world in terms of the multiplicity of its empirical parts, without losing the sense of purpose derived from religious worldviews. James is perhaps most famous for his theory of *Pragmatism* (1907), which proposed that usefulness and practical action should be the way to measure the worth of ideas, and he was particularly interested in showing how pragmatism could endorse religion's ability to motivate and sustain.

In his work, William James did not dismiss science, but he proposed that its insights, along with those of religion, were all useful as paths for increasing our awareness of human possibilities embedded in our physical frames. With these commitments, he anticipated twentieth-century humanistic psychology and the flowering of personal spiritualities that have flourished across denominational lines in the last few generations. His influence is perhaps best expressed with the image he used in *The Varieties*: our normal waking consciousness is only a doorway to some other cosmic consciousness, of which we occasionally get glimpses, especially with the help of religious geniuses. And so, by the end of his life, James found a way to express his father's commitments in more secular terms; like a psychologist, he investigated the human mind in its relation to the brain, but with his spiritualist drive, he proposed that those physical,