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SALVATION, CIVILIZATION AND SOCIAL ETHOS : AN ISSUE IN HISTORIC BUDDHISM/JAINISM VIS - A - VIS BRAHMANISM

In this article the author discusses a very important issue, i. e., how the basic concept of human nature and destiny that prevailed in the Buddhist Jaina and (together constituting the *Śramaṇa*) tradition and the *Brāhmaṇic* tradition affected their ability to provide for the development of civilizational structure and social ethos. These two, it is argued, diverged very significantly all through history. The article does not deal with any actual encounter in the sense of confrontation. It deals with something more basic, i. e., the course of historic Buddhism and Jainism projected against the background of Brahmanism. While Buddhism and Jainism ran their course as movements, Brahmanism remained the all-embracing, defining social and civilizational presence in India. At least, Buddhism and Jainism historically encountered themselves against that presence.

The discussion hinges on the point that these two movements viewed the human being solely as a candidate for ultimate salvation (*nirvāṇa*), a fact that inhibited them from making adequate provisions for a really viable civilizational structure and self-sustaining social ethos. This stands in stark contrast to what is found in the *Brāhmaṇic*, i. e., Vedic tradition with its original scheme that defined the human being in terms of four ends (*puruṣārthas*) – *mokṣa*, *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, i. e., as a candidate for salvation *mokṣa*, that is, *nirvāṇa*), no doubt, as well as a socio-ethical being, an economico-political being and an erotico-aesthetic being. If *mokṣa* took care of what we may call the "vertical" dimension of human existence, the other three took care of the "horizontal", which comprehended the potential civilizational structure and the social ethos. And further, *dharma* also was developed as the ground of mediation between the vertical and horizontal, besides being authentically itself and as wide and as subtle as the cosmos. The enormous fabric of all this was woven by means of a countless variety of sacred texts following the Vedas, chiefly, the epics, *dharma-śāstras* and *purāṇas*. Now, mindful of the

fact that *dharma* as a concept is the centre of Buddhism (and very central in Jainism as well), the author wants it to be noted that there it is very different from *dharma* in Brahmanism: in Buddhism it stood simply for the body of Buddhist teachings.

Another thing: the author wants to keep the record clear on the fact that Buddhism (and Jainism) did set forth elaborate terms for the life of the laity. But he cautions that these were not to be a nucleus for any significant structure or self-sustaining social ethos, for they were rather designed to serve as guide to the laity in their role of furnishing means of support to the monastic community. And the monastic community was *the* community.

Now, the author shows that in these great religious movements, out of the total pre-occupation with *nirvāṇa*, there naturally arose an ideal of excellence, i.e., renunciation, and a way of life, i.e., monasticism, or rather the mendicant's way. On the contrary, Brahmanism contained, in the words of the author, "many paths", providing for a variety of sacred - cum - secular life-styles, as well as religious ways, including domestic and communal rites, devotion with reliance on divine grace, meditation and (for the stalwarts) pure mystical knowledge. The significant aspect of the "many paths" is that, except pure mystical knowledge, all of them had powerful bearing for the development of a religion-based civilization and most certainly for a comprehensive social ethos. As for the last, it carried with it the renunciation ideal as well as the mendicant's way of life, called *sanyāsa*, which in reality was the final stage of a person's life, in preparation for *mokṣa*. But the right to enter that stage had to be earned by earlier fulfilling all duties to family, community and the world.

However, the writer mentions important sequels to the stories of both Buddhism and Jainism. As for Buddhism, it became a pan-Asian religion, lively either under the great Confucian civilization and social ethos or under other regional religious cultures defined by Shinto, Shaman, Bon and so on. A remarkable change came over Buddhism in that it adapted itself to these varying situations, even participating in their rituals and observances and acts of piety, but of course without surrendering its ultimate reason for being, deeply held by the monks essentially, i.e., its absolute commitment

to *nirvāṇa*. In the case of Jainism, whose destiny lay solely in India, there took place an equally important act of adaptation, i.e., to the Brahmanic ethos and civilization, however partial that be and done in the spirit of expediency perhaps, but withal under the unremitting constraint of the *nirvāṇa* goal. This adaptation included incorporation of the Jaina community in some measure into the Brahmanic ritualistic milieu, including the creation of a priestly class over and beyond the class of monks.

