Jaina Phraseology In The
Bhagavadgītā

K. H. Kamdar

I have observed the use of so much Jaina terminology in the course of my repeated perusal of the Bhagavadgītā. An attempt is made in this contribution to bring out the salient parallelisms. I have avoided full recital of the verses of the Gītā in the interest of economy of paper.

Jainism has ordered the laity and the monks to observe five व्रत (vows) which are classified as अपूर्ण (minor) and स्थूल (major) according to the status of the observer. The first and the basic vow is that of abstaining from injury to a sentient being and is named प्राणतिपातविरुपमभ, प्राण or life is discussed in great details by Jaina writers. In verses 46, 47 and 48 of the first Discourse (अष्टव) of the Gītā we come across a conscious, though temporary, resort to this अपूर्ण by Arjuna, when he says to Śrī Krṣṇa that the Pāṇḍavas were being involved in the act of committing a great sin by preparing to kill their kith and kin in order that they might get royal pleasures. The grief is so overpowering that Arjuna would prefer being killed by the Kauravas in battle; he would prefer to die at their hands, without arms, without resistance, and in the act of dying he would feel happy. (अहो व्रत etc., verse 45; वदि मायमषैकारम् etc., verse 46; and एवषुक्ता etc., verse 47).

I have found the great ideal contained in the famous verse 69 of the second Discourse (या निश्च वर्षभूलनाम् etc.) literally described more than
once in the Ācārāṅga-Sūtra, as shown by me in the magazine Jaina of Bhavnagar. The explanation for the parallelism is obvious. The consolidation of the Ācārāṅga and other Sūtras was done by learned Jaina monks who were originally Brahmins, well-versed in the Upanisads and the Brahma-Sūtras. The date for the Ācārāṅga-Sūtra is 2nd or 3rd century before Christ, although it was collated in its present form in the 5th century A.D.

The Gītā uses the phrase प्रव्यावह in verse eleven of the second Discourse. This very phrase with a parallel meaning is read in the Ācārāṅga-Sūtra as pointed out by me in the Jaina magazine of Bhavnagar some time back. The use occurs in the Gītā in verse eleven of the second Discourse where Śrī Kṛṣṇa rebukes Arjuna for giving expression to thoughts which were apparently prudent but which missed the deeper sense of wisdom. प्रव्यावहार आपत्ति etc. The reader should note the use of the plural in प्रव्यावह.

The concept of चक (Wheel) is very common to Jainism and Buddhism, the Aśoka Cakra having been adopted by us as our national emblem. I read a reference to the same idea, although, I am afraid, its great significance has not been adequately brought out by critics. The word चक (Wheel) occurs in verse 16 of the third Discourse. The verse reads as एवं प्रक्षिपति चकम् etc. I may add that the word प्रक्षिपति is eminently Jaina and Buddhistic.

Jaina thinkers refer to eight kinds of Karma: शान्तवरणीय, द्वन्दवरणीय, मोहनीय, गोत्र, नाम, आवृत्त, etc. which cloud or obscure the soul’s access to right knowledge (सम्प्र ज्ञान), right faith (सम्प्र दर्शन), right conduct (सम्प्र चारित्र). The terms आवृत्त and मोहन occur more than once in the Gītā as applied to knowledge and conduct. I have not come across the use of the word दर्शन meaning faith or अज्ञ, though there are several references to श्रद्धा (Faith) in the text of the Gītā. The relevant verses are 38, 39, 40 of the third Discourse. Even the illustrations are the same as in Jaina philosophical literature. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that true knowledge is wrapped up by Ignorance just as flame is enveloped by smoke, as mirror is wrapped up by dirt, as embryo is wrapped up in amion. The verses start as धूमेनाभियते etc., आकृतं शान्तमेति etc., प्रवैत्तिकहस्तेषौ शान्ताकृत्य etc.

The word मोहन, which is the same as the Jaina use of मोहनीय, is found in verse 8 of the fourteenth Discourse, and verse 39 of the eighteenth Discourse, wherein Śrī Kṛṣṇa observes that तमसा deludes (मोहन) all beings (XIV, 8) and that happiness deludes the self in the begin-
ning and by succession (अनुवर्त्य) on account of Sleep, Indolence and Indifference (प्रतार्थ). The word अनुवर्त्य in the verse is essentially Jaina.

