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## JAINA CONCEPT OF RELIGION

### IN THE QUEST OF THE DEFINITION

Can religion get along without a god? This question might seem absurd to many inhabitants of the Judeo-Christian and Islamic belts, but there is nothing, however, inherently absurd nor logically inconsistent in the concept of a religion bereft of the notion of a god, a supreme being or some kind of the absolute that would transcend human condition and lie at the other extreme, qualitatively disparate in relation to the mundane world. And precisely this question—rather than its converse counterpart (with the transposition of the subject and the predicate), which in itself would present perhaps an even more intellectually challenging and stimulating issue, a *souçon* of iconoclasm and discordance hidden in it in the eyes of fervid believer notwithstanding—will occupy the bulk of the present paper, set in the Indian circumjacent of *śramaṇa* culprits scarcely amenable to traditional monotheistic concepts of religion.

It is the ‘god-less’ aspect that seems to have been taken into account from the very outset by first mature definitions of the phenomenon known as religion that came up as a result of unprejudiced encounters of Europocentric minds with other cultures and religions. The idea of a god was commonly replaced with the more vague and indefinite ‘supernatural’, as it was the case, for instance, with functional definitions formulated at the same time and independently by Émile Durkheim<sup>1</sup> and Bronisław Malinowski:

What we call religion is any assortment of beliefs and acts pertaining to the supernatural and bound into an organic system that finds its expression in social life in a variety of cult practices of a regular, public and compulsory character ... based on

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<sup>1</sup> Durkheim (1912: *livre* 1, I § 3).

tradition and on a range of norms, likewise prescribed by tradition, closely related to the cultic dogmas and possessing both social and supernatural sanction.<sup>2</sup>

When confronted with some opposition of anthropologists and representatives of comparative religious studies, especially Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mircea Eliade and their followers, who considered the definition, on different assumptions and with different aims, too simplistic and superficial and endeavoured to rearrange the seemingly incongruous, or even nonsensical mythological material into a meaningful whole and to reveal deeper structures hidden in myths and rituals,<sup>3</sup> the definition was further reshaped, elaborated and dissolved, also to incorporate new aspects of religiosity and to account for objections of some theologians and believers that deemed it reductionist, till it reached the point of characterising religion merely as “the adoration of goodness.”<sup>4</sup> A definition, that is often considered to be very useful,<sup>5</sup> of religion that characterizes it as “the experience of the sacred”<sup>6</sup>—which Leszek Kołakowski erroneously thinks was first conceived by Mircea Eliade, but which, in fact, goes back to Rudolf Otto<sup>7</sup>—and similar definitions are tautological and therefore, no matter how revealing they might look at first glance, vacuous in direct proportion to their comprehensiveness, for the knowledge of the *definiens*, or its part (*viz. sacrum*), already presupposes the familiarity with the *definiendum*. Perhaps the most widespread attitude nowadays is all-including, to the verge on meaninglessness, expressed in the idea—that is more a hermeneutic principle or interpretatory device than a definition—articulated once by Leszek Kołakowski: “what people mean in religious discourse is what they ostensibly mean.”<sup>8</sup> The idea found its expression at least a quarter of a century earlier in R. Godfrey Lienhardt’s reaction to the results of studies on Nupe religion by Professor Nadel and of Nuer religion by Professor Evans-Pritchard, to accommodate the complexities of several tribal religions: “a religion can be made to appear to us much as it does to those who practice it.”<sup>9</sup>

Most of these definitions have one element in common, *viz.* the implicit belief in the supernatural, not necessarily the belief in supernatural beings in the sense of superhuman divinities or god(s), but certainly the admission of certain phenomena that lie beyond the range of everyday experience (though it does not

<sup>2</sup> Malinowski (1911: 67).

<sup>3</sup> For the recapitulation of nineteenth century definitions see Durkheim (1912: *livre* 1, I §§ 1–2). On the difficulties and the historical process of formulating an adequate definition of religion, see Kołakowski (1982: 9–17).

<sup>4</sup> Redfield (1956: 362).

<sup>5</sup> Kołakowski (1982: 9) and Wach (1944: Chpt. I, § 3).

<sup>6</sup> Eliade (1949: esp. “Introduction” and Chpt. 1).

<sup>7</sup> Otto 1925.

<sup>8</sup> Kołakowski (1982: 16).

<sup>9</sup> Lienhardt (1956: 322).

have to imply their strict subjectivity) and inaccessible to common-sense explicability. Thus, there is one more aspect shared by various manifestations of ‘the experience of the sacred’, namely the believers’ consent to some kind of tacit irrationality, being an expression of (1) believers’ acceptance to partially cede their own responsibility for their lives to some supernatural factors, (2) the unquestioned admittance of a set of ready-made norms, that include explicatory and moral rules, (3) the lack of willingness both to critically evaluate the contents of the religious experience and to question the rudiments and nature of the experience itself as well as the absence of some ensuing readiness to relinquish heretofore accepted set of convictions in case the critical examination has spoken in favour of an opposite hypothesis, and (4) the voluntary renouncement of one of basic human drives, the desire to cognize, in its most unimpeded and robust form, inasmuch as the essence of ‘the experience of the sacred’ already sets limits both to the sphere of the cognisable and to human cognitive faculties, limits that are not necessarily innate to the faculties themselves but come from the outside along with the set of dogmas.

