THE RISE, DECLINE AND RENEWALS OF SRAMANIC RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS WITHIN INDIC CIVILISATION WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE EVOLUTION OF JAIN SRAMANIC CULTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE INDIC CIVILIZATION

by BAL PATIL,

Member, Maharashtra State Minorities Commission,

Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai

PAPER READ IN

Conference on

Religions in Indic Civilisation

New Delhi

December 18-21, 2003

Organised by

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

in collaboration with

International Association for the History of Religions and India International Centre,

New Delhi
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRE-ARYAN ROOTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISLEADING STEREOTYPES ABOUT JAINISM</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA AND JAINISM</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADHA KUMUD MOOKERJI AND CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASHOKA &amp; JAINISM</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. THAPAR, AND HISTORICAL SOURCES IN PURANAS AND VEDAS</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. H. CARR: WHAT IS HISTORY?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROF. M. WITZEL &amp; VEDIC AND ITIHASA-PURANA TRADITION</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIGVEDIC TEXTS LIKE TAPE RECORDED RECITATION?</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FALSITY OF WITZEL’S VEDIC HISTORIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROF. H. BECHERT ON MAHAVAMSA</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAINISM IN CEYLON</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACK TO WITZEL’S VEDIC HISTORIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRAMANIC JAIN RELIGION</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISHABHA, 1ST TIRTHAMKAR: HIS ANTIQUITY</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASCETICISM AND RISHABHA’S SRAMANA CULTURE</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOGA AND JAINISM</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWASTIKA SIGN AND TIME COMPUTATION</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISHABHA AS EPOCH-MAKING JAIN SRAMANIC TIRTHAMKARA IN ITIHASA-PURANA</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIA KNOWN AS BHARATVARSHA AFTER BHARATA SON OF RISHABHA AND REJECTION OF THE THEORY THAT BHARATVARSHA IS KNOWN</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFTER DUSHYANTA’S SON</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE-VEDIC AND PRE-AYAN ORIGINS OF JAINISM</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAINA ANTIQUITY IN VEDAS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSATRIYA AND VRATYA TRADITION IN JAINISM</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHIMSA AND VEDIC CULTURE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHIMSA AND THE IDEA OF REBIRTH</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEGETARIANISM &amp; AHIMSA IN BUDDHISM AND JAINISM</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAINISM AND BRAHMANIC-HINDUISM</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIRTHAMKARA AND THE CONCEPT OF WORSHIP IN JAINISM</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIVA, RUDRA AND RISHABHDEVA</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISHABHA, FIRST TIRTHAMKAR AND RUDRA</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARE JAIN NASTIKAS?</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHY WORSHIP TIRTHAMKARS?</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVOLUTION OF JAIN CONCEPT OF TEMPLE</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVOLUTION OF CHAIYA, AYATANA AS AN ABODE OF YAKSHA</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAIYA TREE AND TREE WORSHIP</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YAKSHAS IN JAIN TRADITION</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHAVANAM, YAKSA’S ABODE</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EARLIEST JINA IMAGE AND JAINA PANTEHON</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AYAGAPATAS AND STUPA AT KANKALI TILA, MATHURA</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF AYAGAPATAS</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUPAS’ PRECURSOR OF JAIN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE-MAHAVIRA AND BUDDHA STUPAS</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KURAL BY SAINT TIRUVALLUVAR &amp; JAINISM IN SOUTH INDIA</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHANKARACHARYA &amp; JAIN MATHAS</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RE-WRITING CHRONOLOGY OF ADI SHANKARACHARYA ........................................ 49
PATHASHALAS AND JAINA CONTRIBUTION TO LEARNING & EDUCATION .... 50
O NAMAH SIDDHAM ........................................................................................................ 50
SECULARISM HINDUTVA & JAINISM IN MODERN INDIA .................................. 51
MISREPRESENTATION OF JAINISM ............................................................................. 52
SECULARISM & INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL PREAMBLE ................................ 52
SUDARSHAN AND HINDU RASHTRA ......................................................................... 54
ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE & SECULARISM .............................................................. 55
JAINS & ARTICLE 25 OF CONSTITUTION ................................................................. 57
MODERN MYTH OF HINDUISM .................................................................................. 58
ART.25 AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ........................................................................ 59
SAVARKAR & HINDUTVA ............................................................................................ 60
HINDUTVA AND MINORITIES ..................................................................................... 61
CONSTITUTIONAL SUBTERFUGE AND AMBEDKAR ........................................... 62
SUPREME COURT ON HINDUTVA ........................................................................... 63
MAHAVIRA AND HIS MESSAGE OF AHIMSA ......................................................... 65
MAHAVIRA : MAN & HIS MISSION ............................................................................. 66
MAHAVIRA & HIS ‘ALLEGED’ MEAT-EATING ................................................................ 67
MAHAVIRA & BUDDHA ................................................................................................. 68
MAHAVIRA’S TEACHINGS ............................................................................................ 69
BHAGVAD GITA AND THEORY OF KARMA ......................................................... 71
A NOTE ON THE HINDU VIEW OF SALVATION .................................................. 71
“THE GITA AS IT WAS” Rediscovering the Original Bhagwadgita ....................... 73
FIVE JAIN MAHA VRATAS - GREAT VOWS ....................................................... 74
JAINA PRAYER ............................................................................................................. 75
SYADVADA ANEKANTA : JAIN THEORY OF RELATIVITY OF TRUTH ................ 76
TRANSHUMANISTIC MESSAGE OF JAINISM ........................................................ 77
JAINISM & BUDDHISM - SHRAMANIC RELIGIONS

PRE-ARYAN ROOTS

Almost all the scholars agree that Jainism has Pre-Aryan roots in the cultural history of India. As Dr. A. N. Upadhye remarked - “The origins of Jainism go back to the pre-historic times. They are to be sought in the fertile valley of Ganga, where they flourished in the past, even before the advent of Aryans with their priestly religion, a society of recluses who laid much stress on individual exertion, on practice of a code of morality and devotion to austerities, as means of attaining religious Summum Bonum.” (Jainism by Colette Caillat, A.N. Upadhye & Bal Patil, Macmillan, 1974)

The late Heinrich Zimmer, who is reputed to have been the greatest German Indologist of modern times, in his celebrated posthumous work, The Philosophies of India, conceded that there is truth in the Jain idea that their religion goes back to a remote antiquity, the antiquity in question being that of the pre-Aryan, so called Dravidian period, and that Jainism is the oldest of all Dravidian born philosophies and religions. He also psychologically demonstrated that Jain Yoga originated in pre-Aryan India, and has nothing to do with orthodox Brahmanism which simply appropriated it in later centuries.

Noel Retting, another Indologist, writes, "only in Jainism, of all the living religions, do we see a fusion of the primitive with the profound. It has preserved elements from the first stage of man's religious awareness, animism. It affirms the separateness of spirit from matter, even though our modern philosophers and religionists regard neither form of dualism as untenable. Despite the opinion of these men, Jainism is fundamentally scientific. And, it may very well be, contrary to the opinions of many anthropologists and students of comparative religion, the oldest living faith." And, Professor L. P. Tessitory is of opinion that "Jainism is of a very high order. Its important teachings are based upon science. The more the scientific knowledge advances the more the Jain teachings will be proven".

In fact, the Jain system of thought is so wonderfully consistent with modern realism and science that one may easily be tempted to question its antiquity, about which, however, there is now no doubt. As Dr. Walthur Schubring observes, "He who has a thorough knowledge of the structure of the world cannot but admire the inward logic and harmony of Jain ideas. Hand in hand with the refined cosmographical ideas goes a high standard of astronomy and mathematics." Dr. Herman Jacobi also believes that "Jainism goes back to a very early period, and to primitive currents of religious and metaphysical speculation, which gave rise to the oldest Indian philosophies. They (the Jains) seem to have worked out their system from the most primitive notions about matter."

In the Buddhist scripture Majjhima Nikaya, Buddha himself tells us about his ascetic life and its ordinances which are in conformity with the Jain monk’s code of conduct. He says, "Thus far, SariPutta, did I go in my penance. I went without clothes. I licked
my food from my hands. I took no food that was brought or meant especially for me. I accepted no invitation to a meal.” Mrs. Rhys Davis has observed that Buddha found his two teachers Alara and Uddaka at Vaisali and started his religious life as a Jain.

In Dighanikaya’s Samanna Phal Sutta, the four vows of Lord Parshvanath (who flourished 250 years before Mahavira’s liberation) have been mentioned. Attakatha of Anguttara Nikaya has reference to Boppa Sakya a resident of Kapilvastu who was the uncle of Buddha and who followed the religion of the Niganathas i.e. Jains.

Critical and comparative study has brought to light several words like ‘Asrava’, "Samvara’ etc., which have been used by Jains in the original sense but which have been mentioned in Buddhist Literature in figurative sense. On the basis of these words Dr. Jacobi has concluded that Jainism is much older than the religion of Buddha and therefore it is incorrect to imagine Jainism as the offshoot of Buddhism.

MISLEADING STEREOTYPES ABOUT JAINISM

Yet histories and encyclopaedias of world religions with a few exceptions fail to mention Jainism as a religion. There are pervasive misconceptions about the origin of Jainism, its relation with the Brahmanic, Vedic so-called- Hinduism, about Mahavira being the founder of Jainism, about its being an offshoot of Buddhism or Hinduism or its being a reformist sect of Hinduism. There are misrepresentations galore. It is overshadowed by Hinduism and Buddhism or if noticed at all it is mentioned in passing as one of the ancient IndiaN religious movements subsidiary to Buddhism.

Such is the context of the pervasive impact of the misleading Indian historiography from the deleterious effects of which even the most eminent historians, both right and left are not immune. As noted pertinently by the Aims of the Conference “One of the consequences of this failure is the continuing hold of misleading stereotypes of the nature of Indic religious thought and practice.” I think this has a vital bearing on the devastatingly damaging impact of the misconceived Indological and ‘Oriental’ stereotypes on the Indian ethno-religious historiography so as to necessitate a paradigmatic revaluation.

This misinterpretation of history is compounded by what the doyen of Indian Indologists, Dr.R.G. Bhandarkar noted as to how “India has no written history. Nothing was known till within recent times of the political condition of the country, the dynasties that ruled over the different provisions which composed it, and the great religious and social revolutions it went through. The historical curiosity of the people was satiated by legends. What we find of a historical nature in the literature of the country before the arrival of the Mahomedans comes to very little.” P.i-ii (Early History of the Dekkan Down to the Mahomedan Conquest, 2nd Ed. 1983)

The date of the foundation of the Maurya dynasty by Chandragupta has been determined to be about 322 B.C. on the basis of the known dates of the corresponding Greek persons or events such as the invasion of Alexander the Great
which brought the Greeks in contact with India or such historical fragments as are left by Megasthenes’s *Ta Indika*.

Even Buddha or Buddhism is no exception for such misrepresentations. It is incredible but true that S. Radhakrishnan in his Foreword to the volume brought out on the occasion of **2500th Anniversary of the Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha in 1956: 2500 Years of Buddhism** (published by the Ministry of Information, Government of India, 1956 states:”The Buddha did not feel that he was announcing a new religion. He was born, grew up, and died a Hindu. He was re-stating with a new emphasis the ancient ideals of the Indo-Aryan civilization.”

Such is the common strategy of the historians, philosophers and academicians in dealing with the Indic Sramanic religious traditions. Issues are obscured by introducing irrelevancies and thus an attitude of contemptuous prejudice is provoked by exciting ridicule.

**CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA AND JAINISM**

But such distortions are not confined to Orientalist interpreters of ancient Indian history. I am quoting below an excerpt from *The Age of Mauryas* by the eminent historian Romila Thapar:

“Chandragupta is said to have accepted Jainism in his later years, and in fact to have abdicated the throne and become a wandering ascetic dying through slow starvation in the orthodox Jain manner. Considering the difficulties that he faced in making himself king and building an empire it is hardly likely that he would have abdicated at the end of his reign in order to become a wandering ascetic. It is possible though that he accepted the teachings of Mahavira and became a Jaina. *This interest may be excused as originating in the fact that he was of low origin, a vaisya, and by accepting Jainism he eluded the contempt of the higher caste nobility.* Since the teachings of Mahavira were at this period, regarded more as an offshoot of Hinduism, an extreme discipline, and the Jainas themselves as a sub-sect of the earlier religion, we can disoutenance the above idea. The interest it would seem was largely intellectual. Accepting Jainism did not raise one’s social prestige in the eyes of high-caste Hindus whose social ethics were already being determined by caste rules.”

I am aware that this is an earlier historical reading by the eminent, liberal, progressive historian Romila Thapar. I am also aware that her readings of Indian ancient history have progressed from her *A History of India* (Pelican 1966) to *Early India: From the Origins to A.D. 1300*, Allen Lane, 2002)

In her *A History of India (Vol.I)* Thapar has perceptively noted that “much of the early history of India was reconstructed almost entirely from Sanskrit sources i.e. from material preserved in the ancient classical language”. (p.18) In her latest version “substantial changes in the readings of early Indian history” are made. Mauryan India is Thapar’s special field of historical study. That is why one is concerned to question her cavalier and even presumptuous remarks-so unhistorical in character- regarding Chandragupta.
I am quoting once again the particular sentence: "This interest may be excused as originating in the fact that he was of low origin, a vaisya, and by accepting Jainism he eluded the contempt of the higher caste nobility.” I simply fail to understand this judgemental remark on what Chandragupta did making a totally unhistorical presumption on his alleged inferiority complex as a Vaisya and even more questionable presumption that he did so to elude the contempt of “higher caste nobility”. One is almost led to wonder whether Chandragupta's soul materialised by some transmigratory power before Romila Thapar to make such a guilty confession stating: “Well, Madam, you know how embarrassing it was to be a Vaisya with such glittering nobility around me!”

I am concerned to make an issue of such 'historical' interpretations or rather misinterpretations to show how personal historiography of the historians, apparently not affected by any transparent cultural bias can go astray. But since the issue has been raised it must be dealt with in a rational historical manner. I cannot do better here than quote Dr.Radha Kumud Mookerji.

RADHA KUMUD MOOKERJI AND CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA

Dr.Mookerji has commented at length on the theory of the base birth of Chandragupta in his Chandragupta Maurya and His Times (1943):

“The theory of the base birth of Chandragupta Maurya was first suggested by the derivation which a commentator was at pains to find for the epithet Maurya as applied to Chandragupta by the Puranas.” Further after explaining how the commentator on Purana was wrong in explaining grammatically Maurya from Mura and how it is impossible to “to derive by any grammar Maurya as a direct formation from Mura” Dr.Mookerji states : “The derivative from Mura is Maureya. The term Maureya can be derived only from masculine Mura which is mentioned as a name of a gotra in a Ganapatha in Panini’s Sutra (IV. I, 151).

The commentator was more interested in finding a mother than in grammar! The only redeeming feature of the commentator is that not merely is he innocent of grammar and history; he is also innocent of any libel against Chandragupta. For he has not stated that Mura, the supposed mother of Chandragupta was a Sudra woman or a courtesan of the Nanda king...Thus even the commentator of the Purana cannot be held responsible for the theory of Chandragupta's low origin.” (Pp.9-10)

Dr Mookerji makes a solemn invocation which should serve as a solace to one in search of sober history: “Heavens save us from commentators who supplement texts by facts of their own creation!” Well, this is precisely my watchword for my humble effort to trace the evolution of the Sramanic religious tradition of Jainism and Buddhism and its impact on the Indic civilisation.

Further to press home the conclusion from Jain and Buddhist sources Dr.Mookerji notes that the “Mahavamsa (a Ceylonese Buddhist account of about 5th century AD) states that Chandragupta was ‘born of a family of Kshatriyas called Moriyas’
“(Moriyanam khattiyanam vamse jatam)”, and the Buddhist canonical work *Digha Nikaya* (II, 167) mentions the Kshatriya clan known as *Moriyas* of *Pippalivana*.

Even more monumental evidence, according to Dr. Mookerji, is derived from the Buddhist as well Jain tradition connecting the peacock, Mayura, with the Moriya or Maurya dynasty. Thus the Ashoka pillar at Nandangarh has been found to bear at its bottom below the surface of the ground the figure of a peacock while the same figure is repeated in several sculptures on the Great Stupa at Sanchi associated with Ashoka. Therefore Dr. Mookerji concludes that the “Buddhist and Jain tradition are at one in declaring for him (Chandragupta) a noble birth.” (Pp.14-15) Ibid.

As noted above the date of the foundation of the Maurya dynasty by Chandragupta has been determined to be about 322 B.C. on the basis of the known dates of the corresponding Greek persons or events such as the invasion of Alexander the Great which brought the Greeks in contact with India or such historical fragments as are left by Megasthenes’s *Ta Indika*. Chandragupta Maurya’s ascension to the throne and his historicity is an important landmark or even a high watermark in the vague almost non-existent ancient Indian historical accounts.

I am emphasising the significance of the Chandragupta Maurya dynasty in ancient India because Chandragupta’s role was also crucial in the spread of Jaina religious and cultural traditions in the whole of South India. In a remarkable monograph *Jainism or the Early Faith of Asoka with Illustrations of the Ancient Religions of the East From the Pantheon of the Indo-Scythians with A Notice on Bactrian Coins and Indian Dates* by Edward Thomas F.R.S., read at the Meeting of the *Royal Asiatic Society*, Feb. 26, 1877 (published Trubner & Co, London, 1877) E. Thomas states re; Jaina Sramanic faith of Chandragupta:

“The testimony of Megasthenes would likewise seem to imply that Chandragupta submitted to the devotional teachings of the *sermanas* as opposed to the doctrine of the Brahmins. The passage in *Strabo* runs as follows: ‘That Chandragupta was a member of the Jaina community is taken by their writers as a matter of course...The documentary evidence to this effect is of comparatively early date, and apparently absolved from all suspicion...the testimony of Megasthenes would likewise seem to imply that Chandragupta submitted to the devotional teachings of the Sramanas...’ ”

When Bhadrabahu,, the last of the *Sruta Kevali Jain Acharyas* met Chandragupta Maurya in his court at Pataliputra and foretold him of the impending terrible twelve years famine Chandragupta abdicated his throne and joined Bhadrabahu who, collecting a body of twelve thousand disciples, started a grand exodus towards the south. As stated by Ramaswami Ayyangar and B. Sheshgiri Rao in their *Studies in South Indian Jainism* (1922):

“That Chandragupta, the Mauryan king, was a Jain and attended on Bhadrabahu during his last days and died twelve years after, doing penance on Chandragiri hill may be taken as historical facts. Evidence in favour of such a theory is overwhelming...To discredit the *Sravana Belgola* inscriptions discovered by Lewis Rice is to discredit the whole tradition and the legendary account of the Jains enshrined in *Rajavalikathe*, and it is highly hazardous for the historian to go so far.”
ASHOKA & JAINISM

So much for the Mauryan Jain mission in the South India. To revert to the enduring Sramanic and Jain influence in the Chandragupta Maurya dynasty and especially on Ashoka I would refer once again to Edward Thomas in his quest for historically credible Jainism. I would begin by taking the case of Ashoka and Buddhism. Edward Thomas’s primary object in the above-mentioned paper is to determine the “relative precedence of Jainism and Buddhism, as tried and tested by the ultimate determination of ‘the ultimate faith of Asoka” Thomas too had misgivings and a certain “crucial difficulty “ of his argument that Asoka’s early faith was Jainism.

But as stated by him “all doubts and obscurities in that direction may now be dissipated before Asoka’s own words, which he or his advisers took such infinite pains to perpetuate –under the triple phases of his tardy religious progress-on rocks and big stones, and more elaborately prepared Indian Lats or monoliths.”

Thomas also quotes Abul Fazl, the “accomplished minister of Akbar… known to have been largely indebted to the Jaina priests and their carefully preserved chronicles” from his Ain-i-Akbari “three very important entries, exhibited in the original Persian version quoted below, which establish: (1) that Asoka himself first introduced ‘JAINISM’ into the kingdom of Kashmir; (2) that ‘Buddhism’ was dominant there during the reign of Jaloka (the son and successor of Asoka); and (3) that Brahmanism superseded Buddhism under Raja SACHINARA…” which evidence he takes “to infer that Asoka’s conversion to Buddhism occurred late in his life or reign” and that the “annals of Kashmir, on the other hand, more emphatically imply that either he did not seek to spread, or had not the chance or opportunity of propagating his new faith.”

Thomas also emphasizes that the “leading fact of Asoka’s introduction or recognition of the Jaina creed in Kashmir, above stated, does not however, rest upon the sole testimony of the Muhammadan author, but is freely acknowledged in the Brahmanical pages of the Rajatarangini.

R. THAPAR, AND HISTORICAL SOURCES IN PURANAS AND VEDAS

I think in any historical analysis it would be sobering to recall what E.H. Carr said about historical facts in his classic What Is History? Carr says that “the facts of history never come to us ‘pure’, since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form: they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder. It follows that when we take up a work of history, our first concern should be not with the facts it contains but the historian who wrote it.” And hence Carr supplements his first principle in the study of history that one should “study the historian” as a preliminary, by asking “Before you study the historian, study his historical and social environment.” (p.44) As put by Carr in a subtly ingenuous manner: “No document can tell us more than what the author of the document thought-what he thought had happened, what he thought ought to
happen or would happen, or perhaps only what he wanted others to think he thought, or even only what he himself thought he thought." (p.16)

Hence Carr notes “two important truths: first that you cannot fully understand or appreciate the work of the historian unless you have first grasped the standpoint from which he himself approached it; secondly, that the standpoint is itself rooted in a social and historical background. do not forget that, as Marx once said, the educator himself has to be educated; in modern jargon, the brain of the brain-washer has itself been washed. The historian before he begins to write history, is the product of history.” (Pp.39-40)

And in this context he points out how he was shocked to come across which he puts as “the only remark of Bertrand Russell I have ever seen which seemed to betray an acute sense of class: ‘There is on the whole, much less liberty in the world now than there was a hundred years ago.’” Commenting wryly on this Carr says “I have no measuring-rod for liberty, and do not how to balance the lesser liberty of few against the greater liberty of many.”

Another pitfall of historians so-called is noted by Carr and this occurs when he is rash enough to pass moral opinions on persons and events long past. “The more serious ambiguity”, says Carr, “arises over the question of moral judgments on public actions. Belief in the duty of the historian to pronounce moral judgments on his dramatis personae has a long pedigree.” (p.76) This is because as Carr quotes Prof.Knowles ‘the historian is not a judge, still less a hanging judge’, and goes on to quote Bernadette Croce that ‘Those who on the plea of narrating history, bustle about as judges, condemning here and giving absolution there, because they think this is the office of history…are generally recognised as devoid of historical sense.” (p.77)

If that is the case with available ‘historical records’ it would be most formidable to write history if there are no written records, or only myths, puranas and traditions of geneologies or pure scriptures passed on from generation to generation by mouth like the Vedic srutis.

It is in this context one can be critical of R.Thapar’s judgmental presumption as to why Chandragupta was led to embrace Jainism, and also appreciate her paradigmatic shift in historical interpretation notably in Interpreting Early India wherein a radically fresh framework of historical assumptions based on Itihasa-Purana as well as Vamsavalis and geneologies is resorted to albeit not as rigorously thoroughgoing as one would be led to expect because still there is a certain leaning towards the quintessentially Brahmanic-Vedic-Buddhistic assessment of certain crucial aspects of ancient Indian history.

E. H. CARR: WHAT IS HISTORY?

Yet it is a pleasant surprise to find Thapar quoting E.H. Carr as the classic “summation of the role of historian “ that “the function of historian is neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to master and understand it as the
key to understanding the of the present. Great history is written precisely jwhen the historian’s vision of the past is illuminated by the insight into the problems of the present...The function of the history is to promote a profounder understanding of both past and present through the inter-relation between the two.” (What is History? pp. 20,31,62) Perhaps Carr could be quoted for a fitting finale to such historiography when he observes:“Good historians I suspect, whether they think about it or not, have the future in their bones. Besides the question ‘Why?’ the historian also asks the question ‘Whither?’” (p.108 ibid.)

Notwithstanding her slip on Chandragupta Maurya Thapar acknowledges in Interpreting Early India that “the picture which emerges of the indigenous view of religion from historical sources of the early period is rather different. The prevalent religious groups referred to are two, Brahmanism and Sramanism with a clear distinction between them. They are organizationally separate, had different sets of beliefs and rituals and often disagreed on social norms. That this distinction was recognized is evident from the edicts of the Mauryan king Asoka, as well as by those who visited India and left accounts of what they had observed, as, for example, Megasthenes, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa Hsien and Hsuan Tsang, and Alberuni.”