The concept of Bhāvanā is basic to Jainism and Buddhism. Hari-bhadra Sūri has given an elaborate dissertation of the idea in his धर्मज्ञ. The Gitā refers to the concept several times as if it were expounding the Jaina creed! The homelessness of the Yati is referred to as also the उदासीन माण्डल in verse 16 of the twelfth Discourse, as for instance, a person who is अनुपेश, उदासीन, सार्वर्षभागिनी is dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

A terse dissertation is found of this kind of Bhāvanā in verse 20 of the fifth Discourse, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa observes न महिंद्रेतः भियं प्राण्य etc. Srimad Rājacandra gives expression to the idea several times in his मोहमाला.

The other Bhāvanās are क्रोङ्ग (Sympathy) and मैत्री (Brotherhood). The two are conjointly mentioned in verse 13 of the twelfth Discourse, which may be quoted full, as it strikes as eminently Jaina. अदेशा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रैः क्रोङ्ग एव च निरंतरे निरंतराः समयः सुखः क्षमी ।

The emphasis is mine. The concepts of मैत्री and क्षमा (Brotherhood and Forgiveness) are repeated by Jainas on the last day of the Pajuṣaṇa week. Vinoba Bhave persistently appeals to his readers to cultivate the same Bhāvanās—मैत्री and क्रोङ्ग.

The fourth Bhāvanā is that of प्रभौद—feeling happy over the good fortune of others. I have not found mention of प्रभौद in the Gitā.

The word आरम्भ is peculiar to Jainism. So are गान्त (Attachment), द्रोष (Spite), etc. which are Kaśāyas. The phrase धर्मज्ञातिरिवागी is read in verse 25 of the fourteenth Discourse of the Gitā. The words मान (Honour), अश्वान (Insult), मद (Fear), कोष (Anger), etc. occur times out of number in the Gitā. The opposite of आरम्भ is अनारम्भ. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in verse 12 of the fourteenth Discourse that आरम्भ or Undertaking of क्षमा (Action), as also Greed, Desire, Non-tranquillity (अशाम) etc. generate from ज्ञातुः. क्षमा is jointly used by the Jainas with उत्पाद (Tranquillity) and is contrasted with Destruction (क्षय). In verse 12 of the fourteenth Discourse the Gitā describes the सर्वर्षभागिनी person as one who has discarded all undertakings, who is self-composed in the midst of honour and insult, who is equanimous to friend and foe, as if he is beyond all Guṇās. The description fits in with the condition of a Yati—self-controlled monk, who is defined as one who is devoid of क्षम (Desire), of कोष (Anger) and who has control of his चेतस (mind), in verse 26 of
the fifth Discourse, and in verse 11 of the eighth Discourse. The Yati must be absorbed in ज्ञान-सीवाय which is a peculiar Jaina term. He must practise continence (महावर्ष) according to verse 8 of the eleventh Discourse. He is pure on account of knowledge and penance (verse 62 of the tenth Discourse). The Yati is also called युनि because his intellect is self-composed (स्थिति), according to verse 56 of the second Discourse. The same idea is repeated in verse 5 of the eighteenth Discourse where the युनि must discard speech etc. The Gitā uses in this verse the word युनि which is identical with Hemacandra’s usage in his Yoga-Śāstra.

Of equal importance is the frequent use of the word परिव्रम्ण which is a familiar word in Jainism and the absence of which constitutes the fifth भाज्य of the Jainas. It is termed अपरिव्रम्ण. The concept has been made familiar to the present generation by Gandhiji and after him by Vinoba Bhave. According to verse 53 of the eighteenth Discourse, the person who wants to be qualified for Brahman must abandon परिव्रम्ण which is rendered into English as covetousness by Babu Bhagvandas and Mrs. A. Besant, but which really means Property, Possession.

The twin concept of क्षा and मोह (Bondage and Release) so familiar to every Jaina is referred to in verse 18 of the eighteenth Discourse where the person of pure Sāttvika Intellect is in the position to know the essence of Bondage and Release. In verse 5 of the sixteenth Discourse क्षा is spoken of as निश्चय. It is the fruit of आदर्शी (demoniacal) possession. According to Jainism both पुण्य and पाप (Merit and Sin) lead to Bondage; even पुण्य (Merit) leads to क्षा (Bondage), for merit must yield its own result which is always good. In verse 60 of the eighteenth Discourse, a surprisingly Jaina view is presented of कर्म (Action) which attaches to the soul by Nature—स्वभाविक निश्चय: स्वेच्छ कर्मणा.