Putting aside problems involving circularity in one of the definition of religion, ‘the experience of the sacred’—which I think may indeed occasionally prove useful—involves at least three aspects, i.e., (1) the doctrine as the theoretical expression of religious intuitions and *Weltanschauung*, (2) the religious practice or the cult as its practical expression and (3) the community as its social materialisation, including both collective and individual aspect, in which I agree with Joachim Wach<sup>10</sup>. Strangely enough, this classification resembles—I agree—long discredited nineteenth century insistence on the presence of a theology as intellectual formulation, rituals and the church alongside religious community to make up a religion, as it was once clad in words of a Christian clergyman censuring ‘primitive’ religions of New Zealand and juxtaposing them with Christianity in James Boswell’s *Life of Samuel Johnson*:

Our religion is in a book: we have an order of men whose duty it is to reach: we have one day in the week set apart for it, and this in general pretty well-observed; Yet ask the first ten gross men you meet, and hear what they can tell of their religion.<sup>11</sup>

Admittedly, the modern formulation of this outmoded triple typology is susceptible enough to incorporate also expressions of religious life in the societies of less developed social and economic organisation, wherein the doctrinal aspect comprises the minimum of convictions and religious intuitions about the nature of the divine and the universe, the role and place of human being, eschatology and soteriology, that are often expressed also in the form of

<sup>10</sup> Wach (1944: Chpt. II *passim*).

<sup>11</sup> Quoted after Lienhard (1956: 310).

myths and symbols. The cultic aspect refers as well to any practical expression of the religious experience, including not only rituals, observances and holidays, but any kind of outer or inner act pertaining to the expression of religious beliefs and religiosity,<sup>12</sup> in short, to use the now fashionable and convenient term, *orthopraxy*. The communal side concerns any social interactions related to and suggestive of the experience of *sacrum* and may concern also tradition and hierarchical structuring of a religious community. Truly, it is not an exhaustive definition, but certainly a helpful heuristic tool, that avoids the tantamount and circular character of certain other definitions: we do not have to know what *sacrum* is to know we are talking about religion.

#### HOW FAR IS *DHARMA* WIDE OF THE MARK?

It has been repeatedly claimed that the Indians knew of no suitable equivalent to the European word ‘religion’ and that the closest equivalent—if we disregard the controversy over the proper definition of the term—would be *dharma*; that is precisely how most modern Indian dictionaries translate the Sanskrit term.<sup>13</sup> However, I do not think ‘religion’ would be the most fitting European parallel of *dharma*, that is rather a norm or imperative of moral and social implications, outwardly enjoined by tradition, felt as inborn and perceived in an inner experience as inherently and specifically one’s own. *Dharma* in a wide range of its meanings does not overlap with ‘religion’, for certain aspects of religion, especially the doctrinal element, encountered in the triple definition (doctrine–practice–community) are implied as corollaries of *dharma*, but do not form an essential part of it. On the other hand, *dharma* transcends the limits of ‘religion’ in its natural and inborn character specific to every individual. The lack of a good Indian equivalent of ‘religion’ should not surprise us, for the term *dharma* was coined and used in a Brahmanic society, which, doctrinally speaking (but not practically, in view of the birth requirement to become a genuine participant, with full rights, of the religious community), allowed for inclusion of multiplicity of beliefs and dogmas, and left hardly any room for non-believers. And it is only the vivid presence of another religious community in the consciousness of the Hindus that could have led to conceiving a respective term for religion.

That *dharma* could hardly be used as an equivalent of European term ‘religion’, is vivid in its Buddhist usage as the ‘doctrine’ or ‘teaching’ of the Buddha. In this sense, it is one of the three jewels (*tri-ratna*, *ratna-traya*; Pāli, *ratana-ttaya*): *dharma*, *saṅgha*, *Buddha*, or the doctrine, the community of

<sup>12</sup> On a wide range of manifestations revealing this aspect, cf. Lecuw (1933: esp. §§ 48–92).

<sup>13</sup> On *dharma*, the question of variety of its meanings and European equivalents of the term, see Richard Gombrich “Is *Dharma* a Good Thing?” in the present volume of *Dialogue and Universalism*.

believers or the church and the promulgator of the doctrine. Surprisingly, this triad coincides quite neatly with the above three-fold classification of essential features of a religion (doctrine–practice–community), with the Buddha corresponding to the second aspect (the practice), especially when we remember that initially the Buddha was not an object of cult in strictly religious sense, but merely showed a path leading to liberation, or in other words, established certain soteriological practices to be followed by all believers. Thus, there is no doubt that the usage of *dharma* as synonymous to ‘religion’ in such a context would discard two other vital aspects of Buddhism (*saṅgha*, *Buddha*) as seen by the Buddhists themselves. Besides, *dharma* was used to denote the teaching of the Buddha, i.e., the true teaching or the right salvational doctrine, and does not occur, to my knowledge, in textual source in the sense of *anya-dharma* (‘other religion’, or ‘the religion of others’) to connote also non-Buddhist doctrines. As it should be remembered, the term ‘religion’ by definition presupposes plurality.

Furthermore, the negated *dharma*, viz. *adharmā*—both in its usage within Hinduism and Buddhism—was not simply another religion or another body of beliefs, but evil, perverted nature, deviancy, abnormality, whereas the locution ‘another religion’ may refer to something utterly evil in the eyes of a fanatical follower, but nonetheless, functions on more or less similar ontological level in the world of plurality.

#### ANY EQUIVALENT TO ‘RELIGION’?

However, we do encounter a close equivalent of the European term ‘religion’ in India, though not used in this sense in the main-stream thought of Hinduism: *tīrtha*. The term occurred, or rather it was invested with new meaning, in the first conceivable historical context that could produce the notion of ‘religion’, ensuing from the emergence of non-Brahmanic religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Ājīvikism<sup>14</sup>, whose followers are felt to be in a minority. True, the term was already in use before the origin of the three heterodox (from the Brahmanic view-point) religions and meant ‘a ford’, or passage to the other shore (liberation) through the ocean of *saṃsāra*. However, the origin of the religions brought a sudden shift in its meaning and revealed the awareness of separateness and intrinsic distinction of the teaching and religious practices of the adherents of new religions.