Thapar also notes how Patanjali, the grammarian refers to the “hostility between Brahmanism and Sramanism as innate as is that between the snake and mongoose.” But in all the historical analysis of the demarcation of Sramanism from Brahmanism and how “a reaction to this last group (of the Buddhist and the Jain sangha) which motivated the increasing interest in an itihasa-purana. Both the Buddhists and the Jainas had shown a sense of centering their sects in avowedly historical events which imparted a certain historicity and added to the intellectual strength of their institutions” (p.63, 161), Thapar always clubs together in the Sramanic term Jainism and Buddhism-particularly with the term Buddhism always claiming precedence (!) and there is no suggestion as to how Sramanic culture or its anti-Brahmanic evolution began in pre-Buddhist ancient India co-eval with the evolution of Vedic Brahmanism as recorded in the Vedas, Puranas and the geneologies as well as the vamsavalis etc. which record Thapar takes to be the “one in which historical consciousness is embedded: myth, epic and geneology…” (p.138 ibid)

Again the same, perhaps unwitting historicist preference for Buddhist-cum-Jain interpretation of certain key concepts of the Sramanic culture as distinctly anti-Brahmanic, or anti-Vedic such as ahimsa is evident in Thapar’s criticism of the Hindu hegemonic encroachment of the essentially Sramanic values of non-violence and tolerance. That “ahimsa as an absolute value is characteristic of certain Sramanic sects and less so of Brahmanism. The notion appears in the Upanishads but it was the Buddhists and the Jains (emphasis supplied) who first made it foundational to their teaching. That Brahmanism and Sramanism were recognized as distinct after the period of the Upanishads further underlines the significance of ahimsa to Sramanic thinking.” (p.72, ibid) As is clear there is no attempt here to trace the conceptual evolution of ahimsa as a characteristic of the Sramanic-Jain culture in pre-Buddhist India as noted by eminent Indologists as will be discussed later in this paper.
However, Thapar makes a pertinent observation regarding the fundamental differences between Brahmanic and Sramanic systems and makes a historically welcome suggestion that “It might in fact be a worthwhile exercise to reconstruct Brahmanism from the reference to it in Sramanic and other non-Brahmanical sources.” (p.63, Ibid) This is a welcome opportunity to me because the basic theme which I am concerned to develop in my paper is the Religions in the Indic Civilisation particularly on the topic of historical and contemporary studies: the Rise, Decline and Renewals of Shramanic Religious Traditions Within Indic Civilisation with particular reference to the evolution of Jain Sramanic culture and its impact on the Indic civilization.

Borrowing the historically challenging clue provided by Thapar I would rephrase her suggestion regarding the reconstruction of Brahmanism with reference to Sramanic and other non-Brahmanic sources I would propose the theme of my paper as a reconstruction of Sramanic Jain culture from references to it in Vedic, Puranic as well as non-Brahmanical sources. But before doing that it would be necessary to refer and discuss certain academic questions raised by Michael Witzel in his paper On Indian Historical Writing presented to the Journal of the Japanese Association for South Asian Studies 2, 1990, 1-57.

PROF. M. WITZEL & VEDIC AND ITIHASA-PURANA TRADITION

Prof.Witzel begins by questioning the generally held view such as by Pargiter and even ‘nationalistic’ historians like R.C. Majumdar that “India has no sense of history” and that, “indigenous historical writing has been almost completely absent until fairly recent times” except in Rajatarangini (History of Kashmir) and summarily rejects these contentions as “somewhat rash statements”.

Witzel is sceptical of the legendary history “composed by Brahmins” (Purana) as “mutually contradictory” and contends that such sources have been used of historians such as R. Thapar representing “a patchwork of data gleaned from other texts, such as the Vedas and the Epics (Ramayana & Mahabharata). Nevertheless, they have been used uncritically, e.g. by some historians, suchas R.Thapar, and by modern archaeologists as materials to establish their identifications of particular pre-historic cultures.” Then considering the “idea of geneological history” because the “puranas are based on a framework of geneological nature” Witzel goes on to question the view held by Pargiter in his Ancient Indian Historical Tradition maintaining that the superiority of the "ksatriya tradition" (preserved, according to him, more or less, in the Mahabharata and Ramayana) above the Vedic evidence and has failed to recognize that much of the genealogies of the Puranas were extracted from the Vedas. Consequently, he maintains that the “Puranic accounts are proved by whatever scraps of evidence we can find in the various Vedic texts.”

In accusing Pargiter summarily Witzel himself appears to be guilty of the rashness because Pargiter, who was a Judge by profession, is quite careful in qualifying his dependence on the Puranic and geneological evidence as will be clear from his
following observation in the Chapter on ‘Arguments from Vedic Literature’ in his
**Ancient Indian Historical Tradition**:

“These considerations show that the geneologies have strong claims to acceptance. This does not mean that they are complete and altogether accurate, because no human testimony is free from defects and errors; and it has been shown in the preceding pages, and more will appear in the following pages, that there are defects, gaps and errors in them, especially when taken singly, but many of these blemishes can be corrected by collating the various texts, and others can be remedied by statements found elsewhere. Nevertheless it is quite clear that they are genuine accounts and are substantially trustworthy. They give us history as handed down in tradition by men whose business it was to preserve the past; and they are far superior to historical statements in the Vedic literature, composed by brahmans who lacked the historical sense and were little concerned with mundane affairs.” (p.125)

Witzel, while he makes a summary statement that “virtually no such geneology, in India or elsewhere, is free from tinkering, interpolation”, still he is prepared to to give credence to R.Thapar’s opinion that although there are some problems for the acceptability of lineage history and that the geneologies have been “improved” or tampered with “the idea of geneology is important.”

Yet with all such reservations and his obsessive faith in the Vedic records which Witzel concedes “that the historical material in the **Rigveda** does not consist of clear narrations, but of historical allusions: there is no ‘logical’ development describing successive actions or the story of a myth, only disjointed allusions to facts well known to contemporary listeners… Thus the myths, the ritual and certainly the contemporary history have to be pieced together from stray references, and these, too, were addressed to people who knew the events well.”

**RIGVEDIC TEXTS LIKE TAPE RECORDED RECITATION?**

It also needs to be noted that Witzel’s faith in the Rigvedic texts and their oral transmission through the ages is more Brahmanic than perhaps the Brahmins themselves. According to him the evidence of the **Rigveda** is as solid as the evidence of actual inscriptions. As he puts it: “Right from the beginning, in Rigvedic times, elaborate steps were taken to insure the exact reproduction of the words of the ancient poets. As a result, the **Rigveda** still has the exact same wording in such distant regions as Kashmir, Kerala and Orissa, and even the long-extinct musical accents have been preserved. Vedic transmission is thus superior to that of the Hebrew or Greek Bible, or the Greek, Latin and Chinese classics. *We can actually regard present-day Rgveda-recitation as a tape recording of what was first composed and recited some 3000 years ago.* In addition, unlike the constantly reformulated **Epics** and **Puranas**, the Vedic texts contain contemporary materials. *They can serve as snapshots of the political and cultural situation of the particular period and area in which they were composed… As they are contemporary, and faithfully preserved, these texts are equivalent to inscriptions.*

© Bal Patil: The Rise, Decline And Renewals Of Sramanic Religious Traditions Within Indic Civilisation 13
And further “It is well known that much of historical information in the Vedic texts is contemporaneous and that these text have been unaltered for more than 2000 years (and have, in fact, transmitted word by word, including the otherwise long lost tonal accents of early Sanskrit) while bardic tradition, such as finally recorded in the Mahabharata and the Puranas was prone to constant re-creation by the reciting poet/bard….” Clearly Witzel is more loyal than the king himself!

He is so carried away by his enthusiasm that he is not prepared to give any credence even to the ancient inscriptions which he terms as “another, and indeed the major source for Indian history used since the mid of the last century, have been the thousands of inscriptions on rocks and copper plates. They are so well known that I merely mention the category here. To them, of course, applies the factor, mentioned above, of hyperbole as well. In the praçastis, constituting the first, non-technical parts of inscriptions, the poets tried to praise the local king “to the heavens”.

While Witzel has such unshakeable faith in the perpetually pristine quality of the Rigvedic text he makes an about-turn when responding to an allegation than “the Indians were not interested in historical changes in their language”. He states quite confidently that “This again, is a rather limited view, instigated by the Brahmanical interest in the unchangeability (aksara) of Sanskrit. Sanskrit as the sacred language, the language of the gods, simply “cannot” change. The gods speak the same Sanskrit as we indeed should, nowadays, instead of Prakrit or Hindi. Panini, when using chandas, thus refers to the sacred language, not to the laukika…” One wonders whether he took a pause to consider whether the same instigation in the “Brahmanical interest in the unchangeability (aksara) of Sanskrit” could not be operative in his infallibility of the original Vedic texts. Surely Brahmanic interest given its perennial purity as ordained by the Vedas cannot be one in Vedas and other in Puranas and the construction of geneologies.

It must be pointed out that even in Rajatarangini Witzel has misgivings about the impartiality of the poet because he has devoted a major portion to the ruling monarch. Nor are the poetic or Buddhist works like Dipavamsa, Mahavamsa and Gopalarajvamsaval likely to be exceptions on the historical criteria Witzel is keen to apply to the Itihasa-Purana tradition and thus to disqualify them as historical sources. It is also not borne out by the historical records that a continuous historical tradition was disrupted because of Muslim domination “the possibility for a continuous historical tradition has been disrupted by intervening Muslim periods of government. The picture of a tradition of historical writing as found only at the rims of the subcontinent therefore may be misleading. It is precisely these areas that have (with the exception of Kashmir) been spared disruptions by Muslim domination.”

FALSITY OF WITZEL’S VEDIC HISTORIOGRAPHY

Such presumptions clearly not only betray a historically embarrassing lacuna exhibiting pre-conceived neo-Brahmanic Hindutva notions in Witzel’s Vedic scholarship which is
not found even in a so-called ‘nationalistic’ historian like R.C. Majumdar who did not hesitate to discover in Shankaracharya’s advaita-monotheism - Islamic influence which was prevalent on the Malabar coast in 8th century A.D. According to R.C. Majumdar "Sankara’s monism was based upon the Islamic creed which he had learnt from the fore-fathers of the Moplahs, Navayats and Labbes of South India." (p.228, Readings in Political History of India, (B.R. Publishing, Delhi, 1976)

“What we find of a historical nature in the literature of the country before the arrival of the Mahomedans comes to very little." R.G. Bhandarkar, P.i-ii (Early History of the Dekkan Down to the Mahomedan Conquest, 2nd Ed. 1983)"

The utter falsity of Witzel’s hypothesis of Muslim disruption of “continuous historical tradition” in India can be shown by taking the example of Abul Fazl’s Ain-e-Akbari which narrates how Asoka sent an ambassador to Kashmir to establish Jainism there. Coming to mediaeval Muslim rule Dr. Tara Chand notes not only the salutary Muslim influence on Hindi language as evident in its vocabulary, grammar, metaphor, prosody and style, but as pointed out by him “What is true of Hindi is true of Marathi, Bengali and more so of Panjabi and Sindhi” and that “In Bengal we find that Bengal first developed as an independent literary medium not under Hindu but under Muslim rule. The Hindu courts of Bengal gave no encouragement to their native tongue. Critical opinion holds that if Hindu kings had continued to enjoy independence, Bengali would scarcely have received royal patronage.” (The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, I, p.212)

With all his abiding reliance on the Rigvedic sources Witzel has misgivings because historical material in the Rigveda does not consist of clear narrations, but of historical allusions: “there is no ‘logical’ development describing successive actions or the story of a myth, only disjointed allusions to facts well known to contemporary listeners… Thus the myths, the ritual and certainly the contemporary history have to be pieced together from stray references, and these, too, were addressed to people who knew the events well.” And further that “there has been a constant misuse of Vedic sources and some historical and pseudo-historical materials, not only by nationalist politicians, but also by archaeologists and historians. Most serious is the acceptance of much later materials as authoritative sources for the Vedic period.” In this he includes “not only to the Puranas and Epics, but also to the Vedic literature which constitutes the “bulk of the post-Rigvedic texts”, since “the later Vedic texts contain stanzas and prose… of a later period.”

Yet undeterred by his own Vedic historiographical model Witzel firmly founded on his basic principle that “Clearly, Rigvedic history will have to be reconstructed principally from the Rigveda itself.”, and as noted in a detailed criticism of Witzel’s Vedic historical hypothesis by Shrikant G. Talgeri in his The Rigveda A Historical Analysis Aditya Prakashan, 1997 Delhi) : “But, after failing miserably in his efforts to produce any direct evidence from the Rigveda, Witzel goes scouring for evidence in later and later texts and finally claims to have struck gold in the BaudhAyana Srauta Sutra: “there is the following direct statement contained in the (admittedly much later) BSS, 18.44:397.9 sqq which has once again been over-looked, not having been translated yet: ‘Ayu went eastwards. His (people) are the Kuru-PañcAla and the KASI-Videha. This is the Ayava (migration). (His other people) stayed at home in the West.
His people are the GAndhArI, ParSu and AraTTa. This is the AmAvasava (group).” (Emphasis supplied)

Therefore Talageri concludes: “This incredible assertion represents the most blatant violation of the most basic principle laid down by Witzel himself: ‘there has been a constant misuse of Vedic sources and some historical and pseudo-historical materials, not only by nationalist politicians, but also by archaeologists, and historians.’ Most serious is the acceptance of much later materials as authoritative sources for the Vedic period.” because Witzel, on the one hand, strongly indicts “the acceptance of much later materials as authoritative sources for the Vedic period”, and, on the other, advocates the evidence of an ‘admittedly much later’ text in overriding that of all the previous texts, including the Rigveda itself!” (Emphasis supplied)

Talgeri who concedes that “Witzel’s basic approach to the Rigveda closely parallels our own and that he recognizes the unique importance of the Rigveda: apart from archaeology, our principal source for the early period must be the Rigveda…”, is constrained to indict Witzel stating that he “violates every single norm and basic principle, set up by himself, in the analysis of the Rigveda. And yet, he manages to get nowhere. The Rigveda, basically, refuses to yield to his cajoling.”

That Witzel’s Rigvedic historiography is fraught with internal contradictions is clear because he himself cannot follow the logic of his own parameters of historical research nor his hypothetical reliance on a few writings such as the Nepalese Gopalarajavamsavali, Kalhana’s Rajatarangini, and Ceylonese Buddhist chronicles of 4th and 5th century A.D. Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa (free from Muslim dynastic disruption) is convincing as shown above.

PROF. H. BECHERT ON MAHAVAMSA

Wetzel has mentioned that H. Bechert’s article on the Beginnings of Indian Historical Writing was not available to him. However I have come across a rejoinder by Prof. H. Bechert as Response to Venerable Professor Dhammavihari’s “Sri Lankan Chronicle Data” published in Vol.10, 2003 of Journal of Buddhist Studies. Commenting on Mahavamsa Prof. Bechert says “The later classical chronicle of ancient Sri Lanka, viz, the Mahavamsa, is a rather elaborated work. It is necessary to analyze its composition in order to evaluate its contents. It is a combination of (1) a Buddhist work that was written down for the edification of its readers, (2) a work of artificial poetry (kavya) in the Indian tradition, and (3) a work of national Sinhala historiography written and handed down by Buddhist monks, incorporating historical facts as well as mythical elements.”

“Thus the Mahavamsa represents in these chapters - and partly in other chapters as well - a fourth element, viz, it incorporates the national epic of the Sinhala people which may be compared with the Iliad of the ancient Greeks, the Nibelung epic of mediaeval Germany, etc. All these poems combine historical reflections with mythology in one text.

© Bal Patil: The Rise, Decline And Renewals Of Sramanic Religious Traditions Within Indic Civilisation
“We must not understand these chapters of the Mahavamsa as historical records in the modern sense of the word, particularly because this work was composed by the end of the 5th century C.E., i.e. more than 600 years after Dutthagamani who ruled from 161-137 B.C.E.

Bechert also notes that “Original Buddhism was rightly characterized by Max Weber in his famous work on the sociology of religion as: "a quite specific, refined soteriology for intellectuals... a specifically unpolitical and antipolitical class religion, or, more accurately, a religious learned teaching of an itinerant, intellectually schooled mendicant order of monks.

“It is necessary to understand that original Buddhism was not conceived as a religion of the masses, but early Buddhists were one religious community amongst a considerable number of religious movements including the followers of Vedic tradition, Ajivikas, Jains etc.”

JAINISM IN CEYLON

It would be relevant here to give a short account of the presence of Jainism in Ceylon centuries before Buddhism. Dr.Bhagchandra Jain has given authoritative evidence of Jainism in Ceylon in his Jainism in Buddhist Literature, with a Foreward by Dr.Hira Lal Jain which is his Thesis approved for the degree of Ph. D. of the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon: “Jainism crossed India from south in about the eighth century B.C. if not earlier, and became one of the important religions of Ceylon, which was known in those days by the name of Lanka Ratnadvipa or Simhala. (Mahavamsa, 10. 53-59 (tran).Mahavamsa, pp. 67...ibid. xxxiii. 43-44...ibid, xxxiii. 79.)”

As recounted by Dr.Bhagchandra Jain: “The Mahavamsa, the best-known and most authoritative Ceylonese Chronicle in Pali verse, refers to the existence of Jainism in Ceylon even before the arrival of Buddhism.... The five hundred families of heretical beliefs and the construction of Viharas to the Niganthas on behalf of the king of Lanka, Pandukabhaya, indicate clearly that Jainism was a living religion in Ceylon during his reign. Pandukabhaya’s period, deduced on the basis of the date of Buddha’s death as 544 B.C., is supposed to be 438-368 B. C. Jainism had apparently been introduced to Ceylon before Pandukabhaya. It could have been even before the arrival of Vijaya. One may wonder whether a name like Arittha (i.e. that of Devanampiya Tissa’s minister) had any connection with the Jaina Tirthankara of that name. Mahavamsa, ibid. 10. 65.

And further: “Jainism continued to exist even after the establishment of Buddhism in the Island. Its existence during the first century B.C. is recorded in the Mahavamsa. It is said that after a battle with the Tamila, king Vatthagamini Abhaya who was defeated fled out of the city. A Nigantha named Girij saw him and cried out loudly. “The great black Simhal is running away” (palayati mahakala Simhalo ti bhusam ravi). When the great king heard this he thought “If my wish be fulfilled I will build a Vihara here” (sidhe mama manarathe viharam karessam) ibid. xxxiii. 43-44. Hence, after a few years when he drove away the Damila Dathika from Anuradhapura and regained his throne,
he destroyed the Jaina monastery and built Abhayagiri Vihara in that place. *ibid*, xxxiii. 79.”

As further noted by Dr. Jain

“Jaina tradition takes the history of Jainism in Ceylon to Anera anterior to that reflected by the Ceylon Chronicles. According to Jaina records, the *Yaksas* and *Raksasas* who inhabited Ceylon prior to its Aryanization by Vijaya were not only human beings with a well developed civilization but also Jainas by faith (*See, Harivamsapurana; Pauma Cariu*, etc).

“The *Vividhatirthakalpa* mentions that at Trikutagiri in Kiskindha of Lanka there was magnificent Jain temple which was dedicated by Ravana, for the attainment of supernatural powers (*Kiskindhayam Lankayah patalankayam Trikutagrirau Srisantinathah*). To fulfil a desire of Mandodari, the principal queen, Ravana is said to have erected a Jaina statue out of jewels and this, it is said, was thrown into the sea when he was defeated by Ramachandra. Sankara, a king of Kalyananagara of Kannada, came to know about this statue and he recovered it from the bottom of sea with the help of *Padmavatidevi*, prominent Goddess of Jainas.” (*Vividhatirthakalpa*, pp. 93.)

Dr. Jain also has given a very important piece of evidence regarding the origin of famous image of *Parshwanath* at Shirpur (Maharashtra State, India) (known as *Antariksha Parshwanath*) which has been a matter of a century-old legal battle for the possession and management of the temple trust between the Digambara and Shwetambara. As noted by him: “It is said that the statue of Parsvanatha which is worshipped even now at Sripura Antariksa (India) was brought by Mali and Sumali Vidyadhara from Lanka. *Vividhatirthakalpa*, p.102 Another statue of Parsvanatha found in the caves of Terapura is also said to be from Lanka. *Brahatkathakosa of Harisena*, p. 200 The Karakanducariu describes how Amitavega, a Jaina king of Malaya, used to visit Lankadvipa as an intimate friend of Ravana who built a Jaina temple in Malaya. *Karkandu cariu*, pp. 44-69. This Malaya can be identified with Malaya, the name of the central hill country of Ceylon.”

Thus Dr. Jain concludes. “These references seem to point out that Jainism existed in Ceylon even before the birth of the *Nigantha nataputta*. *Vibhisana*, the younger brother of *Ravana*, who was a follower of Jainism according to Jain tradition and literature, is referred to as the tutelary *Yaksa* of Ceylon (*Vibhisanastamraparaniyam*) in the *Mahamayuri*, a magical text of Northern Buddhists which was translated into Chinese in the fourth century A. D. *Vibhisana* is still worshipped at Kelaniya and is supposed to be one of the four guardian deities of the Island.

“Although the supremacy which Buddhism achieved in Ceylon could have led to the suppression of Jainism and incidents similar to the destruction of Giri’s monastery by Vatta-Gamini Abhaya could have occurred at different times, Jainism did not disappear from Ceylon till at least after the eighth century. About the tenth century A. D. (*Mahamayuri, ed. by Sylviam Levi, JA. 1915, pp.40; cf. The Society of the Ramayana, p. 68*) *Muni Yasahkirti* was requested by the then king of Ceylon to improve the state of Jainism in the island. (*Jaina Silalekha Sangraha, p. 133*)”

Therefore Dr. Jain concludes “This shows that Jainism not only was in existence at
that time in Ceylon, but it also enjoyed the patronage of Sinhala kings of Ceylon.”

As regards the Jaina monuments in Ceylon, Dr. Jain further quotes the view of S. Parnavitana, an authoritative scholar on Ceylon Archaeology, as relevant:

“No remains of any Jaina monuments have ever been found in Ceylon. The earliest Stupas and Viharas of Jainism did not differ from those of Buddhism so much so, that without the evidence of inscriptions or of iconography it would be extremely difficult to differentiate between the two. Jain iconography had not yet developed in the times that we are dealing with. In the period during which this religion was prevalent in Ceylon, there were no monuments built of durable materials. Moreover, when Jainism disappeared, their places of worship must have been appropriated by the Buddhists as it happened with regard to the monastery of Giri, and any traces of the earlier faith would certainly have been obliterated in this way. Some of the earliest unidentified stupas of small dimensions may, however, be Jaina in origination.” Pre-Buddhist Religious Beliefs, JRAS. (Ceylon), Vol. xxxi, No. 82, 1929, p. 325,

I have have extensively quoted the Ceylonese-Buddhist sources as noted by Dr.Bhagchandra Jain because this evidence has a definite credibility as belonging to Itihasa-Purana tradition and which has also a pertinent relevance to the refutation of the infallibility of the Rigvedic sources as argued by Witzel I am endeavouring to present

BACK TO WITZEL’S VEDIC HISTORIOGRAPHY

To revert to Witzel: However, Witzel notes that “Fortunately, the Jainas and Buddhists preserved their texts much better. The oldest in Indian mss. of the subcontinent, outside of Nepal, are those of the Jaina Bhandars of Gujarat and Rajasthan. At Jaisalmer, for example, as my friend A. Wezler told me (1974), the mss. are kept in a cave under the temple in large steel cases that must have been welded inside the cave as they are bigger than the small entrance of the room.”

Finally Witzel concludes: “In short, the lack of historical writings and the alleged lack of historical sense is due, in large measure, more to the accidents of medieval history than to the religious and philosophical tenets of Indian civilization”. It would be difficult to make any logically intelligible sense out of this sweeping observation which takes in its purview the entire field of the “the religious and philosophical tenets of Indian civilization”. It opens a floodgate of the entire course of Indian history. Nor has he taken the trouble either to specify what those “religious and philosophical tenets of Indian civilization” or “accidents of medieval history” are, except perhaps the disruptions in large parts of the Indian sub-continent allegedly caused by the Muslim incursions in the smooth course of Indian genealogical narrations which hypothesis, in any case, is simply indefensible as a valid historiographical parameter.

One suspects that his failure to sustain his Rigvedic historiographical model with its built-in contradiction to its logically and historically credible conclusion has somehow
led Witzel to make such flagrantly irrelevant remark which is totally out of character. In any case Witzel is back to square one of Indian historiography properly speaking. His own foregoing analysis shows that he is himself in two minds about it. If *Itihasa-Purana* have been tampered with by Brahmanical bias the same charge can be levelled against the *Rigvedic* sources transmitted in their pristine glory in three millennia.

Yet the question remains: If the Brahmanic ideology was so meticulous in maintaining unaffected, unaltered their original heritage how come it that certain glaring loopholes remained in the “historical allusions” which prove a stumbling block even to Witzel? Either Witzel is right or wrong: either way I shall have my ground cleared for the exploration of my theme of reconstructing the evolution of *Sramanic* culture right from the inception of the Vedas and even in pre-Vedic times and through the *Itihasa-Purana* religious tradition and the geneologies.