As for Buddhism's disappearance from India after flourishing for many centuries, scholars naturally wonder as to the reason why. Hypotheses of deadly encounters with Hinduism have been advanced. So also, philosophical confrontation, particularly the well-known ones with Śankara, the great champion of Vedānta, have understandably been suggested as a reason. But our author gives here a far better clue: the neglect to generate a civilizational structure and a self-sustaining social ethos, which might have prevented the laity from gradually drifting back into the Brahmanical milieu, and thereby rendering the Buddhist monastic communities out of place, without a constituency, and defenceless before invading armies. And while the great cultural achievements of the Buddhists and Jainas in philosophy and in the creation of celebrated institutions of education, are to be noted, the argument about the inability, or neglect, to furnish a ground for all-embracing social existence must hold. But one may ask "how about the contributions of Asoka the great?" The author hints that the lacuna was not made up even by Asoka, whose contributions, great as they were, were confined to the time-span of his reign and were not such as could have made up in any substantial way for the crucial lacuna of the Buddhist tradition (and Jaina tradition) that is being discussed. However, it is also clear that the Buddhists in India either would not or could not follow the Jaina tack and find a place within the Indian milieu. "Why"? will remain a recurring question. The article ends on a note of considerable interest to all moderns who care deeply for social justice in terms especially of gender equality. In this matter the *śramaṇas*, especially the Jainas score high. It may be largely symbolic in character in that the realm of its application was the monastic order, but even so it is a powerful statement of a great principle: perfect equality in status between monks and nuns especially in the Jaina tradition even in the time of the founder, and in fact predominance

in numbers of nuns over monks generally. (This is one area of encounter in which the *śramaṇas* would or could have had a great impact upon the Brahmanic society. - Editor)

It is a historically well-recorded fact that the Vedic religion from early times met with opposition to its claims. Some of the opposers gathered strength and following, and became full-fledged movements. They developed certain pronounced characteristics with the hall-marks of rejection of the revelatory authority of the Vedas and stress on the virtue of human effort as the only means of salvation. Hence they were referred to as *Śramaṇa*¹ contra *Brāhmaṇa* of the Vedic tradition. Theirs were radical religious revolutions. Two of these movements not only survived but flourished through history: they are Buddhism and Jainism. The rest seem to have been assimilated back into the Brahmanic fold, or perhaps just spent themselves and atrophied.

History has left a legacy of nomenclatures in this context. The Buddhist and Jaina texts of antiquity brought into currency the opposing terms *śramaṇa* (referring to themselves) and *brāhmaṇa* (referring to the others). Clearly, these two terms themselves betokened some incipient encounters in which the Buddhist and Jaina movements started. In Brahmanical texts, written centuries later, we come across another terminological twin: *āstika* (by which that tradition referred to its own philosophical schools) and *nāstika* (by which, again, that tradition referred to Buddhism and Jainism as well as the materialistic school of Cārvāka): the fact that deeply religious systems such as Buddhism and Jainism and the militantly materialistic system of Carvaka were lumped together is more than passing strange. The terms *āstika* and *nāstika*, with the original connotations of "being" and "non-being" acquired a range of meanings, as pairs of opposites, all the way from "orthodox" versus "heterodox", even "unorthodox", to "theistic" versus "atheistic": in fact *nāstika* in common parlance even carried the opprobrious sense of "nihilistic". Surely, all this signified a spirit of on-going encounter that is more than just incipient, and did presage, or reflect, critical attitudes. The *nāstika* label may even have been

1. See P. S. Jaini, "Śramanas: Their Conflict with Brahmanical Society", in J. W. Elder, Ed. *Chapter in Indian Civilization*, I, pp. 39-81, Dubuque, 1970,

adopted challengingly by those to whom it was designed to refer, no doubt derisively. And those who were called *nāstika* did reject belief in God and would claim the description *nāstika* or "atheistic" as a badge of honour for their commitment to the doctrine that salvation could be attained by nothing less than one's own relentless exertion, needing no support from any essentially external agency like the grace of God, or some such crutch, as the "Hindu" theists believed. Buddha and Mahavīra, the founders and exemplars of their respective tradition, attained perfection it is said, by rising above the human condition, with no assistance other than the dint of their own effort.