The best known and widely attested usage of the term *tīrtha* is as a part of the appellative *tīrtham-kara* (or optionally, *tīrtha-kara*; Pāli, *tīttha-kara*; Prakrit, *tīttha-gara* and *tīttha-yaū*) that literally means a ‘ford-maker’, or a founder / promulgator of the salvational teaching, or simply ‘a founder of [our] religion’, applied most commonly to the twenty-four mythical preachers of the Jainas and

<sup>14</sup> The best monograph offering the most comprehensive picture of Ājīvikism is Basham 1951.

of the Ājīvikas alike. Intuitively, one might suppose that the expression ‘ford-maker’ (*tīrtham-kara*) is suggestive of a doctrine or, perhaps, a religion founded by such a religious teacher. And indeed the intuition would prove right, for in Devabhadrasūri’s *Gloss on “Introduction to Logic”* (*Nyāyâvatāra-tippana*), by a celebrated Jaina thinker Siddhasena Divākara, we read:

That with the help of which the ocean of birth is forded through is the ford consisting of the twelve Limbs (= the Jaina Canon) or the community recognising that [Canon].<sup>15</sup>

The definition explicitly mentions two elements that correspond to the above heuristic triple definition of religion (doctrine–practice–community), viz. the doctrine incorporated in the body of twelve main canonical scriptures (*dvādaśāṅga*) and the religious community (*saṅgha*) of believers who place confidence in the doctrine of the Canon (*tad-ādhāra*). It is worth mentioning in passing that, like Buddhism, also the Jainas conceived of their community in terms of a monastic–laical quadruplex, which was an outspoken manifestation of recognition of the crucial role of the lay community instrumental in the survival of the religion as such: “The community is said to be fourfold, namely monks, nuns, male followers and female followers.”<sup>16</sup> The third element of religious practice that apparently is missing is indirectly implied in the definition in the doctrinal aspect, for the Canon contains an enormous number of prescriptions, rules and practices to be conscientiously carried out by both ascetic and lay followers.<sup>17</sup> We do encounter a definition of the term *tīrtha* also in Jaina Prakrit sources that explicitly mentions the three aspects of religion, e.g., in Jinabhadra’s *Viśeṣāvaśyaka-bhāṣya*:

The ‘ford’ [means] the propounded Ancient text (= the Jaina Canon), the community, knowledge, conduct with regard to the community.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from the triad of (1) the doctrinal layer, present in the quotation as ‘the Ancients texts’ (in the original sing., *puvvam*; Sanskrit, *pūrvam*) that according

<sup>15</sup> NAṬ. ad. NA.1: *tīryate bhavābdhir anenēti tīrtham dvādaśāṅgam tad-ādhāro vā saṅghaḥ*.

<sup>16</sup> Thāṇ.363 (p. 165).

<sup>17</sup> A useful and concise overview of Canon–related problems within Jainism and the relation of the scriptures to orthodoxy and orthopraxy can be found in Bruhn 1987.

<sup>18</sup> VABh.1380/1026: *tīrtham ti puvvam bhaṇiyam saṅgho jo nāṇa caraṇa saṅghāō*. I do not intend to enter upon a philological discussion regarding the reading of Prakrit passages as such, which in its linguistic layer is not univocal and allows for more grammatical interpretations, e.g., alternatively, “The ‘ford’ [means] the propounded Ancient text (= the Jaina Canon) [and] the community which consists of knowledge and conduct.” (*tīrtham ti puvvam bhaṇiyam saṅgho jo nāṇa-caraṇa-saṅghāō*). Whatever the final solution of the Prakrit text (either compounded or not) and its syntax, and whether *saṅghāō* is Sanskrit *saṅghātaḥ* (‘compounded, consisting of’) or an Ablative of *saṅgha* (\**saṅghāt-tas* = *saṅghāt*, *saṅghatas*), the most essential elements of the sentence relevant for us are clear.

to Jaina tradition came into oblivion and were later replaced with the 'Twelve-limbed' Canon, (2) practice or religious conduct and (3) the community of believers, we come across a fourth element, viz. knowledge as a personal, individual experience of the doctrine, or the interiorised dogma and understanding of the basic tenets.

One of derivatives of the term *tīrtha* are *tīrthya* and *tīrthika*, that can be translated as 'a believer' or—since sometimes the term *tīrtha* connotes not only a religion but also a religious-philosophical system—as 'a thinker', 'an adept', viz. someone more engaged and experienced in one's own religious system. The term is quite common and can be found in statements such as the following explanation in Siddharṣigaṇi's *Commentary to 'Introduction to Logic'*: "all [people] absorbed in everyday life,' [i.e.,] all [people] engaged in everyday practice, subdivided into [such] classes [as] common people, *adepts* etc."<sup>19</sup>

That the term *tīrtha* involves plurality of beliefs and heterodoxy and implies presence of other religions can be easily seen from such a widely used expression as *tīrthāntara* ('[an]other religion', or 'heterodox system of thought'), that is elucidated by Siddharṣigaṇi as "errant paths' [that is] evil paths, [or] *other religions*."<sup>20</sup> Hence, not at all uncommon are further derivatives such as *anya-tīrthika*, *tīrthāntariya* ('adherent of other religion[s]', 'non-believer', 'heretic')<sup>21</sup> and *kutīrthika* ('adherent of wrong religion[s]', 'false believer', 'heretic').<sup>22</sup> True, the term *tīrthika* denotes not infrequently a heretic, as well, also in Jaina texts. The term was, in all probability, employed by the Buddhist at an early stage, though it soon became obsolete and came to be designative pejoratively of heretics, especially the Jainas. There are, nevertheless, traces that also the Buddhists once used the term *tīrtha* in a neutral sense such as the Sanskrit locutions *anya-tīrthika* and *anya-tīrthika-pūrva*, lit. "[previously] an adherent of another religion,"<sup>23</sup> or the Pāli equivalent *anya-titthiya*<sup>24</sup>.