This is because of certain uncertainties in the Vedic lore as also in the *Puranic* and mythic chronicles: To recall Witzel once again "*Rigveda* does not consist of clear narrations, but of historical allusions: there is no ‘logical’ development describing successive actions or the story of a myth, only disjointed allusions to facts well known to contemporary listeners… Thus the myths, the ritual and certainly the contemporary history have to be pieced together from stray references, and these, too, were addressed to people who knew the events well.”

And if Witzel is wrong, as he certainly proves himself to be, I shall eat my cake and have it too because then *Epic* and *Puranic* sources too can come to my rescue to prove my Sramanic hypothesis. Whichever way one looks at the *Vedic, Epic* and *Puranic* ancient chronicles, in lieu of the proper history in the Western sense, if the balance of evidence is in favour of the *Sramanic* evolution, as I hope to present I can have the satisfaction, at least, of having argued my case in good faith.

**Sramanic Jain Religion**

What is most significant is that *Jainism* has succeeded in its history of Three Thousand Years in preserving down to the present its separate religions identity. It is a unique religions system having its own philosophy, mythology, ethics, and rituals. It has its own deities, gurus and scriptures, its own temples, places of worship and pilgrimage, and its own festivals.

The designation ‘Jain” is applied to approximately four million members of India’s most ancient *sramana* or non-*Vedic* religion traditions. It is really difficult, nay, impossible to fix a particular date for the origin of *Jainism*. To the *Jainas*, *Jainism* has been revealed again and again in the eternity of time by innumerable *Tirthamkars*.

Of the present age, the first *Tirthamkars* was *Rishabha* and the last two were *Parsvanatha* and *Mahavira*. *Mahavira* is the twenty fourth *Tirthamkar* in the present
half of the Avasarpini – descending or regressive-half of the Jain cosmic time cycle. According to Jain cosmological tradition ther will be twenty four Jinas or Tirthamkars in each half-cycle.

These cosmic half-cycles of the Jain universe are two, the Avasarpini- descending – and the Utsarpini- ascending each with six sub-divisions. Together these two half – cycles constitute a cosmic time unit known as Kalpa. The Utsarpini half-cycle of time marks a period of gradual evolution and the Avasarpini that of the gradual devolution or decline in human innocence and happiness, bodily strength and stature , span of life and the length of the age itself.

Conditions in the First , Second and Third ages in each time circle are known as those of a Bhogabhumi- happy,enjoyment based,entirely dependent on nature.

Life in the other three ages is described as being that of a Karmabhumi based on individual and collective effort. The Fourth age of either cycle is supposed to be the best from the point of view of human civilization and culture. It is this age that produces a numbers of Tirthamkars and other great personages.

The Jain universe is without a beginning or an end, being everlasting and eternal. The Utsarpini and Avasarpini follow directly upon one another, pendulum like, in unbroken succession. These half-cycles each last for a vast but finite number of years. The life expectancy of human beings dwelling in the Karma-bhumis increases with each stage of the Utsarpini, and correspondingly decreases with each stage of Avasarpini.

RISHABHA, 1ST TIRTHAMKAR : HIS ANTIQUITY

The first Tirthamkar of the Avasarpini time cycle was Rishabha. Rishabha is said to be the harbinger of human civilization. He inaugurated the Karmabhumi (age of action) founded the social order, family system, institutions of marriage, of law and order and justice and of state and government; taught to mankind the cultivation of land, different arts and crafts, reading, writing and arithmetic and built villages, towns and cities. In short, Rishabha pioneered the framework for human civilization and culture.

Rishabhadeva or Rishabhanatha is also known as Iksvaku, Swayambhu and Mahadev. He had two daughters and a hundred sons. After having renounced worldly possession he took to Sramanic asceticism and did severe penance. He attained Kaivalya jnana (Supreme enlightenment) and became an Arhat or Jina at what is a now Prayaga (Allahabad).

Rishabha’s antiquity may be guessed from the historical and archaeological sources, The yogic, Sramanic and anti-Vedic and Pre-Aryan aspects of the Jain tradition can be traced to Indus Valley civilization which flourished six to eight thousand years ago. Nude standing images found in the Indus Valley ruins bear a striking
resemblance to the oldest Jain sculpture. There may be a link in the bullseals of Indus and the bull –insignia-lancchana congizant –sign, characteristic of Rishabhanatha.

Prof. Ram Prasad Chanda, who supervised Indus Valley excavations, states in his article Moemenjo-Daro (Sindh, Five Thousand years ago) in Modern Review August, 1932. "Not only the seated deities on some of the Indus seals are in Yoga posture and bear witness to the prevalence of Yoga in the Indus Valley in that remote age, the standing deities on the seals also show Kayotsarga (abandonment of the body, a standing or sitting posture of meditation) of Yoga. The Kayotsarga posture is peculiarly Jain. It is a posture not of sitting but of standing , In the Adi Purana Book XV III, Kayotsarga posture is described in connection with the penance of Rishabha or Vrashabha,"

In his Indus Civilization and Hindu Culture, the eminent scholar, P. R. Deshmukh says:"The first Jain Tirthamkar belonged to Indus civilization. The Indus Valley deities were nude. The Jains sustained that culture and worshipped nude Tirthamkars".

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan affirms that “The Bhagavata Purana endorses the view that Rishabha was the founder of Jainism. There is evidence to show that so far back as the first century B.C. there were people who were worshipping Rishabhadeva, the first Tirthamkar. There is no doubt that Jainism prevailed even before Vardhamana Mahavira, or Parsvanatha. The Yajurveda mentions the names of three Tirthamkars-Rishabha. Ajitnatha and Aristanemi”(Indian Philosophy, P.287)

Another scholar P.C.Roy Choudhury states in his Jainism in Bihar; "Not much research is possible in the pre-historical age as to the role Bihar played in the story of Jainism. But some of the ancient Jain scriptures mention that Jainism had been preached in Magadha (Bihar) by Lord Rishabha at the end of stone age and the beginning of the agricultural age. At the remote period Magadha was separated from the rest of India by Ganga-sagar. The ancient history of Nepal bears this out".(P.7)

As the Vedas are believed to have been composed in c.1500 B.C., and as the Rigveda is considered to be the oldest Vedic scripture, one can fairly maintain that Jainism was prevalent in 1500 B.C. So much so that the Hindu text Bhagavata Purana included Rishabha as the amsavatara (minor incarnation of Vishnu).

ASCETICISM AND RISHABHA’S SRAMANCA CULTURE

The yogic posture, kayotsarga-sitting or standing, adopted by Jain Tirthamkar shows the most fundamental feature of Jain path of liberation and its ancient origin of ascetic practice. As R.D.Ranade and S.K.Belvalkar state; "There is evidence to suppose that the philosophical speculations of the Upanishadic period were very largely influenced by a set of wandering ascetics and teachers following their own
quaint and mystic practices. As already explained the *Upanishadic* impulse to give up all worldly ties and take to a life of homeless wanderings can be satisfactorily explained only by postulating an extraneous influence of this nature…”(P.400)

As M. N. Deshpande, a former *Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India*, states, “This extract helps in satisfactorily understanding the distinctive nature and origin of Jain asceticism which was distinct from Brahmanic asceticism. This path of the *sramanas* inculcates complete *nivratti* (turning away completely from worldly life) and *pravrajya* (renunciation), enjoining total *anagaratva* (the state of homelessness) together with the vow of non-willing, truthfulness, non-stealing and celibacy. The concept of “*Trigupti* or the total abstinence by mind (manas), body (kaya) and speech (vacha), further tends to sharpen the ascetic ideal to a point that casting one’s body by prolonged fast (sallekhana) is recommended and no other religious order. Among other distinctive practices of the Jain faith mention may be made of *alochatna* or confession of sin’s and the daily ceremony of *pratikramana* or expiation of sins”(Pp.20-21, *The Background and Tradition*, Ch-2 in *The Jain Art and Architecture*, Bharatiya Jnanapitha, Vol.1, 1974)

M.N.Deshpande also states emphatically that “One thing is quite certain, that asceticism in India has a great antiquity and Jain ascetic practices as exemplified by Rishabhadeva were strikingly different from the Brahmanical tradition “(P.19, ibid)

Jain Acharya Tulsi in his *Pre-Vedic Existence of Sramanic Culture* find's confirmation in the four *Puranas* of his opinion that the *Asuras*, were not only non- *Vedic* i.e.non-Aryan people, but they were the priests of the Jain religion. He also considers that the pose of *Yogasana*, in which several human figures are drawn on the seals of *Indus Valley*, was widely known in pre-Aryan India and was borrowed much later by the Hindu ascetics.

The French scholar Louis Renou, in his 1953 lectures on the religions of India observed that “The Jain movement presents evidence that it is of great interest both for the historical and comparative study of religion in general. Based on profoundly Indian elements, it is at the same time a highly original creation. Containing very ancient material, more ancient than that of Buddhism and yet highly refined and elaborated.”

**YOGA AND JAINISM**

As noted by Dr.Natalya Guseva, Russian scholar in her book *Jainism* (1971)Translation by Y.S.Redkar, if one juxtaposes the yogic posture on *Indus* seals “with the fact that the most ancient philosophical work of the Jains, the “*Book of Wisdom of Arahata*s” ascribed to Rishabha himself was also called ‘*Yogi*’(Benjamin Rowland. *The Art and Architecture of India*, Plate 81a), and also that this posture is the classical echelon of the posture of *Tirthamkar* for 25 centuries (and possibly much longer). Then all this brings back to our minds the thought that there is possibly ancient connection between Jainism and the *Indus* civilization. It is possible that the
teaching of Yoga and this posture connected with it penetrated in the faiths of later period and Buddha and many Hindu gods were portrayed in this posture."(P.91-92)

Meditation and cultivation of equanimous renunciatory spirit is the soul of Jain ascetic path. The practice of yoga consists in meditation (dhyana) and deep meditation (samadhi) leading to the ideal posture of the Jain ascetic practices as kayotsarga meaning abandonment of body which in other words means a meditative realisation of liberation or the nirvikalpa samadhi as the highest stage of yogic practices. as a matter of fact samadhi is the last step in the eightfold path as explained by Patanjali in Yoga Sutras.

These are yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. It is pertinent to remember that the very first step of yama means and includes the observance of five-fold self-restraint or discipline: ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), asteya (honesty), brahmacharya (continence) and aparigraha (freedom from greed and covetousness or non-possession). These are the sine qua non of the yogic practice according to Patanjali which is also the basic framework of Jain religious practices of the lay as well as ascetic community. It is important to bear in mind that ahimsa or non-violence is the first and strictest of sramanic Jainism which can be said to anticipate Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras which appeared later, where non-violence is the first of the yamas or restraints. This is the same ascetic monastic practice known in Jainism as samayika.

SWASTIKA SIGN AND TIME COMPUTATION

It is interesting to note that the Swastika signs seen in Mohen Jo Daro and Harappa culture are also common in the symbols of Jainism. Swastika is the symbolic sign of the seventh Tirthamkar, Suparsva and the middle part forms the sign of the 18th Tirthamkar Ara. This sign is always drawn in manuscripts, in miniatures and in the ornaments in Jain temples.

Swastika, basically means and denotes well-being. It forms one of the eight auspicious emblems found on the Ayagapatas. These eight auspicious signs are known as ashtamangalas, and Ayagapatas are among the earliest and most distinctive Jain sculpture.

The universe according to Jainism is uncreated by any divinity and is without a beginning and an end. The wheel of time incessantly revolves, pendulum like, in half-circles, one ascending and the other descending-Utsarpini and Avasarpini as noted above-and the unit of such cosmic time is known as a Kalpa.

A Kalpa, meaning an era, eon or age, is a unique concept in Jain metaphysics because time is considered to be a real substance along with four other substances, pudgala, dharma, adharma and akasa, and is known as kala which are called dravyas. The practical dimensions of time, like the second, minute, hour, day, month and year are mere deductions of the real substance that the Kala is.
Thus the concept of time, in an existential and realistic sense, and the system of counting is believed by many scholars arose before the Vedic culture. And the Jains are the pioneers also in starting the first modern Samvat (era) beginning with the Nirvana of Mahavira, known as Vir Nirvana Samvat which is the most ancient one. It is 605 years previous to Shaka, 479 years to Vikrama and 527 years to the Christian era.

RISHABHA AS EPOCH-MAKING JAIN SRAMANIC TIRTHAMKARA IN ITIHASA-PURANA

The idea of Rishabha, the first Jain Tirthamkar being an epoch-making man is deeprooted in the Jain religions tradition. It is well corroborated in Hindu puranas, Vedas and scriptures.

अहंता ये चित्तुरोद्धर्द्धश् वेदाययवन्ते ऋ. ५-३-८

“Just as the sun possesses rays the Arihant possesses the wealth of true knowledge.”

What is even more significant as established from these puranas is that this country has become well known as Bharata-Varsha after the eldest of the hundred sons of Rishabha, known as Bharata.

That this country is known as Bharata Varsha after Bharata is as much a matter of pride for Jainism as for the history of India. In the Vedic scriptural tradition this fact has been accepted unanimously. In Vishnu Purana (2,1,31), Vayu Purana (33,52), Linga Purana (1,47,23), Brahmanda Purana (14,5,62), Agni Purana (107,11-12), Skanda Purana, Khanda (37,57) and Markandaya Purana (50,41) it is clearly stated that this country is known as Bharata Varsha.

कैलासे पर्वते रम्ये, वृषभोवं जिनेश्वरः
चकार स्वाभाविका यः सर्वजः सर्वं: शिवः शिव पुराण

“Lord Rishabhdeo, Jineshwar, the omniscient and all-pervasive, incarnated himself on the magnificent Kailas (Ashtapad) mountain”

नाभिस्तु जनयेत पुत्रं, मरुदेव्या मनोहरम्
ऋषिमें क्षत्रियं श्रेष्ठं सर्वक्षत्रियस्य पूर्वजम् ॥२॥

“Nabhiraja and Marudevi gave birth to a son named Rishbhdeo, the greatest of Kshatriyas and the first ancestor of all Kshatriyas”

इस हि इक्ष्वाकुकुलवंशोद्धवेन नाभिसुतेन मरुदेवी
Mahadeo Rishabhdeo was born to Nabhiraja and Marudevi, in the Ikshvaku dynasty, assumed the ten kinds of Dharma, and after attaining kevalajnana (enlightenment) disseminated it.

The year known as Hima was known after Nabhi and Rishabha was born as the son of Nabhi’s queen Marudevi.

Marudevi was the sixth founder of the lineage and Nabhi was the seventh. Rishabha who possessed wide feet was born to Marudevi and Nabhi, the eighth founder of a lineage. He was a guide to heroic men. He was venerated by gods and demons. He expounded and taught the three great ethical principles. He became the Jina in the beginning of the yuga.

INDIA KNOWN AS BHARATVARSHA AFTER BHARATA SON OF RISHABHA
AND REJECTION OF THE THEORY THAT BHARATVARSHA IS KNOWN AFTER DUSHYANTA’S SON

As clarified authoritatively by the eminent Jain Scholar, Dr. Hiralal Jain in his Jainism Through the Ages (Translated from Hindi Yugon Yugon men Jaina Dharma, by Bal Patil, unpublished) the name Bharata is not that of Dushyant-Shakuntala’s son.

Dr. Hiralal Jain refutes the theory of some scholars that this country is known as Bharatvarsha after this Bharata, on the basis of Agni,Vayu and Brahma Puranas.
As stated by Dr. Hiralal Jain; “But they have ignored other mentions in the same Puranas and elsewhere about Rishabha’s son Bharata….For this opinion the necessary testimonials have not been adduced. Probably these cannot be anything else than the Slokas quoted above. But the fact that in the same puranas it is clearly mentioned elsewhere that the name Bharatvarsha was given by Rishabha’s son Bharat, and that the word “Desha” or “Varsha” does not occur with Dushyanta’s son Bharata, does not appear to have been considered carefully by these scholars before asserting their opinion”

In all the scriptures where the genealogy of svayambhuva muni has been given it is clearly said that this country is known as Bharatavarsha after Rishabha’s son Bharat. After this first manvantrara there followed the seventh manvantara known vaivaswat which saw the rise of the puru dynasty. Dushanta, a king of puru dynasty married Shankuntala who was the daughter of Vishwamitra rishi and the heavenly nymph Menaka and Bharata was the name of their son. The propriety of this name is explained in the scriptures by the fact that when Dushyanta declined to accept Shankuntala and his son as his own there was a heavenly voice which proclaimed that what Shankuntala said was right and that he alone was her husband and the father of the boy and therefore he should maintain them. On the strength of the words “bharata tvam” his name was determined as Bharata. (Vishnu purana 4, 19, 12-13) this Bharata, son of Shankuntala has been mentioned in various scriptures and Mahabharata. Some scholars are of the opinion that this country is known as bhatarvarsha only after this bharata on the basis of the words “yasya nam tu bharata” or “yasya namna tu bharatam” occurring in the last stanza of the slokas in agni, vayu and brahma puranas. But they have ignored other mentions in the same puranas and elsewhere about rishabhaha’s son bharat. For example Dr. Pusalkar says:- “according to some accounts Bharata gave his name to our country which was henceforth called Bharatvarsha.” (History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol i The Vedic Age, p.292).

For this opinion the necessary testimonies have not been adduced. Probably these cannot be anything else than the slokas quoted above, but the fact that in the same puranas it is clearly mentioned elsewhere (cf:

ऋषभो मरुदेवाश्रयं ऋषभात् भरतो भवेत्
भरताद् भरतं वर्षः, भरताद् समसतित्वभूतः
अय्य पुराण १५०।

That is “Rishabha was born to Marudevi, Bharat was born to Rishabh, Bharatvarsha (India) arose from Bharat, and Sumati arose from Bharat.”

Also,

तत्त्वं भरतं वर्षमेवत्रेकेषैष्टे
भरताय यतः पित्रा दत्ते प्रतिष्ठिता वनम् विश्नु पुराण, २.८३२

“This country is known as Bharatavarsha since the times the father entrusted the

© Bal Patil: The Rise, Decline And Renewals Of Sramanic Religious Traditions Within Indic Civilisation
kingdom to the son Bharata and he himself went to the forest for ascetic practices”.

That the name bharatvarsha was given by Rishabha’s son Bharata, and that the word ‘desha’ or ‘varsha’ does not occur with Dushyanta’s son Bharata does not appear to have been considered carefully by these scholars before asserting their opinion, and for this the Mahabharata mention is especially useful. It is clearly said therein that the dynasty of Bharata was named as “Bharata” because of this fame and his descendents and ancestors of the puru dynasty also came to be known as “Bharat.” It is clear from this that wherever in the above contexts the word “bhartam” occurs it signifies puru dynasty and where it is “Bharatavarsh” it should confirmed by several mentions in Maharabharata, Gita and Puranas, because here the word “Bharat” has been used for the kings of puru dynasty such as Kaurav-Pandav, but it is never used for the kings of Ikshavaku,yadu dynasties.

PRE-VEDIC AND PRE-AYAN ORIGINS OF JAINISM

The eminent philosopher and statesman, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan is led to make the observation; “The first impulse of progress came when the Vedic Aryans came into contact with native tribes.” (The Hindu View of Life P.18). And this gives a definite clue to the existence of a religion resembling in its peculiar tenets to Jainism.

In the words of the eminent Prakrit Scholar and former General Editor with Dr. Hiralal Jain of the Moortidevi Granthmala of Bharatiya Jnanapitha, Dr. A.N. Upadhye “a great Magadham religion, indigenous in its essential traits, that must have flourished on the banks of Ganges in Eastern India long before the advent of the Aryan into Central India.” (quoted in Jainism and Buddhism by Dr. Jyoti Prasad Jain)

This observation is a clear indication of the pre-historic origins of Jainism. But as the genesis of the historical Jain tradition as it is practised today can be traced fairly clearly from the advent of Bhagwan Mahavir, the 24th Tirthamkar, it is not surprising that he is assumed to be the founder of Jainism which of course is not true.

It would be a mistake to suppose that Jainism originated in sixth centry B.C. with Mahavir. That the genesis of Jainism can be traced to deepest antiquity, and that it was a wholly indigenous and characteristically ethical and ethnical outcome of Indian environment and soil is now recognized by scholars both Indian and foreign.

JAINA ANTIQUITY IN VEDAS

A fairly convincing testimony of Jain antiquity comes from the most ancient literature of Vedas, and particularly Rigveda. The geneology, life and ascetic practices of Rishabhadeva, the first Jain Tirthamkar, are described in details in the first six adhyayas of the fifth skandha of Bhagvat Purana, Rishabhadeva is described as
the incarnation of Vishnu for the establishment of the religion of Vatarashana Munis.” Who were these Vatarashana Munis? As the following sukta in Rigveda says; “These Munis appeared pisanga (Pingalavarna) because they were indifferent to bathing, even though they were Maladhari, that is, unclean, due to sweat etc. They used to remain silent and looked wild owing to their meditative practices. By controlling breathing (by means of pranayama) they used to attain to godhood. The mortal world could only see their external bodies, not their inner soul”:

मूनवो वातरशना पिषांगा वसते मला
वातस्यानु श्वानियंत्य यहेत्रासो अविक्षत
उम्मतिदा मोनेयेन वारता जा तात्स्येमा वयम्
शरीरे दस्माकं यूंयं मतासो अभि पश्यध ऋग्वेदः, ९०,१३६, २

As explained by Dr. Hiralal Jain in Jainism Through the Ages (English Translation of Yugon Yugon men Jain Dharma by Bal Patil unpublished) “They are Munis and their ways of renunciation, silence and non-attachment distinguish them from the Rishi tradition. But a new word Vatarashana is connected with them. Vata means air and rashana means girdle or waistband. Therefore the meaning is air-cloth or one whose clothing is air, that is, naked.”

This is not a new term for the Jain tradition, and it occurs in Jina sahasranama – Thousand names for Jina- Thus:- “According to this Vatarashana, Digvasa, Nirgrantha and Nirambara, all these are synonymous terms and indicate a naked or nude state, So it can be concluded that at the time of the Rigvedic composition such munis were in existence who used to go about naked and who were revered as gods in the Rishi tradition and were eulogised and worshipped by Rishis who were like Indra, etc gods”.

**KSATRIYA AND VRATYA TRADITION IN JAINISM**

In Atharva Veda 15th chapter there is a description of Vratyas who are said to be unversed in Vedic tradition and ritual and belonging to Licchavi, Natha and Malla clans. As they were anti-Vedic they incurred the wrath of Vedic adherents. The etymological meaning of the word Vratya appears to have been derived from the laying down of the five vratas (vows) such as ahimsa etc. in Jainism. Those who do not ceremonially adopt vratas and yet observe them in religious faith may have been called Vratyas.

This is corroborated by Dr. Guseva, the Russian scholar in her ethnological monograph Jainism: “ Ancient Indian literature contains indications of the deep antiquity of the sources of Jainism and it also indicates that the Ksatriyas and ascetics from Vratyas i.e. non-Aryans played noticeable role in establishing non-vedic teachings...several authors contend that during the time when Vedas were taking shape, a number of elements which had subsequently entered in Jain religion were already known. This is confirmed by the fact that monks are called arahans or
arahatas in Rigveda and Atharva Veda. i.e. by the word which is invariably applied in Jain tradition for the designation of great teachers and preachers of this religion.” (P.23)

The non-Aryan origins of Jain culture are also confirmed by H.T. Colebrooke. He observes in his Observation on the Sect of Jains that the Greek Authors of the third Century B.C. divided all philosophers into two groups sramanas and brahmans so greatly differentiated that they considered them as belonging to different races. From this Dr.Guseva concludes: “Only one interpretation can be given to this, and that is, in those times followers of Jainism were, in the main, representatives of pre-Aryan population of the country. This means that there is basis to assert that the chief components of this non-Vedic religion were engendered by non- Aryan ethnical environment.” (P.24)

**AHIMSA AND VEDIC CULTURE**

That the concept of ahimsa in the Jain religious and ethical teaching was foreign to Vedic culture is shown by the eminent indologist Prof. W. Norman Brown in his Tagore Memorial Lectures, 1964-65 published in the book Man in the Universe. His observations deserve to be quoted in full;

“Though the Upanishadas contain the first literary references to the idea of rebirth and to the notion that one’s action (karma) determines the conditions of one’s future existences, and though they arrive at the point of recognizing that rebirth may occure not only in animal form but also in animal bodies, they tell us nothing about the precept of ahimsa. Yet that precept is later associated with the belief that a soul in its wandering may inhabit both kinds of forms. Ancient Brahmanical literature is conspicuously silent about ahimsa. The early Vedic texts do not even record the noun ahimsa—“non injury”, nor know the ethical meaning which the noun later designates. The first occurance of the word in Sanskrit literature is in the Upanishads, but there it occures only once (CU 3.17.4) and in a context that has nothing to do with transmigration. It is merely mentioned in a list of five virtues without any indication of its character. These virtues are austerity (tapas), almsgiving (dana), rectitude (arjava), ahimsa (non-injury) and truthfulness(satya vachana) It is evident that these are prized Virtues… but ahimsa stands here isolated and unexplained. Nor is an explanation of ahimsa deducible from other parts of Vedic literature. The ethical concept it embodies was entirely foreign to the thinking of the early Vedic Aryans, who recognized no kinship between human and animal creation, but rather ate meat and offered animals in the sacrifice to gods.” (Pp.53-54)

Therefore Prof. Brown concludes; “The double doctrine of ahimsa and vegetarianism has never had full and unchallenged acceptance and practice among Hindus, and should not be considered to have arisen in Brahmanical order. It seems more probable that it originated in a non-Brahmanical environment, was promoted in historic India by the Jains and the Buddhists, and was adopted by Brahmanic Hinduism after it began to win its way in North India where Brahmanic Hinduism was developed.” (P.56)
AHIMSA AND THE IDEA OF REBIRTH

It is also interesting to note in this context that there is a vital connection between the concept of ahimsa and the concept of rebirth. A belief in the doctrine of rebirth led to the idea of the unity of all life and, consequently, to the ethical concept of non violence in ancient India. Once the doctrine of migration of souls came to include rebirth on earth in animal as well as human form depending upon one’s karma, it created a humanitarian sentiment of kinship among all life.