However, it is a source of wonder that the deeply religious movements of Buddhism and Jainism were called *nāstika* whilst there are schools of Brahmanism which have no place for God in their scheme, but are, nonetheless, classified as *āstika*. Thus Mimamsa, with no room for God, is placed as the standard-bearer of the *āstika* schools. Likewise, non-dualist Vedānta of Sankara, which shares the spot-light with Mimamsa as the centre of orthodoxy places the transpersonal absolute, i.e., qualityless Brahman as the sole reality. The *āstika* school of Sankhya too is a complete system with no need for God.

If we were to view the quest for salvation—or in Indian terms, liberation from bondage—as the centre of religion, for which there is sufficient warrant in the Indian tradition taken as a whole, then we run into problems with *Mīmāṃsā* in that it does not address itself to the issue of salvation at all. As for non-dualist Vedānta and Sāṅkhya, there is another problem inasmuch as bondage from which liberation (salvation) is sought is not viewed as real but merely as illusory.

Now, in contra-distinction to these just-mentioned schools of Brahmanism, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the qualified non-dualist and dualist systems within Vedānta along with Yoga believe in the reality of bondage, but they also fervently hold that salvation is possible only through the grace of God. No doubt, these systems are avowedly theistic. And they view salvation quite realistically. As for Buddhist and Jaina traditions, it is entirely the case that their central motif is salvation.

It may also be noted that the orthodox philosophical systems do not as such comprise the religious part of the Brahmanical, i.e., Hindu, orthodoxy, which in the main consists of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. In these (latter) religious traditions the individual practitioner is a believer in God and a devotee – *bhakta* – until the very moment of salvation. In terms of salvation, belief in God entails the doctrine of Divine grace as well as that of Divine will, but also entails distinctly ontological doctrines such as of God as creator, sustainer and destroyer. All these add up to produce a widening and dramatic contrast with the so-called *nāstika* – shall we call it "heterodox"? – views of the Buddhists and Jainas, especially pertaining to salvation.

The theistic views, again, are bound up with the understanding of the social order, in turn grounded in the larger cosmic scheme, which together are well laid out in the earliest of all sources, i.e., the *Puruṣa* hymn of the *R̥gveda*. As it is set forth in that hymn, the human being is a part, together with all others, of the cosmic design, and he is linked with other components of the cosmos, as with the creator. The concept of the four *varṇas* defines the human hierarchy within the cosmos; and later texts, particularly the Epics (including the *Bhagavad Gītā*) and the *Dharma Śāstras*, outline for the individual person his duties, his privileges, and his group identity, as well as the grounds for his particular function (*svadharmā*). The performance of duty, according to the *Bhagavad Gītā*, is a person's royal road to salvation, as it upholds the cosmic law, does not violate his own natural essence (defined by his caste, calling, station, etc.) and most of all, makes him dear to the Lord, the keeper and dispenser of his destiny.

It is well known that the Brahmanic tradition – eventually broadened into the "Hindu" – set forth four distinct ends for human beings to pursue, together called *puruṣārthas*, i.e., *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* stands apart not only from *artha* and *kāma* but also from *dharma*, when taken in the sense of caste duties. In order to attain *mokṣa* (salvation), which is the fourth and highest end, one must renounce *artha* and *kāma* as well as applicable portions of *dharma*. However, Brahmanic theism, as outlined above, found ways to remove, with the help of scriptures such as the *Bhagavad Gītā*, conflict between *dharma* and *mokṣa* as distinct ends of life. Theistic religions introduced devotion (*bhakti*) as a means of attaining *mokṣa*; and by stressing that devotion includes performance of duty and does

not require abnegation of *artha* and *kāma*, they reconciled the claims of *dharma* and *mokṣa* upon a person, and thus found justification for secular pursuits. In that way, they gave approval to a person's engagement in his family's and society's welfare, whether he be priest, warrior, merchant, craftsman or labourer. Such wholesome involvement is grounded in the idea that the individual person is part of the same creation as are all other beings, and also on the belief that it is the creator's will that each one must reach his/her final destination through such engagement.

Devotion, therefore, strikes at the very root of asceticism, which is the chief characteristic of the sramanas. The sramanas have never attempted to define the *svadharma* of any human being: they have never contributed to the theory of the caste system; and they have rejected the notion of a three-fold *prakṛti* (*sattva*, *tamas*, *rajas*), the various mixtures of which are responsible for the caste system. The fact that Hinduism defines *svadharma* makes *artha* and *kāma* acceptable goals, in that they are properly limited. In the absence of a notion of *svadharma*, however, *artha* and *kāma* are bereft of any redeeming qualities and cannot be turned into a means of salvation.

