

# The Mahāvratas in Early Jainism

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## § 1. Introduction

The five *mahāvratas* (great vows/precepts) of the Jainas reflect a tradition which can be called pan-Indian. There are not only close and well-known parallels in Buddhism, but also parallels in Brahmanical and even in Manichaeic tradition (§ 17). The precise origins of the five *mahāvratas* of the Jainas (“pentad”) are not known (§ 19). They did not surface all of a sudden, but developed gradually (were incorporated gradually). There is abundant evidence of Jaina conceptualizations which originated on the basis of and in connection with the pentad, most important the version for lay followers as part of the “DADh” (§§ 18 and 20) and the conflux of pentad and “*kaṣāya* vocabulary” (§ 20: see Eighteen Sins, see *kaṣāya*-Tetrad). We concentrate on the canonical texts (mainly on early canonical literature: § 5) and on the pentad for monks and nuns. Naturally, we also consider the difference between the five vows of Mahāvīra and the four vows of Pārśva (§ 19).

References to W.SCHUBRING'S *Doctrine* have been given throughout. The more historical approach of K.K.DIXIT (see § 22) has changed the general course of the discussion on Jaina dogmatics in many cases, and this is more or less apparent from our discussions and quotations.