To have developed this ethical principle is therefore a great pioneering step in human history. The great contribution of Jain culture to this evolution in human ethics is handsomely recognized by Dr. Albert Schweitzer when he says “The laying down of the commandment not to kill and not to damage is one of the greatest events in the spiritual history of mankind starting from its principle, founded on world and life denial, of abstention from action, ancient Indian thought- and this is a period when in other respects ethics have not progressed very far reaches the tremendous discovery that ethics know no bounds! So far as we know, this is for the first time clearly expressed by Jainism.” (Indian Thought and Its Development).

The uniqueness of this ethical contribution is also recognized by the German scholar, Dr. Walther Schubring, when he in his celebrated classic on Jainology The Doctrine of the Jainas states that “The reverence towards life’ (as Albert Schweitzer put it) by which the realm of life was so immeasurably extended, permeates the discipline of Mahavira's order in a way no other ethical prescription does.” (P.301)

From the foregoing analysis it is also noteworthy that the main pillars of the Indian metaphysical thought constituted by the concepts of rebirth, karma and salvation through a way of life governed by non-violence are the characteristic contributions of Jain faith because logically and spiritually they are so intimately interlinked.

In this context one can appreciate the conclusion arrived at by the German Indologist, Prof. Herman Jacobi when comparing Jainism with Buddhism and Brahmanism. Jacobi observed in Jaina Sutras, Part I, (Introduction) that there are four elements common to all the three religions and these are according to him: (i) faith in rebirth of spirit, ii) Karma theory, (iii) salvation from rebirth and (iv) belief in periodic manifestations of prophets to resurrect religious spirit on earth.

Jacobi concedes that the first three are a logical outcome of a faith in non-violence and hence they could not arise in the Aryan culture consistent with its sacrificial cult and that is why they are apparently borrowed from non-Aryan faiths, that is, Jainism and Buddhism.
VEGETARIANISM & AHIMSA IN BUDDHISM AND JAINISM

It must be noted, however, that Buddhism has not been as thoroughgoing as Jainism in its observance of ahimsa. Buddhism justifies meat-eating so long as one does not kill the animal for his food but purchases meat from the butcher.

Buddha advised against meat when (1) it is seen (dittha), (2) heard (suta) or (3) suspected (parisankita) that an animal was killed on purpose for a monk. But meat may be taken when (1) it is not seen, (2) heard or (3) not suspected that an animal has been killed on purpose for monk.

But in Jainism holding the principle of ahimsa paramo dharmah - non violence is the greatest religion - vegetarianism is strictly observed. The Jains have been the primary exponents of vegetarianism in India. The Jains have taken vegetarianism to its logical conclusion. No other religions community in India has gone so far to avoid killing of any kind of organic life for the purpose of nourishment.

MISCONCEPTION OF JAINISM BEING AN OFFSHOOT OF BUDDHISM AND BRAHMANIC HINDUISM

Since Gautam Buddha, founder of Buddhism, belonged to the same region of Magadha as Mahavira, the 24th Tirthamkar of Jainism and both were contemporaries it was assumed erroneously that Jainism is an offshoot of Buddhism. It is now accepted that Jainism is not only older than Buddhism but as shown earlier in this essay it has got its roots going deep into the antiquity in pre-Aryan and pre-Vedic times.

Mahavira was an elder contemporary of Buddha. As a matter of a fact, Buddhist literature and history establish that after he had renounced the world Buddha was for some time an ascetic following the Jain cult of Parsvanatha, the 23rd Tirthamkar whose death took place 250 Years before Mahavira.

In the Buddhist scripture Majjhimanika Mahasihanada Sutta 12 Buddha himself tells his disciples of his severe ascetic experiences when he first took to asceticism at the hands of Muni Pihitasrava who was a follower of Parsvanatha. Buddha has narrated how he went naked, took food in his own palms and followed various other rigorous restrictions expected of a Sramana ascetic. Buddha followed this practice for some time when he felt it was too rigorous, and therefore gave up Jain ascetic practice, wore saffron-coloured cloth and founded his own middle-path which became known as Buddhism.

Modern Buddhist scholar and Buddhist Bhikshu Dharmananda Kosambi has said; “In Tripitakas, there is a mention in several places about Nirgrantha-Jainas. From this it is clear that the Nirgrantha tradition was in existence many years before Buddha. It is mentioned in the Anguttara Nikaya that one “Bappa” named Shakya (belonging to the clan of Shakyas in which Buddha was born) was a lay follower
(Sravaka) of the Nirgranthas (Jain). In the same Sutta’s Atthaatha it is also said that this “Bappa” was an uncle of Buddha.”

It may be mentioned here that Nirgrantha means unattached, without possessions, an ancient name for the Jain community. It should be noted that both Siddhartha and Trishala, parents of Mahavira, are described in the Acharanga-Sutra,- Jain scripture as followers of Parsva.

As noted by Padmanabha S. Jaini, Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of California, in his book The Jain Path of Purification :“Buddhist texts refer to the existence of large numbers of Niganthas (unattached ones) who followed the Catuyama Samvara, the fourfold restraint that Jacobi and others have convincingly identified with the teaching of Parsva. Such references, moreover, suggest a Jain community older than that of the Buddhists, hence predating Mahavira himself.” (P.10)

As Prof. Jacobi notes; “The Nirgranthas are frequently mentioned by the Buddhists, even in the oldest part of the Pitakas. But I have not yet met with a distinct mention of the Buddha in any of the old Jain Sutras. As it is inconsistent with our assumption of a contemporaneous origin of both creeds, we are driven to the conclusion that the Nirgranthas were not a newly founded sect of Buddha’s time. This seems to have been the opinion of the Pitaka too, for we find no indication to the contrary in them.” (“On Mahavira and His Predecessors” in The Indian Antiquary, IX,1880 158-163)

Again as Dr. Herman Jacobi, states in his article on Jainism in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (Vol II, pp465-74). “Notwithstanding the radical difference in their philosophical notions, Jainism and Buddhism being outside the place of Brahmanism, present resemblances in outward appearance, so that even Indian writers occasionally have confounded them. It is therefore not to be wondered that some European scholars who became acquainted with Jainism through inadequate samples of Jain literature easily persuaded themselves that it was an offshoot of Buddhism. But it has since been proved that their theory is wrong.”

JAINISM AND BRAHMANIC-HINDUISM

Already in the foregoing discussion of the antiquity of Jainism about the distinctly separate identity of Jainism from Vedic Brahmanic-Hinduism. However, it will be useful here to state once again the prominent features of the difference as noted by Dr. Guseva in her scholarly study Jainism.

Dr. Guseva categorically states that there are at least eight features which distinguish Jainism from Vedic religion and Brahmanism which are so substantial that they do not afford any possibility of regarding Jainism as a sect of Brahmanism or its some other products. These features are:

1. Jainism rejects holiness of Vedas,
2. Stands against the dogma that gods are the main objects of worship.
3. Rejects bloody sacrifices and a number of other Brahminic rituals,
5. Prescribe defence of others’ life.
6. Prescribes asceticism.
7. Allows women monkhood, learning of holy books etc.

I would add one most important additional feature and that is Jainism does not believe in any divinity as the creator of this universe because according to Jain cosmology and metaphysics the world is beginningless and endless, and each human being, by the dint of his own ethical discipline as laid down in Jainism, that is, Ratnatraya Dharma - Samyak Darshana, Samyag Jnana, Samyak Charitra - Right perception, Right knowledge and Right conduct - can attain liberation without the intervention of any deity.

Thus, one may sum up, the originality of Jainism in the words of Dr. Herman Jacobi; “In conclusion let me assert my conviction that Jainism is an original system, quite distinct, and independent from all others; and that, therefore, it is of great importance for the study of philosophical thought and religious life in ancient India.”

TIRTHAMKARA AND THE CONCEPT OF WORSHIP IN JAINISM

The etymological basis of a Tirtha as a holy place of worship can be properly traced to the term Tirthamkar which signifies a liberated soul according to Jain religions tradition. A Tirthamkar is one who has eliminated the last vestiges of Karmic pollution attaching to the soul through a rigorous ascetic regimen prescribed in Jain religious canon, known as agamas and has attained omniscience.

He thus becomes a creator of a Tirtha or a Tirthamkar, a fordmaker. It is by means of this Tirtha, or ford, a worldly being can cross this life and attain moksa. It is in this context of the unique Jain connection of the term Tirtha a historic genesis of the temple tradition and idol or icon worship can be traced in Jain religious practices since prehistoric times.

As Ghosh, a former Director-General of Archaeological Survey of India and editor of the monumental survey of Jain Art and Architecture published by Bharatiya Jnan Pith, on the occasion of the 2500th Nirvan Anniversary of Mahavira (1974) observes:

“Leaving the standing figures on a mohenjo-daro seal out of consideration, the Lohanipura Tirthamkar images of the Mauryan age show that in all probability Jainism had the lead in carving of images for veneration over Buddhism and Brahmanism. No images of Buddha or any Brahmanic deity of that antiquity have been found, though there are contemporary Yaksa statutes after the stylistic models of which the Lohanipur images are carved.”

The iconography of the Jinas, without the paraphernalia of the later period, are standardized though distinguishing lancchanas are yet to be evolved with the result
that unless the names of *Tirthamkars* are mentioned in dedi- catory inscriptions, it is not possible to differentiate the individual *Tirthamkar*, except *Parsvanatha* who is marked by a *canopy* of snakehood and *Rishabhanatha* who has some locks falling on his shoulders. The images, normally robeless, with the *Sri-vatsa* mark on the chest and with circular haloes, scalloped in some cases, are either seated cross-legged with hands in *dhyana-mudra* or standing in *kayotsarga* pose.

The analysis of the origin of the Indian temple worship would be fruitful if it is carried from the angle of the concept of worship as revealed in scriptural and archaeological sources. To begin with the very concept of worship is alien to the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* do not have the word *Puja*. It is originally not a word of *Aryan* or *European* languages. The *Vedic* ritual of the propitiation of the natural elements is known as *Yajna* in which the gods were offered ghee, honey, *purodasa* (a sacrificial offering made of ground rice) *soma* (wine)-and meat of animals. That is why it was called *balikriya* (oblation-offering) or *pashukarma*.

As a matter of fact, the word *Puja* belongs to the *Dravidian* linguistic group. “Pu’ means flower (*Puspa*) and “Ja “ means *Karma* (act). In *Tamil* and *Telugu* the verb meaning to do is “ce”, and in *Kannada* it is “ge” and thus ‘Puce’ Puge’, ‘Puje’ and ‘Puja’ means *pupsa-karma* (floral act) just as sacrificial fire and offering (*homa, yajna*) used to be called *pashu-karma*.

Thus idol worship and particularly non-violent floral worship is a characteristic prototype of temple culture which was inspired by the ethnico-religious *Jain* traditions weaving a matrix of *karma* rebirth and liberation.

It is noteworthy that there is uniformity in the ritual of worship among the *Jains* and the *Shaivas*. Water, incense, rice, flowers, lamp, perfume, offering of eatables and fruit, these eight substances form the material of the ritual of worship of both the religions. From the available historical and archaeological evidence it becomes clear that *Jainism* initiated idol worship in India. Hardly there exists any *Jain* holy book or an epic which does not extalt idol-worshiping. In fact, the roots of idolatry have gone so deep into the metaphysical and ethical structure of *Jainism* to such an extent that it is impossible to separate this aspect of worship from *Jainism* at all.

**SIVA, RUDRA AND RISHABHDEVA**

Afterwards the word *puja* was admitted into Sanskrit and the root word *Puja* was adopted. Another scholar Charles Charpentier traces the etymology of *Puja* to the *Dravidian* root word ‘pusu’ which means to anoint. Its propriety is in the tradition of anointing the image of *siva* with sandal paste etc. when worshipping the image looks reddish because of anointment with red sandal, and therefore, *siva* became known as *Lohita* whose synonyms *rudhira* and *rudra* finally merged in the form of *rudra*.

The difference between the rituals of sacrificial fire ( *yajna*) and worship with flowers (*puja*) and direction to synthesize them is clearly mentioned in *Bhagvat Gita* wherein
Krishna says (9,24-26) that even though the doer of Yajna, Rishi, and worshipper of siva by non violent means are friends there is difference in ritual.

This attempt at synthesis is illustrated by the story of the creation of two-formed Rudra, one ferocious and another tranquil in Vishnu Purana. According to Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee there was a god by the name ‘civan’ and ‘campu’ in Tamil Language different from the ferocious god in the Vedas, who was the presiding deity in the Dravidian society before the advent of the Aryans. The same was pronounced as ‘siva’ and ‘sambhu’ by the Aryans.

The tradition as the Siva being a originally related to the Dravidian culture is very much strengthened by archaeological explorations. In the Indus Valley excavations one image form of a male is sitting in a meditative pose Padmasana. The hands are on the knee cups and there are horns on the head. It is the definite opinion of Sir John Marshall that the Vedic Aryans adopted Siva worship (siva pasupati-Rudra) from this Indus Valley culture. It is significant as various scholars have suggested that the nude standing images in the Indus Valley in a typical Jain ascetic Yogic pose Kayotsarga bear a striking resemblance to the oldest Jaina sculptures, and further that there is a link between the Indus bull-seals and the bull insignia (lancchan) of Rishabha.

RISHABHA, FIRST TIRTHAMKAR AND RUDRA

The point to be noted is that there is a consistent tradition found in the Jain religious literature and also in Hindu puranas from earliest times of eulogizing the arch-Tirthamkara Rishbhadeva as Rudra or Siva as Dr. Hiralal Jain, an eminent Jain scholar, notes in his carefully adduced evidence from Jain and Hindu scriptures (Jainism through the Ages, translated from Hindi by Bal Patil, Unpublished).

Generally ancient Saiva and Jain temples are found in the vicinity of each other. The cave temples of Ellora are a good example. So much so that a big cave temple is called great Kailasa, and the Jain cave temple is called small Kailasa. The following stanza in Shiv Purana bring out this association clearly.

Rishabhadeva, Jineshwara, the omniscient and the all pervasive incarnated himself on the magnificent Kailas, (Ashtapad Mountain) The idea of Rishabha Tirthamkara being an epoch-making man is deep-rooted in the Jaina scriptures. He was the son of the fourteenth Kulakara or Manu known as Nabhi. He is also known as Adinatha. Rishbha inaugurated the karmabhumi and pioneered human civilisation and culture.

Rishabha was the first preacher of the ahimsa dharma, the first Tirthamkara or ford-maker to the path of liberation according to Jain Sramanic path of purification and liberation. He attained nirvana on the summit of Mount Kailasa in Tibet. The point to be noted is that there is a consistent tradition found in the Jaina religious literature and also in the Itihasa-Purana Brahmamic lore from earliest time of invoking Rishbhadeo as Rudra or shiva. The above stanza in the Shiva Purana brings out clearly this association.
It is in this context it is important to consider the definite opinion of Sir John Marshall that the Vedic aryans adopted *shiva* worship (*Shiva, Pashupati, Rudra*) from Indus valley civilisation. It is significantly sugessted by the various scholars that the nude standing images in the Indus Valley in a typically Jain *Sramanic* yogic pose- *Kayotsarga*- abandonment of the body in meditation- bears a striking resemblance to the oldest Jain sculpture and further that there is a link between the Indus bull seals and the bull *insignia* (*lancchana*) of Rishabha.

From Vedic times to the present Rudra or *shiva* and Rishabha have been considered usually as alternative names or designations which are : *Digambara, Digvasa, Tapomaya, Charukesha, Shanta, Akshobhya, Ahimsa, Jnani, Kapardi, Jati.* These are such attributes as become perfectly applicable in their meaning to *Rishabha Tirthamkara*. The characteristic mark of Shankara as found in Jaina creations and images known as *Triratna* which is found clearly marked in the cave of *Samrata Kharavela* at Udaigiri in Orissa. It is found marked in the ancient images of *Rishabha* and other *Tirthamkaras*.

The arch-form of this symbol is found in the sign of tri-horn on the Indus Valley seal images. It should not be surprising if the same mark evolved later as a phase of moon, *Om, svastika* and the cross of Christianity as well as the moon and the star of Islam as noted by Dr.Hiralal Jain (op.cit.)

The disciples of *Shiva* are collectively called *Gana*, whose leader is called Ganapati and Ganesh . The group of *munis* or disciples established by Rishbha is also called *Gana* and its leader, the chief disciple, is called *Ganadhara*. The tradition of *Gana* and *Ganadhara* is found unbroken till the last *Tirthamkara*, Mahavira. Such parallels and spiritual affinities since pre-historic times between Rishabha and Shiva show unmistakeably that Jainism and its first propounder have been the precursor of the later *shaiva* doctrine.

The most notable example of the fusion and synthesis of not only the Jaina, Shaiva, but also the Brahmanic, Vedic, Buddhhist and other Indian philosophies is found in the great Himalayan centre of pilgrimage, *Badrinatha* or *Badri Vishala*. In the *Badri Vishala* temple the following *stotra* is recited in the daily worship:

यं श्रैवा समुपारसंशिवं इति ब्रह्मेति वेदान्तिनः  
बोध्या बुद्ध इति प्रमाणपतवः क्षत्रि तैयायायका  
अहर्निर्द्वय जैनशासनरता: करिति मीमांसका:  
सोहयं वो विद्यासु वाचिततिलं त्रेलोकयनायौ प्रभु: - हनुमातांक

Meaning: “One who is revered as *Shiva* by the Shaivas, as *Brahma* by the Vedantins, as *Buddha* by the Buddhists, as the *Cause* by the Naiyayikas, *Arahan* by the Jains, *Karma* by the Mimamsakas, such god of the three worlds may grant us our longed for fruits.” This illustrates how the Badrinath embodies the true secular synthesis of India.
ARE JAIN NASTIKAS?

It is a mistake to term the Jainas as Nasitkas. The word nasitka has been differently interpreted. According to the grammarian Panini Sutra it is explained as one who does not accept paraloka or life after death. According to Nyayakosha, a nastika is a person who does not accept the existence of Isvra. Manu has said that he who derides the authority of the Vedas is a Nasitka-nastika Vedarindakah.

But acceptance of the authority of Vedas which are essentially Brahminic scriptures, does not enter into the concept of atheism. Atheism as Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics Vol-II Editor, James Hastings, explains, “both by etymology and usage, is essentially a negative conception and exists only as an expression of dissent from the positive theistic beliefs.”

Further, “Theism is the belief that all entities in the cosmos, which are known to us through our senses or inferred by our imagination and reason, are dependent for their origination and for their continuance in existence upon the creative and causal action of an infinite and eternal self-consciousness and will….”

But Jainism does not recognize that the universe was created by any God or gods. The universe is beginningless and endless. The universe is constituted of six substances viz. soul, matter, time, space, principle of motion and, and the principle of stationariness. The soul, matter, time, space, principle of motion and, the principle of stationariness. Soul is characterized by consciousness while the matter is not. This is consistent with scientific theories.

The Jains do not regard God as necessary to explain the universe. The number of souls in the universe is infinite. Each individual soul is divine in nature and can attain perfection by cultivation of right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. Thus Jainism places a great responsibility on the frail human shoulders and gives each human being a passport to Godhood only warning him that the may do evil at his own peril because each one will reap as he sown.

The essence of Jaina teaching is that a man or a woman is truly the architect of one’s own destiny and that the liberation of soul from the last vestige of karmic particle is synonymous with supreme bliss or salvation or moksa commensurate with divinity.

WHY WORSHIP TIRTHAMKARS?

Why do the Jainas worship the Tirthamkars? Umaswami, a great Jaina Acharya has expressed the object of Jain worship of Tirthamkar in precise terms in the opening verse of his renowned exposition of the principles of reality according to Jainism in Tattvartha sutra;

“I bow to Lord, the promulgator of the path liberation, the destroyer of mountains of Karmas and the knower of the whole of reality, so that I may realise these qualities.”

The object of Jain worship is therefore not to seek favours but to cultivate a frame of
mind to seek guidance, to meditate on the path of Liberation as taught by the Tirthamkars.

As noted by Dr. A.N. Upadhye, a great Prakrit scholar of Jainism, “By God Jainism understands a liberated soul as well as a Tirthamkar, who is the highest spiritual ideal after which every soul can aspire; the God is an example to inspire and guide. Thus the basis of the Jain conception is different from Hinduism. Though the God is not a creator, the Jain religion neither lacks devotional fervour nor ceremonial rituals. Jains offer prayers to him, worship him both in concept and in concrete, and meditate on him. Respectful prayers are offered to the Tirthamkars, liberated soul, preceptor, preacher and monk because these represent various stages of the souls spiritual progress. Such a routine keeps one vigilant about one’s ideal warning every time that one is to depend on oneself to destroy the Karmas. Jainism is thus a religion of self help and can be practised by the self reliant, strong and brave.” (Jainism by Colette Caillat, Dr. A.N. Upadhye, Bal Patil, Macmillan, 1974)

EVOLUTION OF JAIN CONCEPT OF TEMPLE

The Sanskrit words mandira and alaya, both denoting something like a shelter, specify a temple particularly in Jain references. The terms ayatana- a resting place or a sanctuary- is more ancient dating back to the time of Mahavira who often used to stay in Yaksayatana in the course of his Vihara. Later it coined the word Jinayatana and still later was replaced by the words mandira, alaya, geha, griha etc.

But the most important term denoting the genesis of the temple appears to be Chaitya from very ancient times. From the Uvasaga-Dasao Upasaka Dasa, a Jain scripture, we come to know that the Jnatrikas, being the clan of Jnatri Putras to which Mahavira belonged, possessed a Jain temple outside their settlement at kollaga which bore the name Duipalasa.

The term ceiya used here has been interpreted by Dr. Hoernle to mean properly the name of a Jain temple or sacred shrine, but commonly applied to the whole sacred enclosure containing a garden, grove or park (Ujana, Vana-Sanda or Vana-Khanda, a shrine and attendants houses,” (Uvasaga –Dasao, P.2) After Mahavira’s assuming the vocation of a monk he used this ceiya for his accommodation whenever he visited the place of his birth.

EVOLUTION OF CHAITYA, AYATANA AS AN ABODE OF YAKSHA

It is significant to note as stated by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy that the word chaitya is derived from a root Chi meaning to build or heap up, but as used in the Epic and early Buddhist and Jain literature, it means any holystead, altar shrine, grove, temple etc. And therefore he asks ; “May it not be derived from Chit, with the sense therefore of an object to be meditated upon or attended to? “
This interpretation is definitely a pointer to the Jain concept of ritual meditation of perfected beings. Chaityas have been from very ancient times the legendary abodes of the Yaksas, Shasan Devatas or tutelary deities. Every Jain Tirthamkar has a pair of tutelary deities of Yaksa and Yakshini.

It is pertinent to note that a Chaitya is often termed as Chaityavriksha or Chaitya-tree. The earliest reference to the chaitya-tree of Mahavira. Mahavira was sitting under shala tree when he attained enlightenment. The Kalpa Sutra, which speaks of the lives of the twenty four Tirthamkars only mentions the Chaitya-trees of Rishabha, Nemi, Parsva and Mahavira. It does not mention the chaitya-tree of the remaining twenty Jinas.

The Samavayanga - sutra gives a list of the Chaitya-vriksha of all twenty four Tirthamkars of the present age. This last list, being common to both the Digambara and the Svetambara sects was evolved before the Digambara-Swetambara division in the fifth century.