Unlike the Hindu, the Buddhist and Jaina cannot, therefore, assimilate the goal of *mokṣa* with the social responsibilities of production or distribution of wealth, sustaining the family, and propagating the race. In order to win salvation the *śramaṇa* must renounce *artha* and *kāma* in every respect; renunciation, itself, is his *dharma*. If indeed *śramaṇa* is asked about a man's *svadharma*, he will be able to point to the examples of their great teachers' (Buddha's and Mahavīra's) lives and say that it was the very path of the masters.

Renunciation, however, was part of the Brahmanical tradition, assigned to the fourth (and last) stage of life (*āśrama*), called *sanyāsa*. Indeed Yajñavalkya, the great teacher of the Upaniṣads and the supreme *Brahmavādin*, is portrayed as renouncing the world and his own immense wealth. But one must remember that he had led a long householder's life, had two wives, and had amassed a large fortune from his patron, King Janaka. His renunciation was seen as the natural culmination of a long, useful, active life, in which the other *puruṣārthas*, *artha* and *kāma*, were fully realized. When he left home, he was able to do so with a clear conscience and

in the open, saying farewell to his dear wife, Maitreyi. Compare this with the story of Buddha's renunciation,² when he was barely thirty years old. Gautama shunned the worldly life and abandoned his wife and child in the middle of the night, not daring to announce his departure. Moreover, he was not content to do this on his own, leaving his aged parents and his young wife; he took with him into his so-called "state of homelessness" thousands of other young people, whose motto was:

Full of hindrance is the household life,
A path for the dust of passion.
Free as the air is the life of one,
Who has renounced all worldly things.³

Contemporary records tell us that the women, when they saw these young men who had abandoned professions and homes and taken on the yellow robes of the monastic order, criticized and disparaged them, saying "The recluse, Gautama, wants to make us childless. The recluse, Gautama, is bent on making us widows. The recluse, Gautama, gets on by breaking up families".⁴

But the Buddha, we are told, assured his followers that the women's crying would subside after seven days and instructed them to respond by saying, "Verify, great heroes led by the true *dharma*. Who will be jealous of the wise, led by dharma?⁵ there is no doubt that by the word, *dharma*, we should understand not the Brahmanical *svadharma* but rather the route to spiritual salvation (*mokṣa*, *nirvāna*), the goal of the *śramaṇas*.

We find a similar situation when we turn to the career of the Jaina teacher, Mahāvira. According to the Digambaras he never married, and so the question of his involvement with society can not even be addressed. According to the Svetāmbaras he married a princess and fathered a daughter, and, even while he was still in his mother's womb, he was sensitive enough to vow that he would

2. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2. 4. 1.

3. Sambādho gharāvāso abbhokāso pabbajjā. *Dīghanikaya*, I, p. 62.

4. "Aputtakatāya paṭipanno samaṇo Gotamo, vedhabyaya patipanno samano Gotamo, kulupacchedaya patipanno samano Gotamo. . . " *Vinayapīṭaka-Mahāvagga*, p. 44.

5. Accayena antaradhāyissati, . . . te tumhe imāya gāthāya paṭicodetha - "nayanti ve mahāvira saddhammena Tathāgatā / dhammena niyamāṇānam kā usāyā vijāṇātam" ti | " *Ibid.*

not renounce the world until his parents had died and thus spare them the suffering of his leaving the household's life.⁶ Conveniently, they died when he was about thirty years old. Although his feeling for his parents was admirable and sets him apart from Gautama, who had no such qualms, nevertheless, the fact remains that, as in the case of Buddha, his wife and young child were left to the care of society.

Furthermore we are told that soon after his enlightenment Mahāvira gathered around him five thousand brahmins, all followers of the Vedic tradition. Following Mahavira they all renounced the world to lead the life of mendicants. Thus in the case of Mahāvira, as in the case of Buddha, a large body of parents, wives, and children were left at the mercy of society for their upbringing, welfare, and protection. Such a state of affairs could not have taken place if there had not been a Brahmanical society which would provide for the care of these abandoned people.