As we can see, the Indians did know the idea of religion, even in the form typical of more developed social organisms, that involved most important intrinsic elements such as doctrine (preserved mostly in a corpus of sacred compositions and in oral tradition), cult (more or less elaborate rituals and religious practices aiming at liberation or after-life prosperity) and community (a

<sup>19</sup> NAV. ad. NA. 32: *sarva-saṁvyavartīṇām laukika-tīrthikādi-bheda-bhinna-samastavyavahāravatām*.

<sup>20</sup> NAV. ad. NA.9: *kutsitāḥ panthāḥ kāpathās tīrthāntarāṇi*.

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the best available survey of the term *anya-tīrthika* and the relationship of Mahāvīra's teaching and *anya-tīrthika* doctrines can be found in Deleu (1977: 187–193).

<sup>22</sup> E.g., NAV. ad. NA.8,32. I give references mostly to one treatise, but the reader may easily find hundreds of such and similar expressions in all Jaina literature in Sanskrit and in Prakrits.

<sup>23</sup> MV.3.49.12, 412,7.

<sup>24</sup> Eg. DN.3.115, or MN.1.494, 512, Vol. II. p. 114.

group of believers set against the background of heretics), which was also hierarchical (the original propounder of the doctrine, his direct and indirect [i.e., through tradition] disciples and teachers, ascetics, lay followers). To find such an idea in its developed form, we have to look for it not in the folds of the Brahmanic, or Hindu main-stream, but rather turn to religious minorities—commonly designated as *śramaṇas*—that willingly or unwillingly experienced, and further emphasised, the separate and individual character of their religions.

#### ‘GODLESS’ RELIGION?

What is conspicuous in all definitions of ‘religion’ listed in the beginning is the unqualified absence of an element of the divine, or a god, which to many, especially to those acculturated in the universe of monotheistic ideologies, would seem the most fundamental. Usually the reason given by historians of religion and anthropologists to neglect this element was the presence of such religions as Buddhism and Jainism, in which the notion of a god played an inconsequential role or which had envisaged no place for a concept of a god as a being *qualitatively* different from the humans.

True, the Indian term for god, *deva*, traditionally used as a honorific of a king in secular domain, frequently occurs throughout the Jaina Canon and in subsequent Prakrit and Sanskrit literature. In mediaeval philosophical literature it is gradually replaced by its synonym, *īśvara*. Even one of the most celebrated Jaina philosophers and the first to write a doxographic treatise in India entitled *The Compendium of Six Systems*, Haribhadra Sūri (circa eighth century CE) begins the exposition of his own system of thought by stating that “the deity there [in Jainism] is the sovereign, the Jina.”<sup>25</sup> The most distinguished Jaina erudite Hemacandra states in his best known work, *Manual on Religious Conduct (Yoga-śāstra)*—while characterising basic ethical and religious Jaina concepts, viz. the righteous attitude (*samyaktva*), or righteousness, often interpreted as the predilection for truth<sup>26</sup>, and its opposite, viz. unrighteousness

<sup>25</sup> ŚDS.45a: *jinēndro devatā tatra*.

<sup>26</sup> TSṬ. *ad.* TS.2.3: *tattva-ruciḥ samyaktvam*. The author of *Tattvārtha-sūtra* is generally identified with the author of the commentary *Tattvārthādhigama-bhāṣya*, which is supposed (by the Śvetāmbaras) to be an auto-commentary of Umāsvāti. However, there are many reasons, in my opinion, to believe that the author of the *Tattvārtha-sūtra* was Umāsvāmin (c. 350), affiliated neither to the Digambaras nor to the Śvetāmbaras, and the commentary bearing a slightly more elaborate title *Tattvārthādhigama-bhāṣya* was composed c. 75 years later by a Śvetāmbara Umāsvāti. As for the commentary on it entitled *Tattvārthādhigama-ṭīkā*, sometimes called *Bhāṣyānusārīṇī*, it can be assigned to c. seventh century, approximately a century before Haribhadra I (eighth c.), although there has been much controversy as to which of the numerous Siddhasenas the authorship of the commentary is to be ascribed to. The identification—after Winternitz (<sup>2</sup>1933: 557)—with the famous logician Siddhasena Divākara, the author of *Nyāyāvātāra* seems implausible. Unacceptable is Suzuki Ohira’s (1982: 38) identification of the

(*mithyātva*), turpitude, or corrupt and fallacious moral disposition—directly refers to the idea of god:

Such a pure recognition that god is god and the acknowledgement that spiritual teacher is a spiritual teacher, as well as the understanding that religious norm is religious norm is called righteousness.

Such a recognition that [a being who is] not god is god and the acknowledgement that [someone who is] not a spiritual teacher is a spiritual teacher, as well as the understanding that [something which is] not a religious norm is religious norm is called unrighteousness, because it is the contrary of that [righteousness].<sup>27</sup>

Nothing, however, would be further from the truth than a conclusion surmising that some divine being, or god, is spoken of in these passages. Hemacandra himself clarifies in the subsequent verse that

The one who is omniscient, who has conquered [all] defects such as passions etc., who is adored in the three worlds [in heavens, in the middle world, in hells], who expounds things (*sc.* truth, cf. *tattvārtha*) in conformity to the state of affairs is the God, the Venerable One, the Supreme Lord.<sup>28</sup>

In ensuing chapters he proceeds to describe the spiritual or meditative path leading to such a divine state step by step, till he comes to speak about the supreme kind of pure meditation (*śukla-dhyāna*) in the eleventh chapter of his *Yoga-śāstra*, where we can read:

The adept of *yoga*, having subsequently attained the absolute knowledge and absolute perception (conation), that are difficult to obtain, knows and perceives accordingly the world and the realm beyond the world in conformity with truth.