**CHAITYA TREE AND TREE WORSHIP**

The Jainas have assigned the spirits connected with the tree-worship to the Vyantara gods. The Vyantaras are sub-divided into eight groups, Pishachas, Bhutas, Yakshas, Rakshasas, , Kin naras, Kimpurushas, Mahoragas (Nagas) and Gandharvas. Each group has on its crest the symbol of a tree in the following order the Kadamba, sulasa, vata, khatvanga, ashoka, champaka, naga and tumbara, according to Swetambara tradition. In the Digambara list the badri-tree is substituted for the Khatvanga.

The chaitya-tree worship, with which Yakshas are associated and the cult-deities goes for back in ancient times and onces again signifies the great antiquity and pre-Vedic existence of Jaina iconic and worshipping tradition. The gradual and late assimilation of the ideas of samsara- cycle of birth and death, Karma, religious asceticism and Yoga by the Brahmanas, the Upanishads and later in the Epics shows the unmistakeable influence of the ancient and indigenous Sramanic current as exemplified in Jainism.

It is in this context that Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy finds substance in Fergusson's view in Tree and Serpent Worship (p.244) that the worship of Yakshas and Nagas, powers of fertility and rainfall “was the primitive faith of the aboriginal casteless Dasyus who inhabited northern India before the advent of the Aryans.”

And therefore he is led to conclude definitely that “it is at least certain that religious traditions which must be spoken of as Agamic in contradistinction to Vedic, are abundant and must reach far back into the past. This past, moreover, has been proved by recent archaeological discoveries to have been much more ancient and to have been characterized by a much higher culture than had been formerly recognized. “ (p.3) Yakshas, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1973)
YAKSHAS IN JAIN TRADITION

In the Jain Bhagavati Sutra Punnabhadda and Manibhadda are called powerful Devas, and they appear together to those who practise certain austerities. Yakkhas or Yakshas are often called Devas in Jain literature where as Shasan Devatas they are usually guardian angels.

As pertinently suggested by Dr. Coomaraswamy, "the doctrine of reincarnation is not Vedic, and in view of the suggestions of indigenous origins that have been plausibly made, it is of interest to note how constantly the idea of rebirth is connected with the Yaksha mythology in which a Yaksha may have been and may again become a human being.” (Ibid)

Hodson T.C. in his The Primitive Culture of India shows that a belief in reincarnation is widely spread amongst the primitive tribes of India, Khonds, Bhuias, Garos etc. The Lushai desire to escape from the mortal coil of reincarnation. Santals say that “Good men enter into fruit –trees. This reveals again the very ancient origin of the Jain concept of Ahimsa and related causal doctrines of vegetarianism and rebirth.

In the Jain Uttaradhyayana Sutra Ch. III, 14-18 it is stated as a general rule that Yakshas are reborn as men when their stock of merit (acquired, of course, in a previous life on earth) is exhausted. Not only human beings, but even animals may be reborn as tutelary Yakshas. The following story of the Jain saint Jivaka is related in the Tamil Classic, the Jivaka-chintamani; Jivaka rescues a drowning dog, or to be more exact, recites to it the mantras of five Namaskaras-Namsakar Mantra-whereby it is reborn as deity, a chief of the Yakshas.

BHAVANAM, YAKSA’S ABODE

The haunt or abode (Bhavanam) of a Yaksha, often referred to as chaitya (Pali, cetiya, Prakrit, Cheiya) or ayatana (Prakrit ayayana) may be outside a city, in a grove, on a mountain or at a ghat. Such Yaksa shrines are constantly spoken of in Jain and Buddhist literature as ancient, magnificent, famous or world-renowned.

The essential element of a Yaksha holy-stead is a stone table or after (Veyaddi, mancho) placed beneath the tree sacred to the Yaksha. Veyaddi is an earthen or stone slab altar for the reception of offerings which is an essential part of a shrine. Sometimes a symbol is placed on it. Later when images came into general use, it becomes a asana, (seat or throne) or pitha (pedestal) of the figure.

It was just such an altar beneath a sacred tree that served as the Bodhisathva’s seat on the night of the enlightenment. It is very evident, as Dr. Coomaraswamy, states that the sacred tree and altar represent a combination taken over by Buddhism from
older cults, and in the case of the Bodhi-tree we see the transference actually in process.

The existence of images (and Yaksha images are the oldest known images in India) implies the existence of temples. One of the detailed descriptions of a Yaksa holystead is about the famous shrine of the Yaksha Purnabhadra (Punnabhadda) of which a long account is given in the Aupapatika sutra the first Upanga of the Jainas.

“Near Champa there was sanctuary (cheiya) named Punnabhadde. It was of ancient origin told of by men of former days, old, renowned, rich and well-known, it had umbrellas, banners and bells; it had flags, and flags upon flags to adorn it, and was provided with brushes.”

According to Aupapatika Sutra 2-5, the Purnabhadra- chaitya in the Amrasalavana situated to the north-east of the city of Champa was very old in age (chirarita) recognized by people of old as ancient (porana) and famous. On all sides of it was a big forest grove having a central big ashoka-tree with a prithvi-shila-patta under it, slightly reclining against the stem and placed on a simhasana.

Once again it is important to note in the above context as stated by Dr. Commaraswamy “Certainly the Yaksha concept has played an important part in the development of Indian mythology, and even more certainly, the early Yaksha iconography has formed the foundation of later Hindu and Buddhist iconography. It is by no means without significance that the conception of Yakhattva is so closely bound up with the idea of reincarnation.” (Yakshas, P.37)

And even more importantly he continues: “Thus the history of the Yakshas, like that of the other aspects of non-Aryan Indian animism is of significance not only in itself and for its own sake, but as throwing light upon the origins of cult and iconography, as well as dogma, in fully evolved sectarian Hinduism and Buddhism. And beyond India, it, as is believed by many, characteristic elements of the Christian cult, such as the use of rosaries, incense, bell and lights, together with many phases of monastic organization are ultimately of Buddhist origin, we can here too, push back their history to more ultimate sources in non and pre-Aryan Indian Pujas” (P.37) Yakshas.

In view of the fact that Sramanic Jainism and its pre-Vedic ancient origins, and definitely pre-Buddhistic in 6th Century B.C. one can appreciate that the “non-and pre-Aryan Indian Pujas” Dr. Commaraswamy speaks about cannot be anything but Jain in inspiration as evolved in Chaitya-Tree and Yaksha veneration.

As noted by Coomaraswamy (n.1 p.14, Yakshas) “The doctrine of reincarnation is not Vedic, and in view of the suggestions of indigenous origin that have been plausibly made, it is of interest to note how constantly the idea of rebirth is connected with the Yaksa mythology, in which a Yaksa may have been, or may again become a human being.”

It is interesting to note also in the same context Dr.Coomaraswamy states: “Sankara is one of the well-known names of siva, whose close connection with
Yaksas is shown in manyways, *inter alia*, by the existence of numerous temples dedicated to him under the names which are those of Yaksas, e.g. Virupaksa temple at Pattadakal." (Ibid)

EARLIEST JINA IMAGE AND JAINA PANTHEON

The earliest known *Jina image*, preserved in the Patna Museum comes from Lohanipur (Patna) and is dateable to about third century B.C. The nudity and the *Kayotsarga-mudra*, suggesting rigorous austerity, of the image were confined only to the Jinas. Thus the *Jina* images from Lohanipur and Ayodhya and also the evidence of *Hathigumpha* inscription of second century B.C. in Khandagiri- Udaygiri in Kalinga , (Orissa) attributed to Kharvela distinctly suggest that the antiquity of *Jina* images may be pushed back at least to fourth, third century B.C.

Mathura was a stronghold of Jainism from second century B.C. to 1177 A.D. It is certain on the basis of the archaeological data that Jainism got a firm footing at Mathura by the second century B.C. The existence of a Jain shrine (*pasada*) as early as the middle of the second century B.C. is proved by an inscription recording the dedication of a *pasadatorana* by a Sravaka named Uttaradasaka.

The Jinas or Tirthamkars occupy the most exalted position in Jain pantheon. As a consequence the *Jina* images outnumber the images of all other Jain deities. The Jinas are always represented in the seated or standing attitude of meditation. While Buddha was represented with such different gestures such as *abhaya-mudra*, *varada mudra* which shows his concern about the world. Moreover, none of the Jinas were credited with the performance of miracles while the case was opposite with the Buddha.

The Jains have strictly adhered to the *dhyana* (seated cross-legged) and the *Kayotsarga* (standing erect) *mudras*, in a *vitaraga* passionless and free from all bondage pose, showing unceasing respect for yogic postures of transcendental meditation and bodily abandonment.

This brings out the most important difference between the Jain pantheon on the one hand and the Buddhist and the Hindu on the other. As noted by Pratapaditya Pal, the Jain pantheon is simplest among the three Indian religions. The difference lies in the fact that while in the Buddhist and Hindu “blood and gore are the rule rather than the exception, in the Jain pantheon only peaceful forms prevail. In both Hindu and Vajrayan Buddiest art, deities often manifest their ferocious side, which from the artistic point of view leads to dramatic and animated images.” (Introduction *The Peaceful Liberators Jain Art from India*, Thames & Hudson 1997)
AYAGAPATAS AND STUPA AT KANKALI TILA, MATHURA

Mathura was particularly sacred to the Jainas from earliest times, where stupas appear to have been the focal point of the Jain religious establishment. At Kankali Tila, a site near Mathura, a large number of Jain sculptures, ayagapatas capitals, umbrellas was an archaeological discovery between 1888 and 1896.

From the available evidence it appears that the Jaina establishment at Kankali Tila grew around a Stupa which formed an object of supreme veneration. Also a large number of ayaga patas were found in Mathura. Ayaga patas are the votive slabs dedicated to Jain Tirthamkars. Ayaga patas are among the earliest and most distinctive Jain sculpture. Covered in shallow relief in a square or rectangular format they are typically decorated with auspicious symbols, images of the Jains, and stupas (the early Jain and Buddhist reliquaries conceptually originating from burial mounds.

Such ayaga pata slabs were the artistic and religious precursors of the Samavasarana scene, cosmological paintings and mandalas later found in Jain art, and which influenced the development of the latter two subjects in Buddhist and Hindu Art as well. The representation of Jinas and stupas on the ayagapatas tend to prove that these slabs perched on the vedis or pithas did not serve merely as ayagapatas or bali pattas where flowers and other offerings were deposited for worshipping Jinas and stupas, as in the case of purely ornamental slabs.

On the contrary, these representations would suggest that these ayagapatas were themselves like the image of Arhat at the deva nirmita stupa of Nadiavarta-Munisuvrata, 20th Tirthamkar were objects of worship, a presumption supported by the manner in which the sprinkling of flowers is depicted on two of the ayaga patas in front of the stupa represented by the tympanum in question.

RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF AYAGAPATAS

The religious character of these ayagapatas (-ayaga means yajaniya devata, a deity to be worshipped) is clear not only by the available inscriptions (referring to the setting up of thses ayagapatas for the worship of the Arhats) but by the depiction of the stupas, figures of Tirthamkars, chaitya vriksha, dharma-chakra and auspicious symbols, including Ashta-mangalas particularly sacred to the Jains. The Ashta mangalas are eight auspicious emblems; Svastiaka, Srivasta, nandyavarta—a symbol with nine points representing nine nidhis or treasures—, a pair of fish, the mirror, the throne of fortune, banner and chauries. A large number of such ayagapatas are found in Mathura of the Kushana period (first to third centuries) have been donated by women. A typical inscription reads:

“Adoration to the Arahats (Jinas)! A tablet of homage was set up by Achala, daughter-in—law of Bhadrayasas and wife of Bhadranadi for the worship of the Arahats.”

© Bal Patil: The Rise, Decline And Renewals Of Sramanic Religious Traditions Within Indic Civilisation 44
As noted by Pratapaditya Pal, Senior Curator, Indian and Southeast Asian Art, Los Angeles, County Museum of Art in The Peaceful Liberator Jain Art from India, Thames and Hudson, 1997, “what becomes apparent from the Jain donations is the strong sense of community that has been a contributing factor in their (Jainas) survival. The Jaina mode of worship without the intermediary of a priest, makes it more of a community affair, than that of the Hindus. This becomes particularly clear if one visits a Hindu and a Jaina temple and compares their rituals.”

STUPAS PRECURSOR OF JAIN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

As noted by Dr. Jyoti Prasad Jain, “In the field of architecture, the stupa (a burial relic) seems to have been the earliest form favoured by the Jainas. The Jaina stupa unearthed at the Kankali Tila site of Mathura was regarded by archaeologists like Vincent Smith as not only the oldest known structure of that type, but also as, the earliest extant building in India, apart, of course, from the pre-historic Indus Valley civilization which was discovered later.”

Smith thought that “600 B.C. is not too early a date for its erection.” Dr. Fuhrer who superintended the excavation of the stupa said on the basis of inscription bearing words to mean” Deva stupa, built by the gods, ‘discovered at the site, the stupa was so ancient at the time when the inscription was incised that its origin had been forgotten.

“On the evidence of the characters the date of the inscription may be referred with certainty to the Indo-Scythian era equivalent to AD 156. The stupa must, therefore have been built several centuries before the beginning of the Christian era, for the name of its builders would assuredly have been known if it had been erected during the period when the Jains of the Mathura carefully kept record of their donations.”

PRE-MAHAVIRA AND BUDDHA STUPAS

Since Mauryan art was known as the yaksha art and the pre-Mauryan art as the Deva art, Dr. V.S. Agrawala surmised that this stupa must have belonged to times prior to these of the Buddha and Mahavira. The stupa is said to have been golden originally, but was perhaps made of mud. Sometimes during the interval between Parsva’s nirvana, and the birth of Mahavira in 599 B.C. it was incased in brick and in the time of the Mauryas in the 4th or 3rd century B.C. it was repaired and renovated when stone was used freely for the first time.

With the rise of Buddhism and the growing popularity of the stupa form of architecture with the Buddhists it began to lose ground with the Jains, and a time came when all such structures were unhesitatingly attributed to the Buddhists.

Fleet rightly observed; “The prejudice that all stupas and stone railings must necessarily be Buddhist has probably prevented the recognition of Jain structures as
such”. Smith also says, “In some cases, monuments which are really Jaina have been erroneously described as Buddhist.”

**KURAL BY SAINT TIRUVALLUVAR & JAINISM IN SOUTH INDIA**

The authors *in Studies in South Indian Jainism* attribute the Jain influence in idol worship and temple building on a grand scale. “The essence of Brahminism was not idol worship. How came it then that the Dravidians built large temples in honour of their gods? The answer is simple. The Jains erected statues to their Tirthankaras and other spiritual leaders and worshipped them in large temples. As this method of worship was highly impressive and attractive, it was at once imitated. Especially after the advent of Appar and Sambandar, a period of miracles and piety was inaugurated and it was at this time that the whole country was studded with temples. (n. Tamilian Antiquery, No.2, p.23) It is further curious to note that, in the temples so constructed, a niche was given to each of the saints who in any way contributed to the revival of Saivism. In the great temple of Madura, as many as sixty-three Nayanars or Saiva devotees have been given a niche, each of them. One wonders if the saivaites had not borrowed this custom from the Jains who worshipped their saints in the way described, long before these Nayanars flourished. By far the most important of the Jain influences that led either to the intellectual or moral uplift of the Dravidians was the establishment throughout South India of Matams and Patasalas to counteract the effect of Jain centres of learning and propagandism.” (Ibid. Pp.77-78)

The authors also note that the period immediately following the age of Kural is characterised by the growth of classical literature, mainly under the Jain auspices. “This age is generally called the Augustan age of Tamil literature, the period of the predominance of the Jain in intellect and learning though not in political power. It was during this period second century A.D. that the famous Tamil epic Silappadikarm is supposed to have been written.” (p.46)

The great Tamil classic Kural by Saint Tiruvalluvar, as noted by the authors: “Almost every religionist has claimed the author as belonging to his faith. Tamil literary tradition attributes the authorship of Kural to to Valluvar; but there are strong reasons for believing that the author was a Jain...One other evidence in favour of the Jain origin of Kural might be adduced. The commentator of Nilkesi, a Jain work, calls Kural, Emmottu our own Bible. That shows that the Jains generally believed that Valluvar was a member of their community.”

Prof. A. Chakravarti, an eminent Jain scholar and commentator on Kural has identified the author of Kural as no other than the great Jain Muni Elacharya Sri Kund Kunda, well-versed in Sanskrit and Prakrit who propagated Jainism in the in about first century A.D. Tamil land. From the Pattavalis edited by Hoernle and Klatt (Indian Antiquery, Vols. XX and XXI) the date of Kunda Kunda can be ascertained as Ist century A.D.

As regards the far-reaching influence exercised by the Jain scholars on ancient Tamil literature the authors note: “The Jains had been great students and copyists of books.
They loved literature and art for their own sake. The Jain contribution to Tamil literature forms the most precious possession of the Tamils. The largest portion of the Sanskrit derivatives found in the Tamil language was introduced by the Jains. They altered the Sanskrit words which they borrowed in order to bring it in accordance with Tamil euphonic rules. One great peculiarity of Jain Tamil literature is that in some of the works which have become classical, *Kural* and *Naladiyar*, for example there is no mention of any God or religion. Not only Tamil literature but Canarese literature also owes a great deal to Jains. In fact they were its originators. ‘Until the middle of the twelfth century it is exclusively Jain and Jain literature continues to be prominent for long after. It includes all the more ancient and many of the most eminent of Canarese writings’ Thus Rev.f. Kittel.” (p.76 Ibid)

Not only in literature but also in vegetarian way life, idol worship and temple building the Jains influence in South India is evident. As noted by the authors “How far this Jain respect for the life of living beings, a respect shown in daily practice, has influenced the Vedic rites and ceremonies can be seen from the fact that animal sacrifice in certain religious functions were completely stopped, and images of beasts made of flour were substituted for the real and veritable ones required in conducting *Yajnams*. Tamil poets have received inspiration in this matter from the Jains and passages might be cited from Tamil literature to indicate the extreme abhorrence with which Dravidians, a large section of them at any rate, regard eating of flesh.” (Ibid.p.77)

**SHANKARACHARYA & JAIN MATHAS**

Even more significant is the assimilation of the Jaina motives by the Shankaracharya *mathas* as shown by the eminent historian K.A. Nilkanta Shastry and V. Ramasubramaniyam ‘Aundy’ in their article *The Ascendancy and Eclipse of Bhagwan Mahavira’s Cult in the Tamil Land* published in the *Mahavira and His Teachings* (under the Chief Editorship of Dr.A.N. Upadhye, former General Editor of *Moortidevi Granthamala* of Bharatiya Jnanpith (assisted by Bal Patil) on the occasion of 2500th Mahavira Nirvana Anniversary, 1974).

The authors state: "It is necessary at this stage to state briefly what a Sankara mutt was and how it copied the Jaina church in its technique of organization. It was a legally constituted body, *Pitha*, headed by a bachelor hermit (*Brahmachari sanyasin*) exercising absolute control over all the Hindu hermits of the entire quarter. This pontif and his local representatives, practising asceticism themselves,were to tour their respective regions supervising the religious rites (*Samskaras*) and daily practices (*Dinacharyas*) of the four *varnas*...But the most important and epoch-making innovation was their advice to all performers of *Vedic* sacrifices to substitute vegetable offerings for live animal victims. The *Manimekhalai* one of the five great Tamil epics, tells us that some orthodox Brahmins of that age were performing sacrifices, involving the killing of many animals, including the cow. One Brahmin boy, it is said, successfully set free a cow, an intended victim, and he was , therefore, hounded out of the locality as well as the community by other Brahmins. Where actual blood had been spilt in certain *atahvanic* rituals, the *Sankara-mutt* recommended coloured
mineral water (aarati) and breaking of cocoanuts and ash-gourds. Where intoxicants such as soma juice, had been used, they substituted 'panchagavya' and 'madhuparka'. In food habits too, vegetarianism and prohibition were strictly enforced, with penalties of ex-communication for other transgressions. Ahimsa, satya, triple baths every day and free teaching of Sanskrit were rewarded with ecclesiastical honours and grants. **Except for the doctrinaire difference, the pattern of the mundane aspects of the mutt was but a replica of the Jaina church.**" (pp.329-30)

It is pertinent to quote Edward Thomas to show the arch-influence of the Jain Mathas since pre-historic times. The deeper impact of Jainism right from the term "matha" which has a peculiar Jaina connotation is explained in his unique scholarly paper entitled JAINISM or THE EARLY FAITH OF ASOKA (Ibid. op.cit.) in which describing the etymology of the term Mathura as an ancient seat of Jainism. Edward Thomas explains" The modern version of the name of the city on the Jumna is Mathura. Babu Rajendralal has pointed out that the old Sanskrit form was Madhura (J.A.S. Bengal, 1874, p.259), but both transcriptions seem to have missed the true derivative meaning of Matha ("a monastery, a convent or college, a temple, etc. from the root matha ‘to dwell,’ as a hermit might abide in his cave. The southern revenue terms have preserved many of the subordinate forms, in the shape of taxes for ‘Maths’. Rajputana and the N.W. Provinces exhibit extant examples in abundance of the still conventional term, while the distant Himalayan retain the word in Joshi-Math, Bhairav-Math etc"

Further Thomas states: "This said Mathura on the Jumna constituted, from the earliest period a ‘high place’ of the Jainas and its memory is preserved in the southern capital of the same name -Madura- of Ptolemy, whence the sect, in aftetimes, disseminated their treasured knowledge, under the peaceful shelter of their Matams (colleges), in aid of local learning and the reviving literature of the Peninsula." (pp.3-4)

In a Note on the above E.Thomas mentions quoting Caldwell from his Grammar of the Dravidian Languages: "The period of predominance of the Jainas (a predominance of intellect and learning -rarely a predominance in political power) was the Augustan age of Tamil literature, the period when the Madura college, a celebrated literary association, appears to have flourished and when the Kural the Chintamani and the classical vocabularies and grammar were written."

With such glorious heritage all that remains of Jainism in South India at present in the words of the authors:

“The vast Jain remains in south India of mutilated statues, deserted caves and ruined temples at once recall to our mind the greatness of the religion in days gone by and the theological rancour of the Brahmins who wiped it out of all active existence. The Jains had been forgotten; their traditions have been ignored; but, the memory of that bitter struggle between Jainism and Hinduism, characterised by bloody episodes in the south is constantly kept alive in the series of frescoes on the wall of the Mantapam of the Golden Lily Tank of the famous Minakshi Temple at Madura. These paintings illustrate the persecution and impaling of the Jains at the instance of the arch-enemy of Jainism, Tirujnanasambandar. As though this were not sufficient
to humiliate the unfortunate race, the whole tragedy is gone through at five of the twelve festivals at the Madura temple.” (Studies in South Indian Jainism by Ramaswami Ayyangar & B.Seshgiri Rao, p.79)

RE-WRITING CHRONOLOGY OF ADI SHANKARACHARYA

It would be pertinent here to mention how a new exercise in historical interpretation is being purveyed on the website www.kamakoti.org, the official website of Kanchi Kamakoti Shankaracharya. The introductory message on this site pertaining to Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham states “More than two thousand years ago, an avalanche of heretic and non-Vedic sects, with horrible religious practices threatened to wipe away the ancient veda-Dharma. In the Bhagavad Geeta, Lord Krishna has told Arjuna that, whenever there arises danger to Dharma, He (Krishna) will incarnate in this world to eradicate adharma and re-establish Dharma. In consonance with his words, the Lord has made partial incarnations during the course of the present Kali Age. And such an incarnation is the partial incarnation of siva as Sankara Bhagavatpada, which happened some twenty-five centuries ago, on the prayer of celestials to Lord Siva to redeem bharat-Desa from the clutches of non-Vedic heretic sects. Several sources of authentic information lead to the conclusion that Sri Adi Sankara was born at Kaladi on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the vaisakha month of the cyclic year Nandana in cyclic year Nandana-Kali 2593 corresponding to 509 B.C.”

This extrapolation of Adi Shankarcharya’s chronology, a full thirteen centuries before the actual historic date, has been a matter of scholarly debate for over a century and “Although the views of historians have tended to narrow down the extent of controversy to within two centuries now, it cannot be said that the dispute has been finally settled.” as noted by Dr.Govind Chandra Pande in his The Date of Shankara (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1994). The Sringeri Matha, however, repudiates the claims of the chronology more or less accepted by the other mathas.

After examining the available historical sources Dr.Pande states that “This monastic chronology which places Shankara in the 6th and 5th centuries BC, hardly needs detailed refutation because it contradicts the entire chronology of ancient India as determined by scientific history. It tends to make Shankara a contemporary of Buddha whereas Shankara, Kumarila and Sureshvara are clearly posterior to Dignaga and at least Sureshvara is clearly posterior to Dharmakirti also. The chronology errs by antedating Shankara by more than a millennium. The protagonists of this chronology argue that the title of Shankaracharya was adopted by all the successive heads of the monasteries established by the founder and that there were a number of pontiffs who not only bore the general title of Shankaracharya but who had also a remarkably similar career. In particular there was a ‘recent’ or Abhinava Shankara who lived from AD 788 to AD 812. The Kanchi tradition thus records five Shankaras - Adi, Kripa, Ujjwala, Muka and Abhinava: it is this last Shankara who is said to be confused by modern historians with the original or Adi Shankara.”