That Buddha and Mahāvira trusted society to take over where they had left off is shown by the fact that neither made an effort to legislate for the guidance of the lay people regarding their duties to their parents, wives, children, or society at large. The canonical texts of the Jainas and the Buddhists are full of admonitions to the lay people to serve the old, to look after their dependents, etc., which message is repeated even in the celebrated Asokan edicts. But this type of admonition was secondary to the true teaching of these masters, namely, the renunciation of the world through a progressive series of vows and restraints. But even these restraints, such as bans on killing, stealing, lying, improper sexual activity, and excessive accumulation of property, were not primarily devised for the benefit of the laymen. Rather they are watered-down versions of the true precepts and regulations which applied to the monks. Their intent was ultimately total renunciation (*mahāvṛata*) rather than partial refraining from these acts (*anuvrata*).⁷

6. Tae nam samaṇe bhagavam Mahāvire gabhatthe ceva imevāruvam abhiggaham abhigāṇhai-no khalu me kappai ammaṇiṇhim jivamtehim . . . agāṇo anagariyam pavvattāe. *Kalpasūtra*, 91.

7. For a detailed treatment of this topic, see P. S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (California/Berkeley, 1979), pp. 157-240.

Consider the law books of these heterodox Indian religions. There we are immediately reminded of those of Manu and Yajñavalkya, who legislated the duties, punishments for transgressions of duties, conditions of inheritance, etc., for the laymen. But we must bear in mind that these orthodox law books are significantly smaller in bulk than those of the Buddhists and Jains such as the *Vinaya piṭṭaka* or the *Kalpa Sutra*. These latter, however, have no relevance for the laity; they are strictly for the guidance of those who have renounced the world.

One may find a few stray sermons of Buddha, such as *Sigalovāda Sutta*⁸ or *Rājovāda Jātaka*,⁹ which deal with the virtues which are recommended to the lay people. But there is nothing in the Buddhist texts to define the duties of a warrior, or the codes by which he lives, or the fruits of this life and the next that he may hope to enjoy as a result of engaging in warfare.

The Jains may be said to have been a little more conscious of their duties to their lay people. Unlike the Buddhists, who produced only a single work addressed solely to the layman, an eleventh century Pali work, entitled *Upāsakajanāṅkārā*,¹⁰ written by a Sinhalese monk in India, the Jain mendicant authors produced no fewer than fifty *śrāvakācāras*, or law books for laymen.¹¹ But even these cannot really be compared with the law books of Manu or Yajñavalkya. The burden of the *śrāvakācāras* is to explain in full detail the various vows and restraints a layman may progressively assume, and it provides a list of infractions demanding expiation; by means of these the lay person can prepare himself, in a graduated manner, to become a full-fledged monk or nun, who has completely renounced all properly and civil obligations. In the case of the Digambara monk, this includes even his begging bowl and loincloth.

Sustaining the monastic order was considered by both the Buddhists and the Jains, as being the most important duty of the laity. And the Jains have drawn up long lists of unacceptable

8. *Dīghanikāya*, III, pp. 180-193.

9. *Jātaka* (No. 151).

10. Ed. H. Saddhatissa, Pali Text Society, London, 1965.

11. R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga: A Survey of the Medieval Śrāvakācāras*, London, 1963.

professions in order to encourage lay support of the monks. Fifteen unacceptable professions include: obtaining a livelihood from charcoal, obtaining a livelihood by destroying plants, obtaining a livelihood from carts, obtaining a livelihood by demanding transport fees, obtaining a livelihood by hewing and digging, trade in animal products such as leather and ivory, trade in lac. etc., trade in alcohol and forbidden foods, trade in men and animals, trade in destructive items such as poison and gunpowder, etc., work involving milling, work involving mutilation, work involving the use of fire, work involving draining lakes, and work involving breeding and rearing animals.¹²

It is obvious that these professions, forbidden to a Jaina on the grounds of being harmful to the subtle beings which the Jainas call "one-sensed" (*ekendriya*) and of involving cruelty to men and animals, contain actions whose avoidance would be a worthy goal of any religion. But the question remains and must be asked of the Jaina as to whether some of these activities, such as destroying plants, driving carts, hewing and digging, using fire, etc., are not at times essential for sustaining civilization. And if the Jaina does not at undertake these professions, should we understand that those who do will incur the unwholesome karmic consequences of their actions, while the Jaina gains from their activities and is able to continue his employment in "acceptable" professions, such as commerce in grains, textiles, jewelry, and stock, in which there is no direct contact with raw material? A conscientious Jaina would probably reply that he is party to the sins involved, but only indirectly, since his volition is not involved. This is comparable to the claim that a Jaina mendicant who subsists on alms provided by laymen is not responsible for the actions of growing, procuring, and preparing the food.

