



Understanding Jainism (Understanding Faith)

Lawrence A. Babb

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Jainism is Buddhism's often overlooked cousin. As the only surviving examples of ancient India's non-Vedic religious traditions, these two religions are often grouped together as 'heterodoxies,' but this is to ignore deep differences between Jain and Buddhist beliefs and practices. Unlike Buddhism, Jainism has hardly spread beyond the Indian subcontinent. Yet, unlike Buddhism, Jainism has survived in India where it is a prominent element in the mix of Indian religions today. Although relatively few in numbers, the Jains are a wealthy community and exercise great influence in Indian economic and political life. This book is designed to be an introduction to Jainism as a religious tradition and way of life. While paying due attention to Jainism's history and doctrinal basics, the book also emphasizes the ways in which formal Jain teachings are manifested in the practices of both laity and the monastic elite. In addition, the book explores the distinctive Jain systems of cosmographic and biological knowledge, and it describes how Jainism is woven into the social identities of Jain communities in modern India. *** "Understanding Jainism is an absolute "must-have" for college and public library Religious Studies shelves, highly recommended." -- Midwest Book Review, Library Bookwatch: July 2015, The Religion/Spirituality Shelf (Series: Understanding Faith) [Subject: Jainism, Religious Studies, India Studies]

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