

**Ahimsa: A conceptual tenet distinguishing Jainism and Buddhism from other religious orders**

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‘*Ahimsa*’ or non-violence, as a distinct tenet, forms the pivotal conceptual foundation of various religious thoughts in the Asian societies. In some religious orders, such as Jainism and Buddhism this postulate has been institutionalized to form their bedrock. This paper is essentially divided into two parts; the first is a descriptive narration of this tenet of *Ahimsa* in the contemporary religious thoughts in early history of Asia while the second seeks to revisit the historic events recorded in the different religious orders to bring to fore the extent to which this tenet was worked out in practice in those societies. On a larger perspective, during the relevant period of inquiry, the paper reveals convergence of various religious thoughts on the relevance and adoption of *Ahimsa* as a religious practice but simultaneously also distinguishes these very same religions in so far as its practical adoption and the daily chores of their followers. Ancient religious texts / epics, in so far as these can be treated as mirrors of the practices adopted by the contemporary societies, reveal to a significant extent the levels to which *Ahimsa* was practiced in a way of life. The paper seeks to trace these and other aspects to reveal the significance of this essential tenet which distinguishes the Jain and Buddhist philosophies from other prevailing religious orders during the period of inquiry. On a larger level, the paper seeks to establish a rationale behind the existing religious and possibly social practices of those following these religious orders.

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