Still the question remains as to why a civilization be maintained and who should maintain it. This question becomes even more pertinent when we turn our attention to those functions which are less a basic need of life, but are still extremely important namely, the administration of justice, whereby evil-doers are punished, and the defense of one's country in the face of an attack. What do the *śramaṇas* think of what is conventionally known as just war? While

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-123.

the Jainas have considered it a valid issue, the Buddhists seem to have paid no attention to it, whatsoever, unless one considers that Emperor Asoka's celebrated admonition to his successors, that they not engage in warfare, is a Buddhist message. The Jainas were associated with a large number of royal houses and have even claimed several notable kings and dynasties as their own, particularly King Srenika of Magadha, a contemporary of Mahavira, the Nanda dynasty, Candragupta, the founder of the Mauryan dynasty, King Kharavela of Orissa (c. 150 B.C.), King Vikramaditya of Ujjain, and several members of the royal houses of the Gangas, Hoysalas, Rastrakutas, and King Kumarapala of the Calukyas of Gujarat. They have produced many generals and commanders for these kings and were active even under the kings of the Vijayanagara Empire.¹³ Thus warfare was a profession into which the Jaina laymen entered as a legitimate activity. One can search in vain, however, for any Jaina literature which, like the celebrated *Bhagavad Gītā*, either upholds these activities or encourages them in the name of justice or national security. Jaina stories, in fact, seem to belittle the valorous acts of warfare by emphasizing the virtues of expeditious renunciation. The famous colossal image of Bahubali at Sravanabelgola is a good illustration of this point. Bahubali, we are told, resisted the ambitious move of his brother, Bharata, who wished to take over his land in his attempt to become *cakravarti*. Bahubali defeated him in duels and yet preferred to renounce the world rather than to enjoy the fruits of his victory. He became a mendicant immediately and went to the forest, where he stood in one spot for so long that creepers grew around his legs, and he eventually attained salvation.¹⁴

Although this story seems to set forth a commendable example, nevertheless, it does not answer the basic question of whether or not Bahubali did wrong in engaging in warfare to resist his brother. For the answers to such questions one must turn to the larger epic stories of the Hindus, who have set up models for the Jainas, who adapted them to suit their own point of view. In the Brahmanical *Rāmāyaṇa* Rāma slays Rāvaṇa for the unlawful act of abducting

13. See B. A. Saletore, *Medieval Jainism*, Bombay, 1938.

14. See Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa*, ch. xxxvi and Hemacandra's *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita*, I, ch. iv-v.

Sita but does not incur guilt; on the contrary his mission as an *avatāra* of Visnu was precisely the destruction of the ungodly Ravana. The Jainas correctly perceived the contradiction inherent in Rama's killing someone and yet remaining unsullied by the karmic consequence of the deed. They modified the story so that Rāma could attain *mokṣa* by attributing the slaying of Rāvana to Rāma's younger brother, Lakṣmaṇa. One can appreciate the ethical sensibility of the Jainas in their insistence that the path of *mokṣa* cannot admit acts of violence, however justified they are. But it is truly striking that Lakṣmaṇa, who commits this heroic act, does not go to heaven, as we might expect; instead he goes to the same hell to which the Jainas sent Rāvana.¹⁵

This can be compared with the story of the *Mahabharata*, in which we are told that the villain, Duryodhana, and the hero, Yudisthira, were reborn in the same heaven.¹⁶ The former attained to this destiny because he perished on the battlefield, thus fulfilling the *dharma* of the *kṣatriya*, and the latter, his, because of his celebrated virtues. Had a Jaina written the *Bhagavad Gītā* he would have accepted Arjuna's arguments for refraining from battle, and he would have blessed him for his spirit of renunciation, for, according to the Jaina, time is endless, the world is vast and civilization can take care of itself. One's only duty to one's self is to attain salvation. All other actions are to be forsaken.

The same situation is seen again and again in the Buddhist *Jātakas*; there the Bodhisattva abdicates his throne, gives away his kingdom, and refuses to fight his enemy.¹⁷ Although such actions are generous and touching, the nation and the Bodhisattva's family did certainly experience great suffering, the conventional rescue of the hero through the intervention of the gods notwithstanding.