This God, the Lord, all-knowing and all-perceiving, endowed with infinite virtues abides in the earthly realm, being revered by gods, demons, humans and animals.<sup>29</sup>

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commentator with Siddhasenasūri, who is to be placed around 1185. Sukhlal (1974: 52–60) believes the author of the commentary to be Siddhasena Gandhahastin. According to Vidyābhūṣaṇa (1909: 22) Siddhasenagaṇi and Siddhasena Gandhahastin, a disciple of Bhāsvāmin (675–750), are one and the same person. What seems to be beyond any doubt, however, is that this point requires further research.

<sup>27</sup> YŚ.2.2–3:

*yā deve devatā-buddhir gurau ca guratā matiḥ /  
dharme ca dharam-dhīḥ śuddhā samyaktvam idam ucyate //  
adeve deva-buddhir yāguru-dhīr gurau ca yā /  
adharme dharmā-buddhiś ca mithyātvaṃ tad-viparyayāt //*

<sup>28</sup> YŚ.2.4:

*sarvajñō jīta-rāgādi-doṣas trailokya-pūjitaḥ /  
yathā-sthitārtha-vādī ca devo 'rhan paramēśvaraḥ //*

<sup>29</sup> YŚ.11.23–24:

*samprāpya kevala-jñāna-darśane durlabhe tato yogī /  
jānāti paśyati tathā lokālokaṃ yathāvastham //  
devas tadā sa bhagavān sarvajñāḥ sarva-darśy ananta-guṇaḥ /*

There can be no doubt, that the ‘god’ in these verses is not a divine being that would, this way or another, correspond either to some impersonal Absolute of certain mystics or to the personal God well-known from Jewish or Christian mythologies, as I would call them, as Yahve / Jehovah (the rendering of the tetragram יהוה). The Jaina ‘god’ is a perfected human being, an adept of spiritual path who has accomplished the ultimate goal, i.e., realised his true essence. Theoretically speaking, this state of perfection is within reach of practically everybody, with the exception of certain being that are doomed forever (*abhavya*), which is in itself a fascinating issue to find such an, eschatologically speaking, inexorable idea in Jainism especially in view of the Jaina concept of all-encompassing ethics. The conception of a selected group of beings predestined never to leave the circle of *samsāra* called *abhavya*—whose most outstanding exemplar was supposed by some Digambaras to be typified in the figure of the Ājīvika Gosāla Maṃkhaliputta (Pāli, Makkhali Gosāla), believed to be the only instance in the whole universe of a devolution back to the insentient state of a *nigoda*<sup>30</sup>—is hardly reconcilable with the Jaina generally benevolent attitude embracing all creatures. Like the Jaina idea of the colourings of the soul (*leśyā*)<sup>31</sup>, the whole idea might have been developed in early contacts with, or have been influenced by the ideas cherished by, the Ājīvikas, who believed that the liberation did not have to be the ultimate unconditioned state

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*viharaty avanī-valayaṃ surāsura-narōragaiḥ praṇataḥ ||*

<sup>30</sup> In fact, it was a matter of Śvetāmbara–Digambara dispute. The former were convinced that he would eventually attain liberation (cf. Basham (1951: 142–3)), whereas the Digambaras were less favourable and believed he was the only creature in all times to undergo a process of ‘devolution’, i.e., he was maintained to degenerate down to the lowest form of existence as a *nigoda*, or a living being devoid of its own body and forced to share it with other co-inhabitants, and to remain in such a condition forever; cf. Dundas (1992: 90).

<sup>31</sup> There are traditional six colourings of the soul in Jainism (*leśyā*), that correspond to the grade of inner development of an individual, viz. black (*kṛṣṇa*; Prakrit, *kaṇha*), blue (*nīla*), grey (*kāpota*; Prakrit, *kāū*), red (*tejas*; Prakrit, *teu*), pinkish yellow (*padma*; Prakrit, *paṃha*), white (*śukla*; Prakrit, *sukka*); cf. Glasenapp (1942: 47). For the most part, they match the six classes of men of different spiritual rank (*abhijāti*), i.e., black, blue, red (*lohita*), green (*halidda*), white and supremely white (*parama-sukka*), the latter reserved only for the highest spiritual teachers of the Ājīvikas such as Gosāla Maṃkhaliputta and his predecessors; cf. also Basham (1951: 243–246). To my knowledge, the significance of the following statement has so far never been given its due notice: “This [liberated soul] is not black, nor blue, nor red, nor green, nor white ...” (*se ... ṇa kiṇhe, ṇa ṇīle, ṇa lohite, ṇa hālidde, ṇa sukkile*), AS. sū. 176 (= Ch. 1.5.6.4, pp. 56–57.15 ff)! Noteworthy is not only the fact, that the list of colours a liberated soul is free of precisely matches the Ājīvika enumeration of the five first *abhijātis*, but even the term for red employed in this list, i.e., *lohita*, is typical for the Ājīvikan enumeration, that is to say, it is not *teu* (Sanskrit, *tejas*) of conventional enumerations of *leśyās*, as one might expect here. This remark further corroborated my deep conviction of the Ājīvikan influence on the Jaina concept of the six *leśyās*.

and some emancipated beings were still exposed to the risk of falling down to *saṃsāra*<sup>32</sup>.