But notwithstanding the valid historical chronology the Kanchi Kamakoti chronology of the ‘historic’ partial Siva incarnation of Adi Shankara will culminate in 2020 when the
2500\textsuperscript{th} anniversary is mooted to be celebrated officially, and there does not seem to be any difficulty for its official approval given the present unabated wave of Hindutva renaissance in India.

\textbf{PATHASHALAS AND JAINA CONTRIBUTION TO LEARNING \& EDUCATION ON NAMAH SIDDHAM}

Eminent scholar Dr. A.S. Altekar states in his Hindi book \textit{Pracheen Bharatiya Shikshan Paddhati} (Ancient Indian Educational System) 1955, that “It is established from the Jain literature that in ancient India education was considered as a source of insight, enlightenment and peace, which by contributing to a co-ordinated development of physical, mental, intellectual and economic potential endeavoured to reach perfection. Thus education makes one a humble and useful citizen in the society.”

The impact of the Jain influence on the educational process since earliest times is evident from the fact that the preliminary invocation in the historic \textit{Hathigumpha} inscription was \textit{Om namah Siddhebhyah} as noted by Pt. Sumeruchandra Diwakara in his book \textit{Samrat Kharvela}. It was considered to begin any writing, document or inscription with the auspicious invocation \textit{Om Namah Siddhebhyah}.

This is corroborated by Dr. Altekar who notes that at the beginning of education of a child he was asked to say \textit{Om Namah Siddham}. According to the Indologist Buhler’s \textit{Indische Paleography} mentions how ancient Brahmi script came to be designated as ‘Siddhamatraika’ or ‘Siddhakshara samamnaya’ because of the auspicious preliminary invocation \textit{Om Namah Siddham} and that it was in practice since 7\textsuperscript{th} or 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. The Indian language scripts in South and North India evolved out this \textit{Siddhamatrika}.

C.V. Vaidya, an eminent \textit{Apabhrimsha} scholar has noted in his \textit{Rashtrakutas and Their Times} that “mass-education was controled by the Jains. Their \textit{Om Namah Siddham} was followed by all as the beginning of the alphabetical writing. This remained prevalent even in the decline of the Jain influence which proves the importance of Jain education.” (p.309)

Mahapandit Rahul Samkrityayan: “It is a fact that \textit{Om Namah Siddham} is not Brahmanic expression. The brahmanic Trinity is not called as \textit{Siddha}. Buddhists and Jains call their prophets as \textit{Siddha}. Hence such a widespread use of ‘O Na Ma Si Dha M’ shows the far-reaching impact of the \textit{Srmanaic} religion.”

Dr. Jyoti Prasad Jain, archaeological expert and Jain scholar, noted in his Hindi book ‘\textit{Pracheen aur Madhyakalina Bharat men Jain Shiksha}’ “In the old-fashioned \textit{pathashalas}, of South or North India-whether they are of Mundi, Hindi or Mahajani, or Sanskrit or Hindi, or Gujarati, Marathi or Kannada- the child’s education begins by \textit{Om Namah Siddhebhyah ‘O Na Ma Si Dha M’} is its distorted version. This is wholly a Jain auspicious invocation, not connected with any other religion. The prevalence of
this invocation for a long time in a large part of India the people's education was controlled by the Jains."

SECULARISM HINDUTVA & JAINISM IN MODERN INDIA

With all such aforementioned historical context of the Sramanic Jain religion histories and encyclopaedias of world religions with a few exceptions fail to mention Jainism as a religion. There are pervasive misconceptions about the origin of Jainism, its relation with the Brahmanic, Vedic so-called- Hinduism, about Mahavira being the founder of Jainism, about its being an offshoot of Buddhism or Hinduism or its being a reformist sect of Hinduism. There are misrepresentations galore. It is overshadowed by Hinduism and Buddhism or if noticed at all it is mentioned in passing as one of the ancient India religious movements or a sect subsidiary to Buddhism.

Simultaneously there is the pervasive impact of the modern myth of Hinduism. It had its origin in the Orientalism created by the colonial Sanskrit scholars in the 19th century. The political consequences of the construction of such a common Hindu identity are extensive and have given rise to the Hindutva concept as formulated by Savarkar and now being canvassed as the official ideology of the Sangha Parivar.

So insidious and pervading is its influence that it has perverted the entire administrative apparatus. This was also apparent in the innocent nationalistic Hindu ideology of the Constituent Assembly debates which found its expression in the Explanation to the definition of Hindu in Article 25.Clause (b) of Article 25 and its specious Explanation II is truly a religious Pandora's box. There is no reason why the religious institutions of Sikh, Buddhist and Jain faiths should be treated on par with the Hindu religious ones to push forward Hindu social welfare and reform.

It could be nothing but a surreptitious attempt-or rather a clumsy one to dilute and make nonsense of the essence of religious freedom guaranteed by that very Article under a pretentious Hindu pretext. It confirms the suspicion that the particular Clause was not discussed threadbare, nor does it appear from the Constituent Assembly Debates that the protagonists of Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs were given a fair opportunity to discuss its implications. Thus the construct of the Hindu colonial nationalist ethos has found its way in the very heart of the Indian Constitution laying down the Fundamental Right to religious freedom and has made nonsense of its secular basic structure, thus coming back full circle to Savarkar's vision of India in his book Hindutva written in 1923. It is pertinent to recall that articulating the concepts of Hindutva and Hinduness as political concepts has also received the judicial stamp of approval in the Manohar Joshi case of 1995.

As B.Shiva Rao's classic exposition The Framing of India's Constitution :A Study shows that Article 25 relating to religious freedom and particularly its Explanation II including Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs in the definition of Hindu was finalized by the Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee comprising of stalwarts like Dr.Ambedkar and Dr.Munshi without proper discussion.
It is indeed a constitutional conundrum why the Founding Fathers should have resorted to this devious means of social welfare and reform of Hindu religious institutions by a blatant invasion of the admittedly distinct Sikh, Buddhist and Jain religious identities. This CAD context has a crucial relevance to the obnoxious manner in which the Hindutva ideology is being exploited as a sanction for the Hindu Rashtra concept. The recent NCERT history textbooks controversy and the wholesale rewriting of the Indian histories is the last straw to break the overburdened back of the Indian history with systematic classic Hindutva ideology. Even otherwise the coverage of Jainism and Buddhism in Indian history textbooks has been superficial, misleading and downright distorted.

MISREPRESENTATION OF JAINISM

As a glaring instance of such standard distortion one can do no better than quote the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1999 edition) which gives the definition of Digambara as follows “a member of one of two principal sects of Jainism, who reject property ownerships and usually do not wear clothes.” I sent an e-mail to the editor, Concise Oxford Dictionary pointing out how the definition carries the fallacious impression that all the adherents of the Digambara sect of the Jains “usually do not wear clothes” which must be corrected so as not to cause offence to the religious susceptibilities of this ancient world religion of India.

I am glad to note that Mr. Jonathan Blaney, Senior Assistant Editor, Core Dictionaries Group immediately responded stating : “I agree that the definition is misleading, and I will leave a note in our files for this entry to be investigated at the earliest opportunity.”

SECULARISM & INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL PREAMBLE

On a more careful study of the impact of the Hindu Rashtra-cum-Indianisation concept of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ideology and its genesis right from its inception in 1925 and the enunciation of its ultimate goal by Guru Golwalkar in his definitive We or Our Nationhood Defined it dawned upon me that I should rather change the title of my paper as 'Indian Constitution Under the Siege of Hindutva' because that is precisely the diabolical aim.

This task of the subversion of the secular constitutional objective has been partially facilitated by the Preamble itself as amended by the Forty Second Amendment in 1977-inserting the word ‘Secular’. I am concerned here to draw the attention of all the secular citizens who value the sanctity of the Constitution to an outrageous assault in the bilingual (English & Hindi) edition of the Constitution of India (Bharat ka Samvidhan) by the Government of India, 1999 published by the Government of India, Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs. It is pertinent to note that in the Preface dt.1st July, 1999 Raghbir Singh, Secretary to the Government of India mentions:
“This is the first diglot pocket edition of the Constitution of India. In this edition, the text of the Constitution of India has been brought up to date by incorporating therein all the amendments up to and including the Constitution (Seventy-eighth amendment) Act, 1995.”

In this edition the Preamble is printed as follows:

“We the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens: Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation; in our constituent assembly this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution.”

The Preambulary words “Socialist Secular” are translated as “Samajvadi Panthnirapeksha” I think, that in all constitutional conscience, to translate the word ‘Secular’ as ‘Panthnirapeksha’ rather than ‘Dharmanirapeksha’ is a clever tampering with the basic Preambulary and structural sanctity of the Constitution. A Panth means in a straight dictionary meaning a sect or denomination of a religion. By no stretch of imagination a religion can be termed as a sect:a genus cannot become a species.

That this Hindi translation has been current since 1977 after the Forty-Second Amendment throws a curious light on the religious ideological cross currents dominant in the then Parliament influenced by the majority religion. The rationalization which possibly prompted this translation is available in the Rajendra Prasad Lecture of 1992 (I could not find the Speaker’s name on the net stating:

“It seems that there are three main reasons. In principle, it was accepted that the Indian concept of secularism would draw its inspiration from the Sarva Dharma Samabhava - equal respect for all religions. It would not be anti-religion. Still the Government followed such policies and implemented them in such a manner that gave rise to the apprehension that the State wanted to keep away from the religion and treated it as a hurdle in the way progress. The equality of all religions and also of their followers as implied in the Sarva Dharma Samabhava was not put into practice. Right or wrong, both the majority and minority communities started feeling that the scales were tilted one side or the other in view of political expediency and for the quest of power. The scheme of providing incentives and disincentives to tackle the problem of population explosion was not implemented on the ground that it would hurt the religious feelings of some groups. Such as interpretation makes the very concept of secularism ludicrous.

I feel that had we translated the word "secular" as "Sampradaya- nirpeksha" or "Pantha-nirpeksha" instead of "Dharma-nirpeksha", in the very beginning, many apprehensions would not have arisen. Whatever might have been the differences of opinion on the interpretation of the word "secular", all, however, agreed that the State should be non-communal. Even today there is unanimity on this question. The new Hindi edition of the Constitution has translated the word "secular" as "Panth-
nirpeksha” and thus tried to make amends for the past mistake. What is needed now is that we all should adopt correct translation and popularise it......”. (emphasis supplied).

But this linguistic quibble cannot explain the explicit distortion in the Hindi translation which is simply not compatible with the definition of the word ‘secular’ as “not religious, sacred or spiritual” (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1999) This cannot be ignored as a mere slip of the pen of the translator, nor can the essential constitutional intent be distorted in an unwarranted manner by the translator because we must remember it is nothing less than the Constitution of India. One suspects that it is but a strategic misnomer planted deliberately in the very heart and soul of the Constitution to lead Hindi readers on a decidedly wrong scent because according to the notorious shibboleth of the BJP and the Sangh Parivar there is only one Dharma in India and the rest are all Panths.

SUDARSHAN AND HINDU RASHTRA

As Sudarshan said at Chandigarh on April 29, 2000: “At the appropriate time, we will form Akhand Bharat (United India). We have to regain the areas which we lost in 1947. We have to regain Lahore- the capital of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s Khalsa Raj. We have to reclaim Nankana Sahib and several other religious places, as also Sindhu (Indus) and Kasoor. The feeling for ‘Akhand Bharat’ has to survive because it is akin to the feeling that led to the unification of Germany, Vietnam and Poland {sic}. Partition of India was wrong” (The Statesman, April 30, 2000)

The report continued: “Asserting that India was a Hindu ‘Rashtra’, Mr.Sudarshan said Hindu in this context referred to the nationality and added that there were many religions in India and the correct translation for the term in Hindi was not ‘dharma’ but ‘panth’ or ‘sampradaya’ “ (Quoted in The RSS and the BJP: A Division of Labour by A.G. Noorani.

Sudarshan was addressing the Rashtriya Sikh Sangat. Over a dozen Sikh organizations led a protest demonstration march demanding a ban on the RSS and the Shiromani Akali Dal attacked the RSS for trying to “infiltrate into Sikh religion.

There has been a long a strong suspicion right from the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi that the RSS cadres had infiltrated in various administrative departments. As Pyarelal notes in Mahatma Gandhi: the Last Phase (1958) describing the antecedents of the conspiracy to murder the Mahatma over the lack of security despite the bomb incident on 20th January 1948:

“What , however surprises one, is that in spite of the definite and concrete information of which the authorities were in possession, they should have failed to trace and arrest the conspirators and frustrate their plan. The failure was an index of the extent of the rot that had permeated many branches of the services , not excluding the police. In fact later it was brought to light that the RSS organization had ramifications even in the Government departments, and many police officials, not to mention the
rank and file, gave their sympathy and even active help to those engaged in RSS activities... A letter which Sardar Patel received after the assassination of Gandhiji from a young man, who according to his own statement had been gulled into joining the RSS organization but was later disillusioned, described how members of the RSS at some places had been instructed beforehand to tune in their radio sets on the fateful Friday for the "good news". After the news sweets were distributed in RSS circles in several places...The rot was so insidious that only the supreme sacrifice could arrest or remove it.” P.756

If the poisonous rot of the RSS ideology was so deep at the dawn of freedom one cannot simply imagine its hydra-headed extent and its cancerous damage to the body politic. I, for one, remember distinctly as a lad of sixteen, the pyromania that prevailed in the RSS stronghold at Pune and Sangli by the enraged mobs against the Brahmin community on learning about the identity of Nathuram Godse. At Jaysingpur near Sangli (Maharashtra State) a mob set on fire a stationery shop of one Jain RSS Shakha Chalak who after garlanding a photo of Dr.Hedgewar and breaking the photo of the Mahatma distributed sweets. When the furious mob attacked him he sought refuge before my father who happened to be a Civil Judge & Magistrate. A Gandhian by temperament he pacified the violent mob and refrained from firing. Such was my earliest brush with the quintessential RSS ideology and its demonic manifestations.

That the Constitution is under attack not externally, but from within is precisely what I am concerned to stress and this distortion of the Preambulary meaning is palpable enough. That genesis of the Hindi translation goes back to 1977 bring out the fact as to how saffronising elements were active in the administration, as well as the then ruling party, the Congress.

This is not surprising because as Prof.Mushirul Hasan notes in his article Self-appointed Sardar (The Indian Express, dt.11-12-2002): “Comunalism has been rampant in the Congress, indeed many a Congressman is a communalist under his national cloak” and goes on to quote Jawaharlal Nehru stating: “all of us seem to be getting infected with the RSS mentality. This is a curious finale to our careers.”

Books are written to show the work of Hegdewar and Ambedkar was same, and Shankaracharyas garland the photo of Dr. Ambedkar, Brahmanic dignitaries pay a visit to Nagpur Diksha-bhoomi to pay tributes. And even RSS supremo Sudarshan garlands the statue of Ambedkar - the maker of the Indian Constitution - on Deekshabhoomi at Nagpur, (and the Ambedkarites have washed and "purified" the statue "polluted" by touch of someone who condemns the Constitution.)

**ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE & SECULARISM**

A pertinent pointer to this is available in the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s letter dt.July 17, 2000, commenting on the Islamic scholar, Dr.Rafiq Zakaria’s book *Discovery of God* displayed on the back cover page of his latest book *Communal Rage in Secular India*. Mr.Vajpayee’s appreciation states:
“Yet you have succeeded in presenting it in a fresh, simple and highly persuasive manner, with the power of your central thought that GOD IS ONE. This monotheistic thought is the defining principle of India's age-old civilization. Our ancient sages articulated it in these words: *Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudha Vadanti* (The truth is one, wise men describe it differently). They also taught us the secular canon, which is the basis of our nationhood: *Sarva Panth Samabhava* (equal respect for all faiths).”

It is worth noting that Mr. Vajpayee knows what he means as a true *Swayamsevaka*, remember *Sangh* is his soul. Yet he makes a glaring linguistic slip by translating *Panth* as *faith*. In 1995 Mr. Vajpayee declared that *Hindutva* and *Indianness* are one and the same when he was honoured with *Rashtriya Ekatmata* (National Unity) award by the R.G. Joshi Foundation in Mumbai at the hands of the late Mr. Nani Palkhivala. The Prime Minister's well-known expertise in doublespeak notwithstanding, is there any dictionary —excepting the unique RSS glossary of the Savarkarian *Hindutva* which has also been lucky enough to gain the judicial stamp of approval in the Manohar Joshi case— which translates ‘*Panth*’ as ‘*faith*’? Can this be anything else than a systematic linguistic sabotage of the basic structure of the Constitution?

By comparing two statements of Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, one in 1980 and the others in 1995. In 1980 Shri Vajpayee said: “I still feel that instead of the phrase “*Hindu rashtra*” we should have used ‘*bharatiya*’ “. The basic ideological ambivalence in the terms ‘*Bharatiya*, and ‘*Hindu*’ can best be appreciated use “*Bharatiya rashtra*” contrast it with his statement in Dec. 1995: “There is no difference between *Hindutva* and *Bharatiyatva*, in Hindutva alone are the roots of Bharat.”

Mr. Vajpayee’s ideological evolution during a decade and a half towards “*Hindutva*” indistinguishable from “*Bharatiyatva*” unmistakable shows the inexorable march of the Bharatiya Janata Party towards a “*Hindu*” India, thus coming back full circle to Savarkar’s vision of India in his book *Hindutva*: This constitutional ambiguity in the meaning of secularism as interpreted by the stalwarts of the *Sangh Parivar* is a deliberate ploy to subvert the Constitution towards the triumphal pilgrimage to the ultimate destination of *Akhand Bharat* or *Hindu Rashtra* . The point is the RSS will not suffer any opposition to its *Hindutva* and Hinduisation by hook or by crook. The linguistic sleight of hand reminds one of the classic interaction between Alice and the Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking Glass*. “The question is”, said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.” “The question is ,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be the master- that’s all.”

In the above context of the Sikh protest it would be interesting to note that recently the Sikh community made a strong representation to the *Constitution Review Commission* that clubbing Sikhs with Hindus in *Article 25* of the Constitution had impinged on its status as a separate religion and diluted their religious identity. The *Constitution Review Commission* has recommended that the Article should be suitably amended.
JAINS & ARTICLE 25 OF CONSTITUTION

To revert to the sectarian or ‘Panthic’ interpretation of the Constitution I shall now refer to how it has affected the Jains also because the Jain religion and community also has been victimized by this Hindutva religious hegemonic operation. And again the Article 25 which lays down the freedom of conscience and religion is source of constitutional mischief. I have been pursuing the question of Jain minority recognition on par with the other minority religious communities such as Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Zoroastrians (Parsis).

But as far as the constitutional position is concerned Sikhs Buddhists and Jains are sailing in the same boat and there is glaring discrimination because while Buddhists and Sikhs are recognized as minority religious communities under the National Minority Commission Act the Jains have been left out even when the National Minority Commission has recommended twice that the Jains are not Hindus and as such should be recognized as a minority community.

To quote Article 25 of the Constitution: **Right to Freedom of Religion:**

“25. Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion-
(1) subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.

(2) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law-

(a) regulating or restricting any economic any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice:
(b) providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and section of Hindus.

Explanation I,- The wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion.

Explanation II,- In sub-clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly.”

This Article professedly laying down the Fundamental Right of conscience and religious faith is an intrinsic proof as to how the Founding Fathers, at least the drafting committee members - it is pertinent to remember an earlier draft of the Constitution did not contain such distinguishing Explanations- entertain a basically Hinduized notion of India, that is Bharat.

As noted by Gautam Navlakha in his article *Invoking Union and Official Nationalism of Bharat in the book Region, Religion, Caste, Gender and Culture* © Bal Patil: The Rise, Decline And Renewals Of Sramanic Religious Traditions Within Indic Civilisation
in Contemporary India Edited by T.V. Sathyamurthy: “In view of the self-appointed role of the Indian state as the reformer of Hindu society, the tilt in favour of the religion of the majority became more and more pronounced, and its use of symbols and concepts has become heavily overlaid with an emphasis on its Hindu character.” (p.86).

As Romila Thapar suggests this new Hinduism, furnished with a Brahmanical base, was merged with elements of “upper caste belief and ritual with one eye on the Christian and Islamic models” and thoroughly infused with political and nationalistic emphasis. Thapar notes it as “syndicated Hinduism” which is “being pushed forward as the sole claimant of the inheritance of indigenous Indian religion.” (Syndicated Moksha, in Seminar 313, Sept.1985, p.21)

MODERN MYTH OF HINDUISM

How did this modern myth of Hinduism begin? It had its origin in the Orientalism created by the colonial Sanskrit scholars in the 19th century. As Richard King has discussed in his book Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial theory, India and The Mystic East’ He notes that “William Jones in his role as Supreme Court Judge in India, initiated a project to translate the Dharmasastras in the misguided belief that this represented the law of the Hindus, in order to circumvent what he saw as the ‘culpable bias’ of the native pundits. In taking the Dharmasastras as a binding law-book, Jones manifests the Judeeo-Christian paradigm within which he conceived of religion, and the attempt to apply such a book universally reflects Jones’ ‘textual imperialism’. The problem with taking the Dharmasastras as pan-Indian in application is that the texts themselves were representative of a priestly elite (the Brahmin castes), and not of Hindus in toto. Thus even within these texts, there was no notion of a unified Hindu community, but rather an acknowledgment of a plurality of local, occupational and caste contexts in which different customs and or rules applied.”

As he notes succinctly further: “It was thus in this manner that ‘society was made to conform to ancient dharmasastras texts, in spite of those texts’ insistence that they were overridden by local and group custom. It eventually allowed Anglicist administrators to manipulate the porous boundary between religion as defined by texts and customs they wished to ban.” (author’s italics quoting from Rocher’s British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century p.242

This colonial construction of ‘Hinduism’ contributed according to Richard King to the merging of the Brahmanical forms of religion with Hinduism which is notable in the “tendency to emphasize Vedic and brahmanical texts and beliefs as central and foundational to the ‘essence of Hinduism and in the modern association of ‘Hindu doctrine’ with the various brahmanical schools of the Vedanta…”p.102

The political consequences of the construction of such a common Hindu identity are explained by Romila Thapar as : “since it was easy to recognize other communities on the basis of religion, such as Muslims and Christians, an effort was made to
consolidate a parallel Hindu community...In Gramsci’s terms, the class which wishes to become hegemonic has to nationalize itself and the ‘nationalist’ Hinduism comes from the middle class.” (*Imagined Religious Communities*, pp.220-21)

In the context of his Oriental and Western construct of Hinduism Richard King concludes that the the classification of Buddhist, Jain and Sikhs as ‘Hindus, is “unacceptable for a number of reasons. First, it rides roughshod over religious diversity and established group affiliation. Second, such an approach ignores the non-brahmanical and non-Vedic elements of these traditions. Fundamentally, such assimilation effectively subverts the authority of members of these traditions to speak for themselves. In the last analysis, neo-Vedantic inclusivism remains inappropriate for the simple reason that Buddhists and Jains do not generally see themselves as followers of sectarian denominations of ‘Hinduism.’” (my italics) pp.108-09)

**ART.25 AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

A careful reading of the *Article 25* as a whole makes it crystal clear that there is no reference to Hindu religion except with reference to the Hindu religious institutions of a public character in *Sub-clause (b) of clause (2)*. It is also clear that the provision for social welfare and reform or throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus is also specifically refers to the Hindu religion. It is impossible therefore to know what Constitutional purpose the founding Fathers were contemplating to serve by construing the reference to Hindus as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jain or Buddhist religion. Why was it necessary to drag these three Sikh, Buddhist and Jaina religions and club them together with the reference to Hindus? Granted, the Founding Fathers were keen to provide social welfare and reform or throw open the Hindu religious institutions or temples to all classes and sections of Hindus, or they were concerned to end untouchability by law, or they contemplated to carry out any other unspecified social or religious reform vis-à-vis the Hindu religion.

Still that does not explain the rationale of including the other three religions of Indian origin under the specious umbrella of the Hindu religion. Jainism and Buddhism do not have casteism. As a matter of fact Mahavira who was the reformer of the ancient religion of Jainism specifically gave the message of a casteless society and and gave a call against slaughter of animals in sacrificial Vedic Yajnas. Buddha did the same. Sikhism too does not have untouchability.

Therefore the question remains what constitutional purpose was sought to be fulfilled by including Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists among the Hindus. As B.Shiva Rau’s classic exposition *The Framing of India’s Constitution: A Study* shows that *Article* relating to religious freedom and particularly its *Explanation II* including Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs in the definition of Hindus was finalized by the *Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee* comprising of stalwarts like Sardar Patel, Dr.Ambedkar and Dr.Munshi without proper discussion. It is indeed a constitutional conundrum why the Founding Fathers should have resorted to this devious means of social welfare and reform of
Hindu religious institutions by a blatant invasion of the admittedly distinct sikh, Buddhist and Jain religious identities.