The Gitā speaks of ध्याम and अ-ध्याम (good actions and bad actions) more than once. The secret (गुणज्ञान) of release from अ-ध्याम कर्म (evil deed) is given by the Gitā in the first verse of the ninth Discourse and in the 28th verse of the same Discourse, as for instance श्रुताद्वस्तमेव व मोक्षलोकस्मार्थस्त्यवभाव: (You will be free from the bondage of good and bad actions, etc.). Here we find reference to the त्वेक्ष (essence) of निश्चय (shedding of कर्म, good and bad), a word which I have not been able to find in my reading of the Gitā.

Arjuna confesses to realization of the Truth by him at the end of the Dialogue in the famous verse 73 of the last Discourse, नष्ठो योहं स्त्रितिमवद्या तथा etc. The word स्मृति here is opposed to मोह (Delusion, Infatuation) and
is almost identical with सम्बन्ध ज्ञान (True knowledge) of the Jainas. Arjuna’s मोह (Delusion) disappeared and Truth was realized by him (स्वप्निन्धु). Jaina canonical literature is profuse with dialogues between Mahâvîra and learned Brahmins like Gautama, Sudharmâ, etc. who were his chief disciples and Skanda etc. in the Bhagavatî and other Sûtras where the opponents are convinced of their Delusion and become conscious of (स्वप्नि) a new conviction of true knowledge (सम्बन्ध ज्ञान). They accepted conversion from Mahâvîra who said: यथाहुक्तम् (as you please). The sûtras describe them as अन्त्यायानी (those who lived nearest to Mahâvîra). The word is upaniṣadīc. Many of them immolated themselves on the Nipula summit at Râjaghrha.

In verse 58 of the second Discourse, the Gitâ gives the famous instance of the tortoise contracting itself in water, just as the man of ज्ञान (wisdom) withdraws his senses from all objects. The same illustration is found in the Uttarâdhyayana Sûtra.

Merutuṅgācārya has repeated several phrases of the Gitâ in his immortal Bhaktâmara-Sutra, as for instance आविवकेश्वर in the 9th verse of the eighth Discourse, लस्य विभ्रम परं निधानम् in the 18th verse of the eleventh Discourse, also पुर्ण: पुरण: विभ्रम परं निधानम् in verse 38 of the same Discourse. Such illustrations can be multiplied.

I have tried to bring out in this contribution the salient parallelisms between the phraseology of the Gitâ and Jainism. The parallels are easily explained. There was, in the age when the two literatures appeared on the scene of Indian thought, a common background for Jaina, Buddhistic and Brahmanical philosophical beliefs. Brahmins were the great co-ordinators of the rich culture of the age. In this adventure they borrowed freely from their rivals, the Jainas and the Buddhists, whose thought influenced the moral and ethical, as also the philosophical systems of the age. The culture was pre-eminently synthetic and elastic. It was tolerant. It could absorb successfully the best that was contained in the various systems.

I might be permitted to make one observation. Words like श्रम, अश्रम etc. have been defined and explained in various commentaries by Jainas, Buddhists and Upaniṣadic scholars. It is suggested that we made a comparative study of the commentaries. I am informed that a comparative study of the commentaries on Kâlidosâ’s Meghadâta has been made recently in some Indian Universities. It is high time that similar effort be made in the direction of the study of commentaries of Jaina, Buddhistic and Brahmanical terminologies.
Some time back the reformist Jaina monk, Muni Śrī Santabala, wrote on Jaina thought in the Gitā. My contribution strikes a different note.

I have detected even semetism in the Gitā as for instance, in verse 7 of the ninth Discourse: त्वेवेन्द्रानि कौन्तेय प्रकृति यानि मामिकाम्। कलशाये पुत्रस्तानि कल्याणी विदुष्माध्यम्॥

A little known fact may be mentioned here. Al Beruni, the Arab traveller who visited India in about 1031 A.D. and who was a good Sanskritist, mentions in his Account of India some verses of the Bhagavadgītā which are not found in the text now extant.

I have referred in this brief article to some common terms bearing almost identical meanings in the Gītā and the Jaina Sūtras. A close study of Buddhist texts reveals the same identity. The late Prof. H. Jacobi was the first to point out the identity by citing the use of the term आल्प्प by the two sects, Jainas and Buddhists. This was done more than a generation ago. I was able to notice a repetition of the same experience in the last of the three lectures which were delivered in the last week of January, 1967, under the auspices of the M. S. University of Baroda by Prof. Prahlad Pradhan of the Utkal university, Bhuvaneshwar. The subjects of the three addresses were: (1) अर्जुन and महायानसूत्रालंकार, (2) अभिप्रयंकुशय and स्तिथरमति's commentary on it, and (3) अविवर्त्तिकोषभाष्य.