Moreover, the difference between the ‘god’, or perfected being (*siddha*) is not at all qualitative, but quantitative, the criterion being the amount of *karman*—or subtle *karmic* matter, as the Jainas comprehended it in a very material way—that veils innate cognitive faculties (*upayoga*) of the soul (*jīva*, *ātman*). The path was hypothetically open to everyone, as Guṇabhadra once summoned his co-religionists in his *Discourse on the Soul*:

With the foundation [consisting in] entirety of knowledge and [correct] conduct, unhesitatingly take liberation in your hand, which is perfect righteousness acquired as a conclusion of a [spiritual] contract.<sup>33</sup>

The most appropriate description of the nature of such a perfected being, or Jaina ‘god’, is the one employed once by the author of *The Résumé of the Doctrines of all Systems*: “He is the omniscient spiritual teacher of the world.”<sup>34</sup> Potentially, everyone is capable of attaining perfection and all necessary resources requisite for the attainment of liberation lie in the soul concealed by *karmic* matter, as Nemicandra Siddhānta-Chakravartī (12th century CE) points out:

Know that, from the viewpoint of the conventional truth, the causes of liberation are the right perception (conation), [right] knowledge [and right] conduct; [however,] with regard to the ultimate consideration [the real cause of liberation] is the soul as such, consisting in these three.<sup>35</sup>

In such a universe, with so conceived means of attaining emancipation from mundane existence, when the only effort can be made by the adept himself and no one can render him any substantial assistance, with the exception of teaching and showing the path alone, there is no place for any god: “Man! Only you are your friend, why do you want an outer friend?”<sup>36</sup> It is a logical consequence of consistent treatment of the doctrine of *karman*, or the ethically-bound deeds and moral retribution, which would assign no place to the idea of *Boddhisattva*, as

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Basham (1951: 257–259).

<sup>33</sup> ĀA.234:

*mañkṣu mokṣaṃ susamyaktvaṃ satyaṃ-kāra-śva-sātkṛtam /  
jñāna-cāritra-sākālyā-mūlena svakare kuru //*

<sup>34</sup> SDSS.3.16b (*Ārhata-pakṣa-prakaraṇa*): *sa sarvajño jagat-guruḥ*.

<sup>35</sup> DS.39:

*sammaddaṃsaṇa ṇāṇaṃ caraṇaṃ mokkhaṣsa kāraṇaṃ jāṇe /  
vavahārā ṇiccayaṃ / ṇiccaā of niścaya, instead of expected nicchaya / nicchaā, cf. Pischel*

(1900: 243, § 301).

<sup>36</sup> AS. sū. 125 (= Ch. 1.3.3.4, p. 36.7): *purisā! tumam eva tumam mittam, kim bahiyā mittam icchasi?*

well, who could lend others a hand in the spiritual advancement and cede auspicious results of his own deeds onto miserable beings immured in the *samsāra*.

To say that Jainism knew of no deities would amount to falsifying the picture of this religion. There is indeed a widespread cult of minor divinities, protective deities, natural spirits etc. such as the worship of *yakṣas* or *yakṣīs*,<sup>37</sup> or attendant deities associated with *tīrtham-karas*, which to certain extent may resemble the mediaeval Catholic Church policy of incorporating local so-called ‘pagan’ idols and mythical personages in the disguise of saints. Likewise, Jainism in the course of its development and spread in geographical regions of India “adopted regional deities, some associated with powerful local clans and families, as part of a process of integration and adaptation.”<sup>38</sup> Another group of such attendant deities consists of a range of so-called *sāsana-devatās*<sup>39</sup>, viz. tutelary spirits, mostly goddesses, who not uncommonly bear names well known from the Hindu pantheon, e.g., Ambikā, Gaurī, Kālī, Kūṣmāṇḍinī, Lakṣmī, Padmāvātī, Sarasvatī, Brahman, Ṣaṇmukha, Varuṇa, etc. Their worship is of locally restricted prevalence and is indicative of assimilation of regional beliefs and observances. Accommodating such cults was the way Jainism responded to certain psychological needs of its followers who, in confrontation with predicaments and suffering their worldly existence brought with itself, felt more or less subconsciously the need of some supernatural guidance and psychical support in everyday matters and quandaries. The development of such cults, practically absent from the earliest layers of Jaina scriptures, betrays, on the one hand, some similarities with the cult of Christian saints and, on the other hand, maps to a certain extent the historical scenario of the evolution of a once entirely marginal figure in the New Testament<sup>40</sup> who eventually is recognised as the Blessed Virgin Mary and the rapid spread of the Marian cult in the Christian world after the fourth century. But to search for the idea of a god or the absolute in such cults of Jaina tutelary divinities would be as legitimate as a desperate attempt to find in the notion of guardian angels or various Saint Antonies and Francis of Paduas and Assisis a instantiation of a god or the God himself (herself?). The role of the Jaina local cults of various spirits and deities resembles quite closely the protective and psychologically supportive function

<sup>37</sup> On the cult of *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* cf. Cort (1987: 242–3), Jaini (1991: 195), Dundas (1992: 182–3) and Zybendos (1993: 19–27).

<sup>38</sup> Dundas (1992: 182).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Dundas (1992: 182–3) and Zybendos (1993: 26–28).