The Jains could not provide for *svadharmā* and hence could not find room for Lakṣmana in heaven. The moral of this story, for the Jaina, is that all killing must lead to hell, and that killing can not be *dharma*. The path to be followed is Rama's, namely, refraining

15. *adhunā narake turye sa Śambuko Daśānanaḥ / Lakṣmaṇas caṣṭi, gatayaḥ karmadhīnaḥ hi dehīnaḥ Ibid.* VII. ch. x, 231.

16. *Śvargam trivisṭāṣam prāpya Dhramarājo yudhisṭhiraḥ. Duryodhanam Śriya juṣṭam dadarśāsinam āsane. Mahābhārati, XVIII, i, 4.*

17. See for example, the "Vesantara jātaka, *Jataka*, No. 547).

from all acts of killing. Because of their refusal to admit *svadharme*, the Jainas could not develop a philosophy which would build a civilization or maintain it on strong foundations.

These trends show that both the Buddhists and Jainas, in their zeal for renunciation, were unable to develop a *weltanschauung* that could sustain civilization and social ethos and justify the role of the individual within society. Instead of integrating the individual's needs with those of society, and instead of bringing the life of the renunciate into harmony with other social needs, the *śramaṇas* seem to have over-emphasized the needs of the individual and neglected those of society.

The disappearance of Buddhism in India as a vital society probably can be explained by this fact, since the lay people were never provided with either rituals or goals such as marriage, and family - and so much more - that are essential to the healthy functioning of lay society. The monks became increasingly isolated from the laity and when their monastic centres were destroyed by invading armies there were not enough exclusively Buddhist laymen, unassimilated by Hinduism, to rebuild and repopulate them. Hinduism had provided for most lay people the goals, rituals, and the notion of *svadharme* which they required.

The Jainas, unlike the Buddhists, becoming aware of these needs fairly early in their history, formulated a new class of priests, distinct from monks, through whom there took place a considerable amount of Hinduization of Jaina lay society. This is clear from the claims of Acarya Jinasena (eighth century) that the first *Tīrthankara*, Rṣabha, was the founder of human civilization during the present *kalpa* and was responsible for the division of castes.¹⁸ Such attempts to include the laity were just enough to ensure the survival of Jainism. However, in the absence of a philosophical basis, they were not enough to bring to the religion new vitality or to help it grow. At best it helped the Jainas to remain on the fringes of the vast Hindu majority and to pursue their goals in a restricted manner; the promotion of vegetarianism or the prevention of animal sacrifices on the holy days are examples of this.

18. *Ādipuraṇa*, ch. XXXVIII.

The Jaina preoccupation with salvation as the only legitimate goal finds its expression in the following notable verse of Somadeva, the twelfth century Jaina mendicant author:

There are only two duties of the layman.
The mundane and the supermundane.
The former depends on the world and the customs thereof.
The latter is what one learns from the words of the
Tirthankara.¹⁹

And again :

All worldly activities are valid for a Jaina layman, as long as there is no loss to the pure faith, and there is no infraction of the holy vows.²⁰

It is clear that the Jains did not claim responsibility for legislating concerning the mundane needs, rituals, and goals, precisely because they could depend on Hinduism for its various institutions that would ensure the security of a social order which would, in turn, sustain the mendicant order. We cannot speculate as to how Jainism would have fared as a majority religion or outside of India in a country which would not provide for its social basis, because Jainism never left India, in part due to its strict dietary rules.

As for Buddhism, it did not survive in India but flourished quite well abroad as a pan-Asian religion, integrating itself to, among others, the vast world of Confucian ethos and civilization. It is well-known that it was nowhere the sole religion. Where Buddhism became the principal religion, as in Tibet, Burma, and other Southeast Asian countries, as well as in the Far East, it assimilated the secular rites and other features of indigenous religions, such as Bon, nat-worship, Shintoism, etc. Although the monks in these countries can be said to be true Buddhists, the lay people have had to live a double life, relying on the non-Buddhist religions for their mundane rituals, while attempting to lead a Buddhist life

19. dyau hi dharmau gṛhasthāṇam laukikaḥ paralaukikaḥ. Lokśreyo bhaved ādyaḥ parah syād āgamāśrayaḥ. *Upāsakadhyāyana*, kārikā 477.