Clause (b) of Article 25 and its specious Explanation II is truly a religious Pandora’s box. There is no reason why the religious institutions of Sikh, Buddhist and Jain faiths should be treated on par with the Hindu religious ones to push forward Hindu social welfare and reform. It could be a nothing but a surreptitious attempt-and rather a clumsy one- to take away the religious freedom guaranteed by that very Article under a pretentious Hindu pretext.

A very unconvincing and clearly untenable attempt which cannot be sustained by constitutional rationalization. It confirms the suspicion that the particular clause was not discussed threadbare, nor does it appear from the Constituent Assembly Debates that the protagonists of Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs were given a fair opportunity to discuss its implications.

SAVARKAR & HINDUTVA

Thus the construct of the Hindu colonial nationalist ethos as detailed above has found its way in the very heart of the Indian Constitution laying down the Fundamental Right for religious freedom and has made nonsense of its secular basic structure., thus coming back full circle to Savarkar’s vision of of India in his book Hindutva written in 1923. It is pertinent to recall that articulating the concepts of Hindutva and Hinduness as political concepts Savarkar said:

“Asindhu Sindhu Paryanta yasya Bharatbhumika pitrubhu punyabhu sarvaithi hindu iti smritisah” that is “One who considers the country or nation spread between singhu river to the sea coast as his Fatherland and Holyland is verily a Hindu.” Pertinently one must note that instead of “Motherland” Savarkar calls it “Fatherland”, a peculiarly definitive partrilineal concept characteristic of Vedic and this “Hindu’ Brahminism which later developed into the racist and Fascist Nazi concept of pure Aryan Vaterland thus making the fascist geneology of Hindutva clearly evident.

According to this convenient portmanteau definition of “Hindu” most of the Indians, except of course Muslims and Christians, comprising those believe in Vedas, as also, those not believing in Vedas such as Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs, are lumped together as ‘Hindus’. As explained by the Hindu-ideologue J.S. Karandikar in his Marathi book Hindutvavada “Although Jains, Buddhists, Vedic, Burmese, Arya, Sikh , Manbhava, belong to different religions sects Hinduism is alone the spring source of all these sects and these have grown into separate branches at various times for various reasons .This leads to the pan-hinduistic position of Viveknanda stating that any religion in the world has its ultimate origin in Hinduism, but we do not want to connect Christian and Islamic religions by such far fetched relationship.”

Such being the Vedic pedigree and genesis of the term Hindutva one can well realize Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s somewhat tortuous journey towards accepting the ‘synonymousness’ of Hindutva and Bharatiyatva. But does it mean that the
Bharatiya Janata Party will change its name as “Hindu” Janata Party. It is inconceivable that the BJP will take this ultimate nomenclatural ideological leap because the term “Hindutva” for all its rigmarole of all inclusive Hinduishness cannot connote the comprehensiveness, breadth and a certain secular cultural synthesis peculiar to the confluence of a medley of religions, Eastern and Western, that have grown together through centuries, in the term “Bharatiya”.

And the moment BJP re-christians itself in a rash Hindu brainwave it will be immediately branded as ‘fundamentalist’ and ‘communal’ like Muslim League or Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Hence one can make out why with all its ideological compulsions to paint the Indian map with saffron colour the BJP has prudently continued with the term ‘Bharatiya’, and still has innermost reservations that ‘Hindutva’ and ‘Bharatiyatva’ cannot be one and the same.

**HINDUTVA AND MINORITIES**

And with all such irreconciliable inconsistencies and reservations on the meaning of the term “Hindu” in practical terms the majority of those residing in India, having faith in Vedas, and those not believing in Vedas such as Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists are bundled together as Hindus on the specious consideration that these are all following a Hindu way of life and hence are taken to be followers of Hinduism. This is precisely where the crux of the Minority problem, its communalization lies; just because Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs have grown together through centuries with the rest of the Brahminic Hindus and inevitably other religious and ethnic minorities and there is an intermingling of custom, tradition and culture it cannot simply mean that the non-Hindu or non-Vedics have forsaken their individual religious and ethnic identities. Likewise is the case of Christians and Muslims in India that although they are forbidden from the mainstream of the Pan-Hinduistic culture, yet the fact remains that as much as the Hindu, Jains and Buddhists have influenced each other equally these so called alien faiths have not remained aloof nor have not remained uninfluenced and certainly played an important role in the synthesis of Indian or Bharatiya, and not Hindu culture.

The whole terminological muddle and the fundamentalist division in the Indian context can be traced to the desperate and impossible quest of the fanatic elements in the original Vedic Brahmanic, that is, the so called ‘committed to Hindutva philosophy to fraudulently gobble minorities like Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs in their grand design to create a ‘Hindu Rashtra’ as a theological counterpoint to the major minority of the Muslims in India. By a clever stroke of constitutional drafting this was accomplished by such eminent draftsman of the **Fundamantal Rights Sub Committee** comprising of stalwarts like Dr. Ambedkar and Dr. Munshi when **Article 25** relating to religious freedom and particularly its **Explanation 2** including Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs in the definition of Hindus was finalized without proper discussion. And if constitutional stalwarts including its very architech Dr. Ambedkar who had publicly burnt **Manu Smriti** could be such unwitting victims of the so-called Hindutva tradition so as to obliterate the separate religious identities of well defined religious minorities albeit under the constitutional cover of certain limited objective one can well understand the logic of the Frankensteinian spread of Hindutva today intent on eliminating the
smaller religious denominations like Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. While Sikhs and Buddhists cannot be easily dealt with what with the militant and uncompromising character of the one and the universal impact of the other Jains alone are left to fend for themselves with their non-violent creed.

**CONSTITUTIONAL SUBTERFUGE AND AMBEDKAR**

This constitutional subterfuge, or almost a terminological sleight of hand, was very much in evidence in the then Law minister, Dr. Ambedkar’s comments in the Clause by Clause discussion of his *Hindu Code Bill* in Parliament from 5th Feb. 1951 to 25th Sept. 1951 when various eminent Hindu and Muslim members, and particularly Sikh members took serious objection of the terms ‘Hindu’ comprising Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains. They objected to its communal, discriminatory character and were strongly critical of its circumlocutory, round about and circuitous way of defining who is *Hindu*. Some members very clearly stated that the Bill in whatever form it was passed should not be forced on any section of the Hindu community or the Sikhs or Jains.

Dr. Ambedkar tried to brush aside these objections in a magisterial manner by saying that the “peculiarity about the Hindu religion, as I understand it, that it is one religion which has got a legal framework integrally associated with it… it would not be difficult to understand why Sikhs are brought under the Hindu religion, why Buddhists are brought under the Hindu religion and Jains are brought under the Hindu religion…In this country although religions have changed the Law has remained one… The Jains come and ask: ‘What are you going to do to us? Are you going to make us Hindus? The Sikhs say the same thing. The Buddhists say the same thing. My answer to that is this: I cannot help it. You have been following a single law system and it is too late now for anyone to say that he shall reject this legal system whole sale… That cannot be done. Therefore, the application of the Hindu Law and the Hindu Code to Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs is a historical development to which you and I cannot give any answer.” *(Dr. Ambedkar and the Hindu Code Bill, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Vol.14, Part Two, 1995, Pp.886-888)*

Dr. Ambedkar’s contention of a historical and hegemonic operation of *Hindu Law* in India was categorically rebutted by Sardar Hukam Singh and Sardar B.S.Mann. Sardar B.S. Mann quoted *Mayne’s Hindu Law* which says: “As regards the village communities the Punjab and the adjoining districts are the region in which alone they flourish in their primitive rigour. This is the tract which the Aryans must have first traversed on entering India. Yet it seems to have been there that Brahminism most completely failed to take root and the religious element has never entered into their secular law.” Commenting on this Sardar Mann said: “If I have enjoyed emancipation from Manu for so long a time, will it not be tyranny of the times if I have to submit now to a modern Manu. Let me give credit to Manu that at least he was original in many respects, but my modern Manu –Oh, what a fall has he had!”

In this context I would like to refer to a searching analysis of the Hindu Law by Madhu Kishwar in her article *Codified Hindu Law : Myth and Reality* published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* August 3, 1994.
Madhu Kishwar has rightly argued in this paper that “There is almost no principle introduced by the Hindu personal code which did not already exist somewhere in the India as accepted law. On the other hand, there were several existing, much more liberal principles which were decimated by the Hindu code. In their determination to put an end to the growth of custom, the reformers were putting an end to the essence of Hindu law. But they persisted in calling their codification ‘Hindu’.”

Even more pertinently she has put her finger precisely on the crux of the issue in Hindu Law when she notes: “There was no single or uniform body of canon law or Hindu pope to legitimise a uniform code for all the diverse communities of India, no Shankaracharyya whose writ ran all over the country.”

**SUPREME COURT ON HINDUTVA**

But while the BJP is willing to stike but afraid to wound the ‘Bharatiyatva’ concept frontally despite Mr Vajpayee’s categorical assertion that Hindutva is synonymous with Bharatiyatva because it is still Bharatiya Janata Paty and not ‘Hindu’ ‘Janata party its Hindutva ideology has received judicial imprimature from the Supreme Court of India in its judgment in the Election Petition case. The Supreme Court judgment in cases against the Shiv Sena BJP elected representatives upholding the concept of Hindutva as the “way of life of the people in the sub-continent” shows how even the highest judicial forum cannot remain immune to the deceptive spell of the Vedic Hindu metaphysical concepts and so-called Hindu tradition.

The Supreme Court judgment is at once a high watermark of the Hindutva impact in the highest judicial echelons of the country and also a crucial challenge to the Preambulary secular constitutional character of the Indian Nation. The Supreme Court in its judgment has attempted to do something which was not dictated by its jurisdiction nor called for, that is, arriving at a definition of ‘Hindutva’ and ‘Hinduism’ something from which even the foremost scholars have shied away. The apex court has rushed in where the angles fear to tread and veritably opened a Pandora’s box. It did not pause to consider that if Hinduism and Hindutva per se is a way of life it could be similarly the case with Islam, Christanity or any other religion. In ancient times India was known as Jambu-Dvipa or Bharatvarsha. As Mahamahopadhyaya P.V. Kane says in his monumental History of Dharma Shastra the correct word to describe our country must be Bharatvarsha.

It is simply incredible therefore to find such colossal ignorance of our ancient Indian heritage and culture. Perhaps it is not ignorance but simply the judges were unable to dissociate from their minds the very deep impact of their Hindu upbringing and look dispassionately at the fundamentalist manifestation of the ‘Hindu’ spectre of the BJP brand. Such ‘faithful’ aberrations even at the highest judicial level are enough disquieting indication of the irreparable damage being done to the secular constitutional fabric.

In a strong rebuttal of the Supreme Court judgments in an article Brenda Cossman and Ratna Kapur (Economic and Political Weekly, Sept 21,1996) have argued that...
“Hindutva continues to be a political category that at its core is an attack on the legitimacy of minority rights” and that the “Supreme Court has failed to understand the assault on religious minorities that is a constituent element of the concept of Hindutva. From its roots in the writing of Savarkar to its contemporary deployment by the likes of Bal Thackeray, Manohar Joshi, Sadhvi Ritambhara and L.K. Advani, Hindutva has been based on the idea of Indian society fractured by the conflict between Hindus and Muslims, wherein the majority of Hindus have been and continue to be oppressed at the hands of the Muslim minority, Hindutva is a call to unite against these religious minorities; at best it is a call to assimilate these minorities into the ostensibly more tolerant fabric of Hinduism, and at its more modest assimilationist mode and in its more extreme and violent mode, Hindutva is an attack on the rights, indeed, on the very legitimacy of religious minorities. As a call to assimilate or otherwise undermine the very identity and integrity of minority communities, it is based on a total disregard and lack of respect for other religious group.” (Emphasis supplied)

This is precisely the dilemma and danger the Jain community is contending with in its fight for recognition as a minority community. In a powerful theoretical exploration of Hindutva and fascism and the RSS’ ability to capitalise on such anti secular traditions Aijaz Ahmad says in his recent book Lineages of the Present: Political Essays that we in India need to be especially careful in our understanding of the relationship between fascism and the oppression of minorities. As put by him, “Racism, in our case, communalism, can arise as the centerpiece of fascist demagogy and fascists can then fashion a comprehensive programme for organizing the heretofore unorganized mass morbidity; countless members of the minority can undoubtedly suffer in the process, and there may be even a fully fledged holocaust; but the real object of the fascists is not the elimination of the minority but the construction of a fascist state, hence the subjugation of the whole society.”

The hegemonic operation of the Hindutva fascist ideology spawned by the Sangha parivar combine of BJP VHP Ram Sewak Samity Hindu Sangam et al has penetrated the constitutionally forbidden precincts of the Supreme Court; and its march is unabating as it aspires even to encroach upon the ideologically impregnable fortress of Marxism as is evident in the extravagant claim made in a book entitled The Experience of Hinduism by Sadashiv Bhave, State University of New York Press, 1988: "Christians, nay even the Marxists, of today’s India cannot help partaking of it they are all Hindu Bharatiya at heart.. What is it to be Hindu Bharatiya? What does it involve? Chiefly, the accepting of the other world as well as this World, the attempt to reconcile the two. But between the two the other world comes first. Brahman and Maya are both real, but Brahman is the ultimate reality. This ultimate/provisional duality has been resolved into a unity in the Vedanta of non duality.” (quoted in Gail Omvedt’s Dalit Visions p.8)

Gail Omvedt pertinently notes: “This assertion leads to the political line of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad that there may be various versions of what is defined as the “Hindu tradition (Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Arya Samaj and Sanatan dharma re the ones usually mentioned), but there is no question that the core is “traditional Hinduism-sanatan dharma.”
Such being the signs of the Hindutva times in India the writing on the wall is extremely disquieting for the minorities. Yet one can still discern a way out in this fundamentalist miasma in the transhumanistic message given to the world by Mahavira, the 24th and last Tirthamkara I shall revert to a discussion of the abiding message of peace, non-violence and universal compassion given by Mahavira.

MAHAVIRA AND HIS MESSAGE OF AHIMSA

It was the priceless legacy of non-violent culture nurtured by ages of spiritual cultivation which Mahavira Vardhamana the 24th Tirthankara was destined to inherit and propagate for the enduring benefit of humanity. Mahavira was the ascetic leader of the renascent Jainism. As the propagator of the principle of ahimsa paramo dharman non-violence is the greatest religion- Mahavira preached fervently against the decadent ritualistic practices of Brahmanism culminating in the supposition that propitiation of heavenly deities like Indra and Varuna through sacrificial fires was the highest religion. Mahavira pointed out to his followers that such slaughter of animals was the very travesty of religion. He stressed that all life is sacred and equal.

Mahavira was the scion of the princely family of Licchavi, the son of king Siddhartha of Kundapura and queen Trisala, daughter of Licchavi king Cetaka. Mahavira belonged to the Jnatri clan. There is unanimity among both the principal sects of Jainas, Digambara and Shvetambara on the place of his birth being Kundapura in Videha (Hari Purana, 2,4, Uttara Purana, 74, 251) and hence Bhagwana Mahavira is also known as Videhaputra and Videhasukumara. He is also spoken of an ‘Vesaliya’ (Sutra Kritanga, 1,2: Uttaradhyana 6) which confirms according to Dr.Hiralal Jain his Vaisali citizenship. Therefore, the western indologists Dr. Hoernle and Jacobi are inclined to accept Vaisali as the correct birthplace of Mahavira.

There is slight variation regarding certain incidents in Mahavira’s life in Digambara and Swetambara traditions. According to Digambara version he remained a bachelor till the age of 30 and then was ordained as an ascetic. But according to the Swetambara tradition Mahavira married and had a daughter married to Jamala who was his disciple for some time. While at the time of diksa Mahavira discarded all his clothes as Digambara tradition states, the Swetambaras say that he did not discard all his clothes for one and half years after diksa. Bhagwan Mahavira attained kevalajnana (omniscience) after twelve years of hard rigorous penance on the banks of the river Rijukula near Jrmabhakagrama under a sala tree. For the next thirty years Bhagwan Mahavira was an itinerant of various regions propagating his teachings and the establishment of his Ford (Tirtha). This is unanimously agreed upon by both the sects. But while according to Digambara tradition Mahavira gave his first sermon on the Vipulacala mountain near Rajgraha, the Swetambaras maintain that he delivered it near Pava. Bhagwana Mahavira attained to nirvana at the age of 72 years near Pavapuri according to both the traditions.

That the saints and prophets are stoned in their time was true of Bhagwan Mahavira also. During his ascetic peregrinations in Magadha and Bengal Mahavira braved inclement weather and suffered from human wickedness and persecution. He bore
everything with a sense of equanimity and constant indifference. Thus Bhagwan Mahavira lived up to his hononific- a great valiant being. Soon with the attainment of omniscience animosity gave place to reverence and as Dr. Schubring puts it: “but with his fame increasing, the vicissitudes he had to suffer from the side of humans ceased and changed into respect and reverence.” (The Doctrine of the Jainas, P. 36)

MAHAVIRA : MAN & HIS MISSION

What kind of a human being was Mahavira and how did he organize his religious order? As Dr. Colette Caillat puts it: “One knows but little about the personality of the Jina. He appears to have been of a proud character of not so affable a temperament as that of Buddha or of Parsva. If, as it is probable, from the traits revealed by the Jaina scriptures of his personality one can recognise in him a systematic mind. A propensity for classification and categories (which are not rare in Indian works, a taste for numbers, calculations, geometric figures and a tendency to convince rather than to persuade..." the monograph Le Jinisme translated into English from French by Bal Patil)

This is corroborated by Dr. Schubring who mentions of “Mahavira’s success as a teacher” monumental figures of which are given in Jinacarita, 134. Further, as regards the manner of Bhagwan Mahavira’s preaching: “For as well as always he remains impersonal, and even where he rejects contradictory often rather foolish- teachings of other preachers (annutthiya) he does so by speaking in naked antithesis. It was probably in his nature to be non-committal and stern... He would never have been able to succeed without giving his words touch of originality and power, and his oratorical gifts is certain to have excelled the high measure customary in India by far...” (Ibid. Pp. 39-40)

Mahavira preached in Ardhamagadhi, the language of the people and his spoken words can be discerned in Thananga, esp. in Thananga 4. As Dr. Schubring observes: “In them Mahavira renders proof of his extensive practical experience of both his profound knowledge of the world and of human nature, and had they been handed down to us in an oratorical form, the Canon of the Jains would certainly be not inferior to that of the Buddhists aesthetically. ” Dr. Schubring also pays Mahavira the compliment of having been “the most versatile thinker we know of in ancient India.”(Ibid. p.40)

Unexcelled as a teacher Mahavira was also a great organiser of Jaina ascetics and the laity both male and female. The Order of the Jain Samgha is again a clear confirmation of his systematic thinking. He divided his disciples into four sections as I) Muni, ii) Aryika, iii) Sravak and iv) Sravika, the First two belonged to the monastic order while the last two were of the laity. This was Mahavira’s four-fold Samgha.

What are the salient points of Mahavira’s teaching? He was not only an original thinker but also a bold religious innovator and a fearless reformer. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this last Tirthankara of Jainism gave a new orientation to the time honoured fundamental principles of Jaina religion and its unique ethical system. Dr. Schubring emphatically states that Mahavira’s teachings indicate a definite
development in practical ethics beyond Parsva’s ideas where the four-fold morality, the *caujjama dhamma* is replaced by the *panca-mahavaiya sapadikamana dhamma*. In prescribing clearly the commandments regarding sexual abstention and non-possession Mahavira did away with certain ambiguity in Parsva’s teaching and made his fifth commandment applicable to both sexes. Mahavira also introduced certain rigorousness in ascetic practices by discarding clothes because his predecessor Parsva had only clothed adherents. Thus one can say that Jainism attained to a reformation and renaissance in Mahavira’s time and it would be proper to speak of Mahavira’s Jainism from sixth century B.C. though he was not its founder. There is also certain harmonious balance in this conception because in his previous birth Mahavira was the grandson of the first *Tirthankara* Rishabdeva who had told Bharata that his son Marica would be the 24th *Tirthankara*. And it is but natural that the last *Tirthankara* in a cycle of time should make the circle of Jainistic evolution complete by infusing it with a new dynamic ethos of spiritual rebirth which is continuing with unabated vitality in this 2600th *janma kalyanaka* of Mahavira.

Mahavira’s protest against violence to animals in the name of religion was a magnificently humane gesture and it reawakened the people to the innate dignity of all life under the sun however small and mean in the eye of man. To have discovered unity of life in all organic phenomena and to have stressed the right to live peacefully of all creatures was the greatest spiritual triumph of Mahavira. He based his teaching on the most obvious principle that “all creatures like to live, none wants to die, and therefore all life should be protected.” (*Acharanga Sutra*)

**MAHAVIRA & HIS ‘ALLEGED’ MEAT-EATING**

It is in this context of Mahavira’s high renown as the apostle of non-violence I wish to digress here on an incident alleged to have taken place in Mahavira’s life. In this incident Bhagwan Mahavira is stated so have partaken of *marjarakrta kukkutamamsa* given by a *Sravika* named Revati of Mendhiyagrama a remedy for high fever caused by *tejolessya* thrown by his renegade disciple Gosala.

Whatever the explanation one cannot believe that the arch-missionary of *ahimsa* could have partaken of meat to save his life. It is *prima facie* patently absurd that a preacher of *ahimsa* who is avowed to *pancamahavartas* as a duly ordained Jaina ascetic to seek the way of salvation according to Jaina canon would even dream of touching meat to save his life. It at all the incident is faithfully reported in the scriptures the phrase must be ascribed metaphorical meaning as suggested by Prof. Jacobi in his revised opinion of his translation of *Jaina Sutras* as expressed in his letter quoted in Professor H.R. Kapadia’s article ‘Prohibition of Flesh-eating in Jainism’ published in the *Review of Religion and Philosophy* Vol. IV. No.2, Sept. 1933). I think therefore that the story must be rejected as highly apocryphal.

Again I find it rather strange that a renowned indologist Professor Ludwig Alsdorf should assert: “It is needless to refute in detail Jacobi’s argumentation (not completely cited here): a dispassionate reading of *Ayaranga* section should be enough to convince the readers that the text is really meat and flesh.” (From my unpublished translation of Prof. Alsdorf’s German monograph *History of Vegetarianism and Cow-
worship in Ancient India). With due respect I have to submit that Prof. Alsdorf has completely failed to appreciate the spirit of *ahimsa* in Jainism and how it would be inconceivable especially for an avowed ascetic leader like Mahavira who is moreover the most revered *Tirthankara* (Ford-maker) to partake of meat to save his life.

In this regard when I wrote to Dr. A.N. Upadhye when translating this monograph by Alsdorf pointing out the utter incongruity of the story Dr. Upadhye responded to me saying that I was right in my contention that “it was difficult to conceive the arch-missionary of *ahimsa* would partake of meat under any circumstances, however, it is a matter for further research and enquiry why such words with double meaning were used at all in our important ancient scriptures.” I guess it must have been an interpolation in the original text.

Here it would be important to relate how *ahimsa* in Buddhism is not absolute as compared to Jainism. Buddhism has not been as thoroughgoing as Jainism in its observance of *ahimsa*. Buddhism justifies meat-eating so long as one does not kill the animal for his food but purchases meat from the butcher.

But in Jainism holding the principle of *ahimsa paramo dharmah*- non violence is the greatest religion- vegetarianism is strictly observed. The Jains have been the primary exponents of vegetarianism in India. The Jains have taken vegetarianism to its logical conclusion. No other religions community in India has gone so far to avoid killing of any kind of organic life for the purpose of nourishment.

Since Gautam Buddha, founder of Buddhism, belonged to the same region of Magadha as Mahavira, the 24th *Tirthamkar* of Jainism and both were contemporaries it was assumed erroneously that Jainism is an offshoot of Buddhism. It is now accepted that Jainism is not only older than Buddhism but as shown earlier in this essay it has got its roots going deep into the antiquity in pre-Aryan and pre-Vedic times.

**MAHAVIRA & BUDDHA**

Mahavira was an elder contemporary of Buddha. As a matter of a fact, Buddhist literature and history establish that after he had renounced the world Buddha was for some time an ascetic following the Jain cult of Parsvanatha, the 23rd *Tirthamkar* whose death took place 250 Years before Mahavira.