<sup>40</sup> Mark mentions Mary only once without even giving her name, there are four (also longer) references in Matthew and Luke each, in John she is reported (again unnamed) three times, Paul seems to ignore her altogether; she is absent in most crucial moments in her son’s life; there are at least two passages in the Gospels (Luke 14:26 and Matthew 12:46–50 = Mark 3:31–35 = Luke 8:19–21) that allude to animosities between her and her son and the latter’s disregard for his mother.

of a wide range of saints and protective angels in some Christian churches (e.g., the Catholic and Orthodox Churches). Likewise, they are either sublimations or straightforward expressions of ancient cults of Goddess Mother and their worship is highlighted by various accompanying miracles. And thus, Ambikā's role as a goddess of childbirth and prosperity<sup>41</sup> resembles Saint Margaret of Antioch, also known as Saint Marina, invoked by women in childbirth. Padmāvati is associated with wealth and beauty<sup>42</sup> and her function as a curer of snakebites and various diseases in the eyes of the Jainas is not so far removed from the healing thaumaturgy practised in the cult of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes in France or in Częstochowa, a pilgrimage centre in Poland, as seen by Catholic devotees. Similarly, the benefactors in the realm of learning are Saint Catherine of Alexandria, a patroness of attorneys and scholars, and Sarasvatī, "who is invoked to help dispel the darkness of knowledge-concealing karma."<sup>43</sup> By the same token Saint Jude invoked in cases of special difficulties echoes the South-Indian Jaina tutelary deity Kūṣmāṇḍinī who, when implored, renders protection and help, even in case of earthquakes in the vicinity of Halebidu in Karnataka, provided her image is formally installed there.<sup>44</sup> Another convergent trait is the intermediary character of the Virgin Mary, prayed to by many votaries with the belief in the efficacy of her intercession, on the one hand, and of a respective Jaina *sāsana-devatā*, on the other, who act as middlemen between the worshippers and the main object of their worship (Jesus or a *tīrtham-kara*).

It should be borne in mind that such mediative deified beings as *yakṣas* or *sāsana-devatās* who attend the sanctified recipient of homage (*tīrtham-kara*) act on behalf, as if were, of the ford-makers, who abide in the umbrella-shaped summit part of the universe (*loka*) called *siddha-loka* inhabited by perfected beings (*siddha*). Any perfected being, including a *tīrtham-kāra*,

when he comes in contact with the paramount restraint, which is the unsurpassed norm, he purges the grime of the *karmic* matter [and] amassed mental defilement[s] of ignorance...<sup>45</sup>

attains liberation and never returns to the mundane existence and enjoys a supreme condition characterised by a full accomplishment of the soul's (*jīva*) own intrinsic cognitive faculties (*upayoga*) and powers (*vīrya*).<sup>46</sup> Thus, the liberated beings continue to exist on the top of the world in an emancipated

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Dundas (1992: 183).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Dundas (1992: 183).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Dundas (1992: 183).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Zybendos (1993: 26).

<sup>45</sup> Dasav.4.20:

*jayā saṁvaram ukkaṭṭham dhammam phāse anuttaram /  
tayā dhunāi kamma-rayam abohi-kalusam kaḍam //*

<sup>46</sup> On the concept of liberation in nearly Jainism, see: Bhatt 1989.

condition that is “the liberation—freedom from all *karmic* matter on account of either the absence or destruction of the causes of bondage [in *samsāra*].”<sup>47</sup> The disposition of a lord-maker, who thrives on enjoying his omniscience on the top of the world aloof from all worldly matters, to renounce any involvement in the worldly matters is not in fact his conscious, deliberate decision but is due to specific Jaina ontology. *Karman* is not some abstract moral force but is a subtle matter that obfuscates soul’s basic cognitive faculties and powers. Since any matter, including *karman*, possesses its weight, the more immoral a soul is, the lowers regions in the universe it inhabits. A purification of the soul, or removal of *karmic* matter, diminishes its weight till, in case of complete removal of *karmic* matter, the soul becomes weightless in the liberated state: there is nothing more that could pull the soul down and the soul proceeds in a direct vertical line to the top of the universe free of any matter. Accordingly, any bonds with the world are broken and the further involvement with the material and heavy universe is no longer feasible. Therefore, in default of actual capability of a *tīrtham-kara* to respond to the devotee’s wishes, this religious function, highly important for lay believers, is transferred to the deities that are not liberated and are still subject to *karmic* determinants.

The above picture of a *tīrtham-kara* as a perfected human being is, in the first place, a sublime vision on a higher, more abstract level of reflection conjured up by ‘doctors’ of Jainism, viz. it is the way Jaina intellectualists, monks and mystics understood the *tīrtham-kara* concept and does not have to coincide with the laic amateur perspective. As it is the case in most religions, the sophisticated theoretical and doctrinal framework constructed by the elite of theologians (which—in view of the non-theistic tendency in Jainism—would not be the most appropriate term here) and a conventional medley of beliefs of everyday application that evolved in response to the mundane needs and religiosity of lay followers, which by nature tend to be less reflected and sophisticated, do not always overlap. As any other religion, also Jainism, with its social structure and the body of dogmas and beliefs, is subject to historical development and thereby mirrors certain undercurrents or general processes Indian communities are going through. It should, therefore, not at all be so surprising to find within the folds of Jainism clear theistic tendencies, that reflect for instance Vaiṣṇava theocentric doxy, in the person and teachings of Raichandbhai Mehta, currently known under his honorific title of Shrimad Rajacandra, who was born in 1876 in Gujarat and whose homiletic activity and personality influenced the young Mahātmā Mohandas Gandhi.<sup>48</sup> Despite recent tendencies to deify *tīrtham-karas*, the essential attitude of Jainism towards the divine still remains as it was once epitomised in a brilliant and inspiring refutation of the concept of god as (1) the

<sup>47</sup> TS.10.1: *bandha-hetv-abhāva-nirjarābhyām kṛtsna-karma-vipramokṣo mokṣaḥ*.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Dundas (1992: 224–227).

creator of the universe, (2) one, (3) all-pervading, ubiquitous and omniscient, (4) self-dependent (unconditioned and independent) and (5) eternal formulated by Malliṣeṇa in his *Syād-vāda-mañjari*<sup>49</sup> by way of a comment on Hemacandra's following verse:

