TEACHERS OF THE HETERODOX SECTS — BUDDHISM AND JAINISM — IN THE EYES OF THE PURĀÑAS (VIŚNU, ŚIVA, AND BRĀHSPATI)

N. P. Joshi

The Purāṇas are orthodox by nature and were written with the view on expanding the basic concepts of the Śrūtis (Vedas) and the Smṛtis*. At the same time, their encyclopaedic aspect is equally important. Though traditionally attributed to Vyāsa, their authorship is collective, done by different persons flourishing in different regions and periods. That is why none of the 18 Purāṇas, as are found at present, can safely be dated to one particular age. Every Purāṇa is likely to contain some ancient material traditionally handed over to its authors, which they presented either in toto or in some new form with fresh additions or deletions. Therefore, it is safer to ascertain dates of particular portions in the Purāṇas when using them.

Since Jainism and Buddhism did not conform to the orthodox views of the Purāṇas, they were regarded as heterodox sects, which questioned the very authority of the Śrūtis and the Smṛtis and also of the Varṇāśrama-dharma, the very basis of the orthodox society. Naturally, the founders and the doctrines of these two sects, which were a part and parcel of the ancient Indian society, went against the basic views and ideas of the Purāṇas; however, it was not possible to ignore them altogether. It is, therefore, interesting to see how the Purāṇas managed to swallow this hard pill without causing any damage to their orthodox set up.

The Purāṇas in general mention the two faiths Buddhism and Jainism, as pākhanda, vidharmā, buddhi-sammoha, māyāmaya-sāstra, nāsti-vādārtha-sāstra, mohā-sāstra, etc. Similarly, the heterodox teachers have been named as vidharmīn, māyāmoha-svarūpas, and so on. Available Puranic data show that the number of the Purāṇas taking the Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu is larger than of those referring to Rśabha in the same cadre. Curiously enough, against this fact, references therein to the spread of Jainism are more in number than those relating to the Buddhism. At times both the faiths have been confused with each other.

The Purāṇas hold that the two faiths were absolutely misleading and those who followed them lost celestial favours, accrued sins, and ultimately met a tragic end. This view has been skilfully argued proving beneficial to the orthodox set up in different ways through different episodes. They can be summed up as follows:

1. Daityas and Asuras, permanent opponents of Indra, often embraced the heterodox faiths and lost power.
2. Human rivals of Indra, like the sons of king Rāji, were misled by the fictitious doctrines and thus Indra could save his throne.

3. Rulers like Vena and Divodāsa, who disregarded the Devas and for the time being even sent them to exile, became inclined to heterodox faiths and invited their end.

4. Even commoners like Tulādhara had to argue with a heterodox monk with all firmness.

This trick of misleading the powerful opponents of the Devas and finally winning them over was perfectly mastered by Viṣṇu, though at times Bṛhaspati, the priest of the Devas, and Śiva also took recourse to this method.

The episodes may now be examined to get a more detailed picture of the above-noted facts.

1. Daityas embracing heterodox faiths

The earliest account of this class comes from the Viṣṇupurāṇa (III. 17.). There was a hundred years' war between the Devas and the Asuras, which ended in the victory of the latter. The Devas approached Viṣṇu for help and said that the Daityas were staunch followers of the Veda-mārga and Sva-dharma, and therefore were proving invincible (III. 17.39). Thereupon Viṣṇu, from his own person, produced one Māyāmoha (III. 17. 40), who was naked (digambara), carried peacock feathers in hand (barhi-pitcchadhāri) and had his head completely shaven (muṇḍi) (III. 18.2). Māyāmoha went to the Asuras, who were practising penance on the bank of Narmadā and asked them to quit the Veda-mārga and follow his Arhad-dharma (III. 18.5,7), which he further defined as the religion of the naked (digvāsas) and also of the clothed (bahuvāsas) and advocated the Anekāntavāda. Māyāmoha was completely successful in his mission and the Daityas continued to become Arhats in long succession (III. 18. 12, 14).

The succeeding portion of the chapter discusses spread of the Buddhism. The Purāṇa tells that, afterwards Māyāmoha dressed himself in red garbs (raktāmbaradhārīḥ), approached another group of the Asuras and in his brief but sweet lettered talk (mṛdvalāpa madhurāksara III. 18. 15) said, “Know and understand (buddhyata, buddhyadvāni). The world has no base, it is full of false illusions (III. 18. 17-18).” As a result of these preachings the new group also started believing in ahimsā and questioned the sanctity of the Vedic rituals (III. 18. 24-31). Thus the Asuras were deprived of their superior position and were easily destroyed by the Devas.

The Purāṇa names the followers of Māyāmoha as Nagnas meaning thereby not only literally devoid of any clothes, but also devoid of the coverings of the three Vedas (III.
18. 35)⁵. Thus the term is applicable to the Jainas as well as the Buddhists. That is why those Brāhmaṇas and others have been grouped as Nagnas, who would leave their own religion and embrace the other faith (III. 18. 36-43). It has been laid down that the "wise should never touch or speak to a Nagna; even his look defies the offerings intended for gods or the ancestors (III. 18. 50-51)." Pākhaṇḍi, vaidala-vrati, śaṭha, baka-vṛttī and duracāri are some other terms used for the treachers of the heterodox faiths and the Purāṇa proceeds at length with the story of king Śatadhanu, who, because of extending friendly behaviour to a Nagna, had to undergo the births of a dog, jackal, wolf, eagle, crow, peacock, and lastly of a son of king Janaka. Throughout this long chain of births, king Śatadhanu was constantly helped by his wife, who from the beginning had not honoured the Pākhaṇḍi, unlike her husband. Thanks exclusively to this pious lady that Śatadhanu ultimately was saved (III. 18. 52-104).