In the Buddhist scripture *Majjhimanikaya Mahasihanada Sutta 12* Buddha himself tells his disciples of his severe ascetic experiences when he first took to asceticism at the hands of Muni Phitasesrava who was a follower of Parsvanatha. Buddha has narrated how he went naked, took food in his own palms and followed various other rigorous restrictions expected of a *Sramana* ascetic. Buddha followed this practice for some time when he felt it was too rigorous, and therefore gave up Jain ascetic practice, wore saffron-coloured cloth and founded his own middle-path which became known as Buddhism.
Modern Buddhist scholar and Buddhist Bhikshu Dharmananda Kosambi has said; “In Tripitakas, there is a mention in several places about Nirgrantha- Jainas. From this it is clear that the Nirgrantha tradition was in existence many years before Buddha. It is mentioned in the Anguttara Nikaya that one “Bappa” named Shakya (belonging to the clan of Shakyas in which Buddha was born) was a lay follower (Sravaka) of the Nirgranthas (Jain). In the same Sutta’s Atthahatha it is also said that this “Bappa” was an uncle of Buddha.”

It may be mentioned here that Nirgrantha means unattached, without possessions, an ancient name for the Jain community. It should be noted that both Siddhartha and Trishala, parents of Mahavira, are described in the Acharanga-Sutra, Jain scripture as followers of Parsva.

As noted by Padmanabh S. Jaini, Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of California, in his book The Jain Path of Purification: “Buddhist texts refer to the existence of large numbers of Niganthas (unattached ones) who followed the Catuyama Samvara, the fourfold restraint that Jacobi and others have convincingly identified with the teaching of Parsva. Such references, moreover, suggest a Jain community older than that of the Buddhists, hence predating Mahavira himself.” (P.10)

As Prof. Jacobi notes; “The Nirgranthas are frequently mentioned by the Buddhists, even in the oldest part of the Pitakas. But I have not yet met with a distinct mention of the Buddha in any of the old Jain Sutras. As it is inconsistent with our assumption of a contemporaneous origin of both creeds, we are driven to the conclusion that the Nirgranthas were not a newly founded sect of Buddha’s time. This seems to have been the opinion of the Pitakas too, for we find no indication to the contrary in them.” (On Mahavira and His Predecessors” in The Indian Antiquary, IX, 1880 158-163)

Again as Dr. Herman Jacobi, states in his article on Jainism in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (Vol II, pp465-74). ‘Notwithstanding the radical difference in their philosophical notions, Jainism and Buddhism being outside the place of Brahmanism, present resemblances in outward appearance, so that even Indian writers occasionally have confounded them. It is therefore not to be wondered that some European scholars who became acquainted with Jainism through inadequate samples of Jain literature easily persuaded themselves that it was an offshoot of Buddhism. But it has since been proved that their theory is wrong.”

**MAHAVIRA’S TEACHINGS**

To revert to the discussion of Mahavira’s teachings it was logical that after stressing the supremacy of nonviolence in human activity Mahavira should have simultaneously emphasized the cardinal importance of self-control. Non-violence did not mean merely abstention from physical violence: it was abstention from violence in thought and word as well. Therefore, he rightly stressed that to control the self is the hardest thing to achieve. In Mahavira’s time Varnasrama system had congealed into unmitigated casteism. It was a far cry indeed from the noble and universal principles enunciated in the ancient scriptures. Mahavira instinctively felt it to be his mission to lift this curtain
of ignorance which made man to hate man, and to reawaken in him a sense of innate equality of all human beings.

Mahavira, therefore, declared that deeds and not birth make man what he is. In a trenchant saying in Uttaradhyayana Sutra Mahavira pinpoints this: "Nobody becomes a Sramana by shaving his head, nor does a man become a Brahman by reciting Om. One is not hailed as muni by residing in the forest or become an ascetic by wearing grassclothes. One becomes a Sramana by a sense of equality, a Brahmin by chastity, a muni by knowledge and an ascetic by penance. Man becomes a Brahmin ksatriya, Vaisya or Sudra by his deeds only."

It was a revolutionary assertion in the context of the times and Mahavira admitted into the Jains ascetic fold all people including women regardless of caste considerations. Under the banner of Jainism for the first time man could aspire to open the higher portals of knowledge. And Mahavira taught that every man was entitled to salvation – a state of soul shorn of all karma- on his own without the intervention of any authority.

The operation of karma theory is something unique in the Jaina religious system because it dispenses utterly with any divine agency. Jainism does not recognise a supreme being as the creator of this universe. It says that the world is there from beginningless time and it will be there without end. There is not one entity charged with the conduct of this vast universe because if it were so a perfect godhead could not have tolerated so much evil and apparent inconsistency in human affairs. Also, an impersonal supreme being could not possibly concern Himself with mundane affairs because it would be a taint on His perfection.

And so having dispensed with a supreme arbiter of human destiny Jainism asks each individual to strike his own path for his salvation. It devises the eminently rational concept of karma according to which every individual shall reap the fruit of his actions, good or bad, in this life or in cycle of births and deaths till he has completely wiped out the karmic taint. Thus, Jainism places a great responsibility on the frail human shoulders, and gives each man a passport to Godhood only warning him that he may do evil at his own peril because each one will have to reap as he sows. The essence of this teaching is that man is truly the architect of his destiny and that the liberation of soul from the last vestige of karmic particles is synonymous with supreme bliss or salvation commensurate with divinity.

This dispensing with the divine instrumentality leads one to the mistaken notion that Jainism is an atheistic religion. Nothing could be farther from truth. As already pointed out above in the discussion of Jain concept of God and worship of Tirthamkara and explained by Dr.A.N.Upadhye “By God Jainism understands a liberated soul as well as the Tirthamkara, who is the highest spiritual ideal after which every soul can aspire: the God is an example to inspire and to guide. Thus the basis of Jaina conception is much different from that of Hinduism…Respectful prayers are offered to the Tirthamkaras, liberated soul, preceptor, preacher and monk because these represent various stages of the soul’s spiritual progress. …Jainism is thus the religion of self-help and can be practiced by the self-reliant, strong and brave.” (JAINISM by Colette Caillat, A.N. Upadhye & Bal Patil, (Macmillan 1974)
The uniqueness of the Jaina *karma* doctrine can be illustrated by pointing out that there is no room for pre-determination or Nature in it. Determinism leads one to postulate that whatever happens happens necessarily: this rules out exercise of Free Will. As regards Nature its all-pervasive nature is succinctly expressed in the following verse in *Bhagvad-gita*:

But the Jaina theory of *karma* which clearly lays down that one reaps as one sows rules out any external agency but the self in the formation and elimination of *karmas*. The uniqueness of the Jaina *karma* doctrine is not only fascinating but also scientific and rational in its logical process of cause and effect. Indeed, as Dr. Mohanlal Mehta shows in his monograph on *Jaina Psychology* the Jaina account of *Karma* viewed in its dual dialectic nature and synthesis becomes the basis of Jain psychology.

According to Jainism every individual soul in its pristine state of purity possesses infinite apprehension, infinite comprehension, infinite bliss and infinite power. But this untrammeled spiritual power of the soul comes to be obscured by the foreign impact of physical matter just as sun's light is obscured by dust, fog or cloud. As put by Dr. Mehta: “The Jaina tradition distinguishes between physical *karma* and psychical *karma*. The former is material in nature, whereas the latter comprises those psychical effects and states which are produced in the soul due to the influx of physical *karma*. The former is the *karmic* matter and enters into the self. The physical and psychical *karmas* are mutually related to each other as cause and effect.” (*Jaina Psychology* p. 15) This is expressed in *Sarvarthasiddhi* of Shri Pujyapada as ‘The action of the body, the organ of speech and the mind is called *yoga* (activity) and it (this threefold activity) is influx (asrava)’. (*Reality*, Engl. tran. by S. A. Jain Pp.167-68)

The liberation from the shackles of *karma* which are fundamentally eighth in kind, namely, i) *jnanavaraniya karma*, (comprehension—obscuring, ii) *darsanavaraniya karma*—apprehension-obscuring, iii) *Vedaniya*-feeling—reducing, iv) *mohaniyakarma*-deluding, v) *ayus karma*—age-determining, vi) *nama karm* physique-making, vii) *gotra karma*- status—determining and viii) *antarya karma*—power—obscuring, is attainable in Jainism through a avowed practice of *ratnatraya dharma* as put in a *Sutra*: *samyagdarsana jnanacaritrani moksamargah*—Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct constituting together the path of salvation. A harmonious attainment of all the three together leads one to *moksa*.

**BHAGVAD GITA AND THEORY OF KARMA**

**A NOTE ON THE HINDU VIEW OF SALVATION**

I wish to refer here to my note given to Dr. A.L. Basham, author of *The Wonder that was India*, and Professor at the Australian National University, School of General Studies, when he delivered his *Heras Memorial Lectures* for the year 1964 at the *Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture*, at *St. Xavier’s College*, Bombay in response to which Dr. Basham recast him third lecture on *Religious life in Ancient India* and a reference to the same note appears in the published version of the lectures entitled: *Aspects of Ancient India Culture* ([Asia] p.30)
“The Hindu view of Salvation with all the secondary emphasis on the conscientious carrying out of the duties attendant upon the three subsidiary goals of Dharma, Artha and Kama—piety, pleasure, and profit—had the sole effect of turning one’s attention from the problems of this life. Individual became concerned with his salvation, his attainment of Moksha by shedding away all the Karmic mundane coils, and social fellowship was all forgotten.

“Such an inculcation, thought admittedly not perhaps intended one can exonerate the Hindu view of salvation from such an implicit assumption because what it meant on its positive side was an escape from the self centred life, a release into a fuller and wider consciousness Here and Now had the undesirable effect of cultivating a studied indifference to and negation of this life as merely an illusion to be wondered at, got exasperated by but never to be challenged.

“The negative side of the eminently noble view of salvation only flourished making the individual blind to everything else and of course, very honourably too and concentrate in ivory tower of the ascetic ideal, musing with an immense self complacent feeling the utter hopelessness and the vacuity of all human endeavour.

“The consequent lack of the development of a practical and social ethic did indeed have grave repercussions on the subsequent evolution of the Indian history. India did remain shackled in medieval times till late in the nineteenth century, and it would not be unfair to say that even now this traditional view is a chief obstacle in the way of the emergence of a modern way of life embodying humanistic social principle in the state policy. How far do you think this criticism is valid?

“My point is that in ancient India the other-worldly ideal gained an upper hand out all proportions, and relegated everything else to the background. It created an over all climate of world-weariness crystallized in an attitude that life is no doubt an intolerable burden to be borne, but it is not given to question why it is so. We can only pray and wait.

“Was this not a natural consequence of placing too great an emphasis on the otherworldly goal? And did it not result into a socially apathetic ethic?

“And moreover, there is another difficulty. You may act in a disinterested spirit, and renounce the fruits of action, but the point is whether you have acted at all. Dr. Radhakrishnan has interpreted this philosophy to mean that the question is not, what shall I do to be saved? But in what spirit shall I do? Detachment of spirit and not renunciation of the world is what is demanded from us. Action done in a disinterested spirit does not blind or sully the soul.”

“But this leaves the question unanswered: How such concern got itself translated in some tangible action as disintinguished from merely individual efforts for his welfare? Did it transcend into the social spheres around him? What exactly are the implications of ancient Indian view of life Negative or Positive, and how did such a view react on life around?” BAL PATIL

Dr. Basham was good enough to respond to my Note as the following remarks in the published version of his lectures shows. An Excerpt from Dr. A.L. Basham’s Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture containing some remarks in response to the above note:
“RELIGIOUS LIFE:

“I have decided to recast this lecture in the light of a remarkable document, which was handed to me yesterday by a young man who attended my first two meetings and was apparently rather impressed by my emphasis on the essential individualism of ancient Hindu thought. Among other things, he writes: “The Hindu view of salvation meant on its positive side an escape from the self centred way of life, a release into a fuller and wider consciousness here and now. But it had the undesirable effect negatively of cultivation a studied indifference to and a negation of this life and merely an illusion to be wondered at, got exasperated by, but never to be challenged. This negative side of salvation only flourished by making the individual blind to everything else… and enabling him to concentrate in an ivory tower on the ascetic ideal, musing with an immensely superior and pleasant fueling on the utter hopelessness and the vacuity of all human endeavour. It was all maya and so naturally could not be bothered about.”

“This vary interesting note gives a personal and pessimistic view of the classical Indian attitude to life, and its author concludes “with a request for kind consideration of this aspect in your lecture on religious thought.” So I have revised the notes of this lecture, and perhaps some of my remarks may give an implicit answer, if not a direct one, to the writer of this very interesting, sincere and eloquently written document.”

Again in 1968 in reply to my letter concerning the problem of decipherment of the Indus script Dr. Basham wrote (dated 12th March):

“I was very pleased to receive your letter dated 3rd March, and I have not forgotten your intelligent and well-worded note, which stimulated me to alter the Hears lecture in question. I am glad that you found the printed version of the lectures stimulating…. I was interested in your notes about the Indus Valley civilization. It is full of problems and uncertainties and in my opinion, even with the most up to date methods and the use of computers; it is unlikely that the script will ever be deciphered, unless much new material in this script is discovered. “

I gratefully acknowledge the creative impetus to my further research in religious philosophy given by Dr. Basham’s spirit of giving due consideration to an opposite point of view in a democratic spirit. Later on I learnt that Dr. Basham was born in India and began his writing career as a journalist which again strikes a chord of affinity because I have been a journalist and writer all my life.

“THE GITA AS IT WAS” Rediscovering the Original Bhagavadgita

Almost a quarter century later after I questioned the karmayevadhi karaste ma phaleshu kadachana of Bhagavadgita I came across a remarkable book entitled as THE GITA AS IT WAS: Rediscovering the Original Bhagavadgita by Dr. Phulgenda Sinha (1986, Open Court,) In a hard-hitting critique of the Gita Sinha’s thesis is that Bhagavadgita as it is has been extensively interpolated.

As the author has analysed “the total number of verses in the original gita is 84. The original begins with the verse number 28 of the Bhagavadgita and ends with verse 43
in Chapter III. Thus the content of the original gita is found within the first three chapters of the extant Bhagvadgita. The remaining fifteen chapters from Chapter IV to XVIII, containing 538 verses, have been interpolated." (p.130)

In a devastating analysis of the far-reaching destructive consequences of systematic Brahminic interpolations on the Indian civilisation and culture after 8th century A.D. Sinha states: “Reworking the original Gita to form the Bhagvadgita was not merely the modification of a book. It was a surreptitious plot to dismantle the whole intellectual edifice of the Indian culture which had been built up over a thousand years. the changes not only stopped the tide of rationalism in Indian life but also seduced people into believing and accepting the false as genuine, alien as indigenous, religious as political, and mystical as rational. The consequences were deep, all-encompassing, and bewildering. India, indeed, was pushed into a ‘dark age’...the interpolators also made changes in many other works of that time to establish textual support in their favour. It was for this reason that the interpolations were made in the Rig Veda, the Epics, Samkhya Karika, and Yoga Sutra.” (p.105)

As further noted pertinently by the author: “(the) bands of proselytizers for the new Brahmanic faith were organized at four different centers (mathas) during the time of Shankaracharya. These teachers received increasing political protection and patronage. At the same time, the national opponents of the new faith were forced into silence. In such an atmosphere, the people had to accept the the doctrines of the new faith even when they did not agree with them. This enforced obedience of the Indian people towards the newly coined doctrines and codes of behaviour which, though beneficial to the Brahmans as a caste, were disastrous to India as a nation, as a political entity, and as a culture.” (Ibid.p.105)

FIVE JAIN MAHA VRATAS - GREAT VOWS

The five Great Vows enabling one to attain Ratnatraya are i) ahimsa – non-violence, ii) satya- truthfulness, iii) asteya-non-stealing, iv) brahmacarya- abstention from sensuality and v) a-parigraha-abstention from greed. This regimen of Vows or vratas is no doubt essential for the prevention of karmic matter and their psychic conversion, but it can be only a meaningful spiritual activity if it is simultaneously pursued with an equanimous meditative contemplation of the high emancipated destiny of the soul in a prayerful spirit. This process can be best characterized as what is known as samayika in Jainism.

It is in this context Dr.Upadhye’s remark quoted above that “Respectful prayers are offered to the Tirthamkaras, liberated soul, preceptor, preacher and monk because these represent various stages of the soul’s spiritual progress” becomes pertinent. Meditative prayer is found to occupy the focal point in the spiritual armoury of Jaina soul’s pilgrimage to moksa in its gradual ascent to salvation. But Jain prayer is not the primitive subjective type-vocal prayer in the popular sense of praise and petition "in which the whole of the intention is centred on the Being to whom prayer is addressed and not at all on the production of any desirable mental effects" as put by Robert H. Thouless in his classic study The Psychology of Religion.
JAINA PRAYER

The Jaina prayer represents an evolved form of meditation aimed at mental self-improvement and with a view to enter into communion with an elevated state of soul-consciousness after the emancipated ideal of which the mundane soul held in bondage by physical *karmas* is striving for realisation. If prayer is a mental exercise with a religious aim, then prayer in Jainism indeed attains to its highest rational point of spiritual evolution and this is one of the qualities to my mind which qualifies Jainism not only as a modern religion but truly a prophetic religion of the future.

The spirit of Jaina prayer is most sublimely expressed in the very first invocatory verse of Sri Pujyapada’s *Sarvarthasiddhi*:

```
मोक्षमार्गस्य नेतारं भेतारं कर्मभूतात्।
ज्ञातारं विश्वव्याप्तानं वदेत तद् गुणलब्धये।।
```

Which means “I bow to the Lord, the promulgator of the path to liberation, the destroyer of mountains of *karmas* and the knower of the whole of reality, so that I may realize these qualities.” (Eng.Tran. *Reality* by S.A.Jain) The essential orientation of Jaina prayer is introspective which ultimately is directed towards perfecting the inner soul of the individual person and not for asking solace or help.

The essence of Jaina invocation is self-culture. As Dr. Harisatya Bhattacharya explains the significance of Jaina prayer: “The offering of prayers to and the meditations of the God in Jainism- as in the highest form of a rational religion, - are perfectly disinterested.. No favours are sought from the God or the Gods and the result of the divine worship is simply the development and perfection of one’s self. This self-development and self-perfection do not depend on the grace of God or any external being but are due to pure self culture.” (*The Jaina Prayer*, p.116)

To illustrate the cosmic, scientific and in a manner secular significance of Jaina prayer, I think, it would be best to cite the *Namaskara Mahamantra* in Jainism which represents the *summum bonum* of the Jaina philosophical teaching. The *mantra* is:

```
णमो अरिहंताणं
णमो सिद्धाणं
णमो आयरियाणं
णमो उवज्ञायाणं
णमो लोकेष्वसङ्कृतृणं
```

This means : Obisance to the *Arahats*: Obeisance to the *Siddhas*; Obeisance to the *Acaryas*; Obeisance to the *Upadhyayas*; Obeisance to the *Sadhus* in the universe. Every Jaina is enjoined to repeat and contemplate this great *Mantra* with all meditative reverence in his heart, spirit and soul. One can say that this great Jaina incantation reveals the master key to Jainism and its philosophical catholicity encompassing the universe of knowledge and purity of conduct wheresoever it is found regardless of the narrow religious and bigoted sectarian considerations. The last *mantra namo*
loesavvasahunam shows that saintliness and purity of conduct is venerable to a Jaina where very it is found on the face of the earth. I think this represents the most elevated cultural ethos of Jaina ethical teaching embodying the time-honoured Indian cultural doctrine vasudhaiv kutumbakam – world as a family.

**SYADVADA ANEKANTA : JAIN THEORY OF RELATIVITY OF TRUTH**

But the most distinctive aspect of the Jaina teaching is the Jaina theory of judgment-logic known as syadvada which purports to show that every judgment or point of view is relative in character. According to the Jaina epistemology every object of knowledge is possessed of a huge complexity of characters as regards substance, quality and modification governed by the universal law of organization, destruction and permanence – utpada vyaya dhrauvya. An object in its entirety can be comprehended only by an omniscient being, but imperfect beings toiling within the coils of karma and confined to a particular point in space and time can only see it from a particular point and partial point of view. Such partial knowledge is called in Jainism as naya. There are seven nayas according as an object is referred to from the point of view of the substance and its modifications.

The essence of such human judgment is that everything that we can say by way of forming judgment about an object is only true in reference to the standpoint taken and the aspect considered. The story of the six blind men and the elephant trying to guess what the animal was like illustrates the dilemma of finite human perception a precise connotation to which is given in the Jaina theory of syadvada.

This formulation of the concept of the relativity of reality in human sphere as embodied in the doctrine anantadharmatmakam vastu – object endowed with infinite characteristics- is the bedrock of the Jaina metaphysical system: it is not so much a piece of logical jugglery as an eminently rational and practical way of looking at things if one is not to come to grief through an intolerant insistence on one’s own point of view. It is a doctrine of peaceful co-existence of conflicting and opposing philosophies. As Dr.A.N.Upadhye points out this” analytical approach to reality has saved him (A Jaina) from extremism, dogmatism and fanaticism, and has further bred in him remarkable intellectual toleration, a rare human virtue indeed,”

The pertinent relevance of the anekantavada which seeks to synthesize harmoniously differing points of view into an integrated conception of reality cannot be stressed too highly for our strife- ridden times. It is in fact a plea for moral détente, a political version of which is so much in vogue in the troubled international relations today. I think, in reality, anekantavada represents the meridian of the moral and spiritual elevation of the principle of non- violence because it is ultimately actuated by an intense desire to be tolerant and not to be injurious to the other point of view. And therefore I feel that one can say without fear of contradiction that ahimsa of Jainism, in thought, word and deed is the crux and the spring source of all that is noble and spiritually edifying in the Jaina tradition.

An Dr.S.Radhakrishnan brings out well the innate significance of syadvada in his observation: “Individual freedom and social justice are both essential for human
welfare. We may exaggerate the one or underestimate the other, but he who follows the Jain concept of Anekatawada, Saptabhangi naya or syadvada will not adopt that kind of cultural regimentation. He will have the spirit to discriminate between right and wrong in his own and in the opposite views, and try to work out a greater synthesis. That should be the attitude, which we should adopt. So the necessity for the self-control, the practice of ahimsa and also tolerance and appreciation of other's point of view – these are some of the lessons which we can acquire from the great life of Mahavira."

Ahimsa thus is the greatest gift of Jainism to humanity but man engrossed in brutish exploitation affairs has lost sight of its true significance. Mahatma Gandhi the greatest exponent of ahimsa and its true exemplar in modern times candidly said: “Prophets and avatars have also taught the lessons of ahimsa more or less. Not one of them has professed to teach himsa. And how should it be otherwise? Himsa does not need to be taught. Man as animal is violent, but as Spirit within he cannot remain violent. Either he progresses towards ahimsa or rushes to his doom. That is why the prophets and avatars have taught the lesson of truth, harmony, brotherhood, justice etc.- all attributes of ahimsa." (Selections from Gandhi Ed.by Nirmar Kumar Bose, pp.160-61)

What is the message of Jainism as preached by Mahavira. I think Jainism in its total perspective of a weltanschauung or a world view is a real modern religion with a scientific basis. It is my earnest belief that the next logical step in the evolution of the Jaina principle of ahimsa will be a revolutionary humanism which will assert the right of every human being to live, think and act in humanitarian dignity in a spirit of syadvada. It is an implicit principle of Jainism to strive for the salvation of every human being in this as well as the world beyond because its teachings are essentially an exhortation to realize man’s innermost being by subjecting it to its real transcendental essence of ethical humanism through ahimsa which is in reality nothing but an unfailingly constant consideration for the other self.

**TRANSHUMANISTIC MESSAGE OF JAINISM**

It is thus Jainism as taught by Mahavira comes to represent a ‘Religion without Revelation’ of which the eminent scientist Julian Huxley speaks of and it is this characteristic of Jainism which is hound to have an unfailing appeal to the most modern mind. If Jainism in its uncompromising quest of the principle of sanctity of life represents the high watermark of evolutionary humanistic ethic, the insistence on innate human dignity and equality it no doubt emerges then as embodying a transhumanistic message which seems to offer a new panacea to humanity as in Huxley’s words:

“The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself-not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, but in its entirety, as humanity, We need a new name for this belief. Perhaps transhumanism will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, but realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature.” “(Religion without Revelation. P.195)
Jainism understood correctly in the light of its dialectics of anekatavada rooted in the twin concepts of truth and non-violence and its insistence on limited possession offers a real advance in human thought which has a crucial relevance to the chaotic times we live in when as Einstein said “a new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels.”

I believe Annie Besant, The great theosophist summed up the essence of Jainism in her Convention Lectures delivered in 1897: “One might almost sum up the atmosphere of Jainism in one phrase that we find in the Sutrakrtanga (3.20), that man by injuring no living creature reaches the Nirvana which is peace. That is the phrase that seems to carry with it the whole thought of the Jaina: peace- peace between man and man, peace between man and animal, peace everywhere and in all things, a perfect brotherhood of all that lives. Such is the ideal of the Jaina, such is the thought that he endeavours to realize upon earth.” (Seven Great Religions, p.83). This is a most pertinent interpretation of ahimsa as taught by Mahavira and Jainism in our world tottering on the brink of persistent conflict, war and nuclear disaster.