20. sarva eva hi Jaināṇam pramāṇam laukiko vidhiḥ / yatra samyaktvaṇanir na yatra na vratadṛṣṭāṇam *Ibid.*, kārikā 480.

with respect to supermundane considerations.²¹ The monks, since they have no mundane concerns, do not need to rely on the indigenous religions in any respect. In this the situation of the Buddhist outside of India is similar to that of the Jaina in India; he has a double identity, being part of the non-Buddhist society but striving for the only true goal, salvation, through, the only available path, renunciation.

For the most part, Indians have always accepted a multiplicity of paths leading to salvation. It is generally agreed that the Vedic hymns to both the path of devotion (as in the hymns addressed to Varuṇa) and the path of renunciation (as in the *Munisūkta*), as well as to the path of sacrifice reflect this. What is noteworthy of the *śramaṇas* is that they condemned sacrifice and rejected devotion; thus they were left with only one path, which they tried to make accessible to all segments of society. The Brahmanical society only allowed renunciation to a few individuals of the twice-born castes, recommending this path as being suitable mostly for brahmins. The Jainas and the Buddhists opened the path of renunciation to the entire society, including the *śūdras* and the so-called "untouchables".

Brahmanical society, moreover, considered the paths of sacrifice and renunciation as the exclusive prerogative of the male; women, even of the highest caste, were excluded from the initiation ceremony as well as from the third and fourth stages of life, namely *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa* (total renunciation). In this respect women, even of twice-born castes, were like *śūdras* and were encouraged to follow the path of devotion.²² It is therefore very much to the credit of the Jainas and Buddhists that they were the first to allow women not only to renounce the world but even to organize themselves into an order of nuns. A Hindu widow was never allowed this freedom. She may shave her head, forsake her ornaments, and undertake long fasts, but she must remain in the household, under the protection of her son and subject to the supervision of her elders.

21. See R. C. Gombrich, *Precept and Practice*, Oxford, 1971.

22. It is interesting to note that the *Gītā* places the women and *śūdras* in the same bracket: *mām hi Pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ striyo vaisyāḥ tathā śūdras te 'pi yānti parām gatim* ix, 32.

Jaina texts have claimed that there were fourteen thousand male mendicants and thirty-six thousand nuns in the order of Mahāvīra.²³ It is well known that the Buddha himself, however, reluctantly agreed to establish a community of nuns, which flourished for a number of centuries and drew a large number of women, some even from royal households, including Samghamitra, the daughter of Emperor Asoka. The Buddhists allowed women the fruits of salvation but denied them Buddhahood. In this respect, all Buddhists, including the Mahāyānists, resemble the Digambara Jainas, that sect which denies the state of omniscience to a soul in a female incarnation, on the grounds that ascetic nudity, the prerequisite for salvation, is not possible for her.²⁴

The Śvetāmberas have rejected this doctrine and have maintained that a woman is in no way disadvantaged by her sex, nor is she less able to uphold the discipline of the mendicant. They have even claimed that Mallī, one of the twenty-four Tīrthankaras and a predecessor of Mahāvīra in our *kalpa*, was a female who renounced the world to become the supreme teacher.²⁵ Throughout the centuries they have continued to propagate the law among women, and to this day they include more female mendicants than male in their community; even now, in a community of fewer than six million, the Śvetāmbara *saṃgha* consists of about two thousand male mendicants and almost twice that number of females. These are women who have renounced the world completely, as in the time of Mahāvīra; living in small groups, they move about the country on foot, and their only personal property is their clothes and their begging bowls.

A study of such a community, drawn mostly from the rather well-to-do segment of society, would be of immense interest to those who wish to examine the position of man and woman in Indian society in general and to investigate the *śramaṇas'* impact upon the society at large. A study of these individuals will tell us not only about their own outlook on man and woman, but also how the entire community, based upon the *śramaṇa* ideals of salvation and renunciation, differs from the rest of Hindu society which has been brought up on a doctrine of theistic grace and the path of devotion.

23. *Kalpaśūtra*, P. 135.

24. *Prameyakamalamārtāṅga* (*strī-mukti-vicāraṅga*), pp. 328-34 (Bombay, 1941). See P.S. Jaini, *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debate on the Spiritual Liberation of Women*, California: University of California Press, 1991.

25. *Trisastīśalākāpurusacarita*, VI, ch. vi, 19-213. For the Digambara version (which rejects the Svetāmbara tradition on Mallī) see *Uttarapurāṇa*, lxvi, 1-65.