There is a particular creator of the world, and he is one, he is omnipresent, he is self-controlled (free), he is eternal'—only those do not [profess] such crooked fantastic humbugs, who have you [the Tīrthāṅ-kara] as [their] teacher.<sup>50</sup>

If we divest god or the absolute of his attributes such as oneness, omnipresence, all-pervasiveness, ubiquity, omniscience, self-dependence, freedom, unconditioned and independent existence, eternality and the status of the creator or sustainer of the universe, there is nothing much left of the initial idea of god. There is also nothing much left at the disposal of 'the unionists' searching for the same divine element supposedly common to all religions to prove their thesis. The above Hemacandra's aphorism, alongside Malliṣeṇa's commentary thereupon, is one more conspicuous example, beside Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's critique of the existence of god found in the *Mīmāṃsā-śloka-vārtika*, that belies the universally acknowledged Indian mystical spirituality allegedly resting on the notion of a supreme spirit, god, or the absolute.

A frequently repeated thesis pertaining to religious practices throughout the world boils down to the declaration that all religions point to one and the same experience of one and the same sacred, the realm of which is ultimately beyond discourse and verbalization. Such a conclusion, however, seems to rest on the foundation of a subconscious hope that it should corroborate the following reasoning: since all religions speak of the same, they cannot be false. There is nothing, however, logically inconsistent in the recognition of true diversity in the province which under ordinary circumstances is barely amenable to the principles of discursive diversification. To cite a worn-out example, in absence of adequate linguistic and conceptual tools to a German, an Englishman, a Pole or a Sri Lankan the uniformity of the perception of snow as basically one homogeneous white mass may be beyond doubt, to an Eskimo, however, who may freely profit from several different terms for and concepts of snow that are at his disposal, such a postulate would simply appear unsound. Similarly, the contention deeming certain spheres of reality or some realms of the universe of concepts and intuitions 'inexpressible' (*anirvacanīya*), so often encountered in religious writings, does not have to prove that those spheres labelled as 'ineffable' in respective religions do overlap. Usually such tendency simply indicates the inadequacy of normal means of verbal expression and paucity of

<sup>49</sup> SVM. ad. AYVD.6, p. 21–31.

<sup>50</sup> AYVD.6:

*kartāsti kaścij jagataḥ sa cūkaḥ sa sarvagaḥ sa sva-vaśaḥ sa nityaḥ /  
imāḥ kuhevāka-vidāmbanāḥ syus teṣāṃ na yeṣāṃ anuśāsakas tvam //*

the language developed, in the first place, in diverse cultural circumstances to describe everyday phenomena that are inter-subjectively verifiable. I really doubt whether ‘the inexpressible’ pertaining to the ultimate bliss of the Vedāntin’s absolute ultimately void of any subjectivity, individuality and plurality would be tantamount to the ‘the inexpressible’ found in the following Jaina verse describing the state of the final emancipation (which is one of rare instances of the usage of ‘inexpressible’ in this meaning in Jaina literature):

All sounds (*sc.* words) vanish;  
 where reasoning does not exist,  
 the thought (mind) does not pervade there.  
 The valiant one (*sc.* the Jaina ascetic) is the knower  
 of the province of that which has no support (*nirvāṇa*).<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, I do not think that such adverse religious ideas as the non-theistic attitude of Jainism and the personalistic Trinitarian concept of god of some Christians, or extreme asceticism of Jainism and Ājīvikism and ‘the middle way’ of Buddhism, or Judeo-Christian and Islamic proselytization and Buddhist and Jaina missionary activities, Confucian attitude to the state violence apparatus and early Christian anarchical tendencies,<sup>52</sup> etc., are in any way commensurable, given the intent to keep the genuine character of respective religions intact and free from any attempt of misrepresenting them. If there is any common denominator the extraordinary polymorphism of religious concepts and beliefs could be reduced to it can be nothing else but the central factor common to all religions, *viz.* the human being with his astounding capacity to evolve and unfold his human nature in a tremendous variety of civilisational and cultural areas.

<sup>51</sup> AS. sū. 176 (= Ch. 1.5.6.4, p. 56.11–14):

*savve sarā niyaṭṭamī,*  
*takkā jattha ṇa vijjati,*  
*maṭī tattha ṇa gāhiyā /*  
*oḷe appaṭiṭṭhāṇassa khettaṇṇe /*

Significant in the above passage is the use of the term *khettaṇṇe* (Sanskrit, *kṣetra-jñā*; ‘the knower of the province’) which is a very well-known term of the early Sāṃkhya system, widely attested in the Sāṃkhya portions of *Mokṣa-dharma-parvan* of *Mahā-bhārata*, in Aśvaghōṣa’s *Buddha-carita* and in *Caraka-saṃhitā*. The term, literally meaning ‘the knower of the field’, was used in the *Sāṃkhya* either to denote an individual self as a manifested aspect of the absolute (*ātman*) or, slightly later, as a synonym of *puruṣa*, who was an onlooker and observer of the evolving unconscious principle called *prakṛti*, that was ‘the field’ (*kṣetra*) for the *puruṣa*. The term further developed till it reappeared in the famous *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* as a locution, far more sophisticated philosophically, *vyaktāvyakta-jñā* (‘the knower of the manifest and the unmanifest [aspects of *prakṛti*]’). For *puruṣa* and the term *kṣetra-jñā* in Sāṃkhya cf. Larson (1979: 8–9, 115–134, 168). The term *kṣetra-jñā* hardly ever, to my knowledge, occurs in strictly non-Sāṃkhya contexts!

<sup>52</sup> Cf. e.g., Baigent-Leigh 1991.

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