

THE GOLDEN RULE: Each religion is different, but all teach people to be good. They teach the "Golden Rule": that we should treat others the way we'd like to be treated. Here's the Jain version of the Golden Rule...

In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self. – Lord Mahavira

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A Jain nun does disaster relief work after a flood in Surat, India.

journey from India to Singapore, in search of opportunities and to build new homes. At first, their charity work was mainly targeted at India, where they came from. Nowadays, however, members of the younger generation think of Singapore as their home.

"We are the second or third generation and so, for us, this is home," explains Mr Ashvin Desai, a Jain Singaporean.

The Singapore Jains Religious Society (SJRS) got more involved in local community projects. They collected over \$12,000 for the SARS Courage Fund, for example. The SJRS youth wing recently helped out at a Muslim orphanage, while the ladies' wing makes regular visits to a home in Eunos run by the Thye Hua Kwan Moral Society.

They haven't stopped caring about international causes, though. After the 2004 Asian Tsunami, they raised more than \$70,000 for the Red Cross and Project Hope, which managed the rebuilding of a devastated village in southern India.

In all these charity efforts, religion is not a barrier. Like

other religious groups featured in this series, the Jains believe in helping the needy – regardless of race or religion. For example, the communities that SJRS helped after the 2001 Gujarat earthquake and the 2004 tsunami were mainly Hindus and Muslims, not Jains.

Jainism is the latest religion to be included in Singapore's Inter-Religious Organisation. Like other major religions in Singapore, the Jains believe in promoting peace and understanding among religions.

Jains are inspired by their belief in Ahimsa, or non-violence. "Non-violence – it's not just don't fight with someone. It's in your thoughts, in your speech and your actions; you need to speak and think non-violence," says Mr Desai.

Giving is receiving

Jains are making an impact with their charity work.

The number of Jains in all of Singapore is smaller than the number of students in a typical school. But, when an awful earthquake struck Gujarat in India in 2001, Singapore's small Jain community of about 700 managed to raise a whopping \$300,000 for the victims.

They were inspired by their motto, "Giving is Receiving".

Charity is a core belief of their faith. They were also moved by the suffering of the earthquake victims because many Jains in Singapore have roots in Gujarat. However, the meaning of home can change, as Jain Singaporeans will tell you.

The first Jains settled in Singapore around the turn of the last century. In the years that followed, many more made the



Young Jains joined other groups in folding lotuses for Project Million Lotus, an inter-religious wish-making event celebrating major religions' common teachings on compassion.

More about Jains

AN ANCIENT RELIGION: Jains follow the teachings of the Tirthankaras, men and women who have achieved enlightenment. The founder of modern Jainism is the Lord Mahavir, the 24th Tirthankar, who lived from 599-527 BC.

NON-VIOLENCE: Jains believe in rebirth, such that souls are continually reborn into future lives, until they reach spiritual perfection. They also believe in the law of karma, which basically means that all thoughts and actions have consequences, with good actions leading to positive results. Ahimsa (non-violence) is considered the supreme value, and must be practised in thought, word and deed.

FESTIVALS: One of the most important Jain festivals is that of Paryushan, an eight-day period of fasting, abstinence and introspection. Like Hindus and Sikhs, Jains celebrate Deepavali, or the Festival of Lights.



ABHINAV AGARWAL

NO MEAT, PLEASE: One of the legacies of Jainism is great vegetarian food. Jains are strict vegetarians, because of their deep believe in Ahimsa or non-violence. Jainism isn't the only religion that promotes vegetarianism. Buddhism and Hinduism also encourage followers to respect animal life by not eating meat. Many faiths have rules about what can or can't be consumed. Hindus avoid beef, while Muslims and Jews avoid pork. Some of these rules may be hard for others to understand, but there's a bright side to them: they make each religious group's cooking unique and inventive, adding to the diversity of world cuisine. Thus, the Jain influence has made Gujarati cooking world-famous for its

vegetarian dishes. The famous cookbook writer Madhur Jaffrey termed Gujarati food "the haute cuisine of vegetarianism".

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