It is noteworthy in this connection that the Viṣṇupurāṇa nowhere accepts the Buddha or Rṣabha as one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu.

The episode of Māyāmohā has been referred to also by the Agnipurāṇa. According to this source' (Agni. 16. 1-4, p. 27), Māyāmohā, a form assumed by Viṣṇu himself, became the son of King Śuddhodana. His followers, the Daityas, were called the B[a]uddhas. Later, this Māyāmohā became Arhat and converted the other group of the Daityas.

In some other Purāṇas, the episode is similar, but the occasion is different. According to the Liṅgapurāṇa⁸ and the Śivapurāṇa, Tripurāsura was proving superior in power to the Devas because he was a devotee of Śiva. Viṣṇu, therefore, created Māyāmohā, the śāstā, the author of a voluminous Māyāmohā-sāstra, which then contained 16,00000 verses. The Muni surrounded by his disciples and grand-disciples soon brought the Daityas in the fold of Pākhaṇḍa, which made their defeat easy. The same story has been described at length in the Śivapurāṇa⁹, which in brief thus goes:

In order to dissuade Tripurāsura, the lord of the Three cities, Viṣṇu created Māyāmohā Puruṣa from his body. He had shaven head (munḍita), dirty clothes (mlāna-vattra), a gumphi (?) pātra and a broom (puṇjika)¹⁰. The teacher and the disciples were putting on mouth-strips (tuṇḍa-vattra) and a cloth-made broom (mārijānti)¹⁰. While walking carefully they would utter 'dharma' or 'dharmalābha' in low voice.

On Viṣṇu's advice the 'Munḍi' or 'Arhan' created a Māyāmaya-sāstra with 16,000 verses in Apabhraṃśa language advocating karma and other theories. The Munḍi went to the deserts, made four disciples well-versed in his sāstra¹¹ (II. 5.4. 25-28). Viṣṇu was happy to see the progress and he named them as Rṣi, Yati, Akirya (Ācārya) and Upādhyāya¹². He further sent Nārada to their help. Nārada, now a convert Jaina, approached the king of the three cities, advertised the coming and staying of the five sages in the neighbouring gardens and propogated the new doctrine. It had its desired effect and
seeing that even Nārada, the sage well-known to everybody had embraced the New Faith, Tripurāsura and all the citizens went to the Munḍi and became his followers. This Purāṇa, too, agrees that the Munḍi taught them the Buddhist doctrines also; according to the Padmapurāṇa it was the Buddha himself, who did it (VI. 252. 19-20, p. 917). Thus Tripurāsura lost his superiority over the Devas and being led astray, Śiva could easily do away with him. After the victory of the Devas, the five monks were asked by Viṣṇu and others to stay in the deserts, await Kali’s approach, and then to spread their doctrine wide and large.

Four other Purāṇas, namely the Vāyu, the Matsya, the Padma, and the Devi-Bhāgavata record another occasion when the Daityas were brought within the fold of Jainism, but this time the person behind the game was not Viṣṇu but Bṛhaspati, the priest of the Devas. Most of the verses giving this account in the Vāyu and the Matsya are mostly the same with minor additions and alterations. The verses in the Padma are also fairly the same, but the text excludes some portions like Śiva-stuti by Śukra. On the other hand, this Purāṇa describes the Jaina doctrine in detail. The Devi-Bhāgavata has adopted a few verses from the Vāyu and the Matsya, of course excluding the Śiva-stuti. Let us proceed with the story in brief as told by the Matsya and the Vāyu.

Once Śukrācārya, the chief priest of the Daityas, decided to retire to a forest, practice penance, and please Mahādeva for obtaining new knowledge and powers. So saying to the Daityas, Śukra retired to some secluded place. Thereby Indra got cautious and as a first diplomatic step he sent his daughter Jayantī to serve Śukra in penance and win him over. Jayantī pleased Śukra by her devoted service and ultimately got his consent to have conjugal relation with her for ten years. Thus Śukra’s absence from the demons’ camp was prolonged and Indra took advantage of the situation. At his request Bṛhaspati went to the demons in the guise of Śukra and proposed to impart new knowledge to them, which he had obtained from Śiva for their welfare. The Asuras easily believed the imposter and became his followers. After completing the contract period with Jayantī, Śukra returned to the demons. He saw through Bṛhaspati’s game, but the Asuras would not believe him in spite of his hard efforts to establish his own identity. In the end, out of sheer disgust, Śukra cursed them and leaving them to their fate went back to his place. Bṛhaspati, too, with towering success in hand, disappeared. Now the Asuras realized what they had done and led by Prahlāda approached Śukra for being pardoned. But the game was lost; however, Śukra promised to help them at some favourable moment in future.

Both the Vāyu and the Matsya are silent about what exactly Bṛhaspati taught to the demons in the guise of Śukra. Here the Padma and the Devi-Bhāgavata come to our help. They clearly record that Bṛhaspati preached the Jaina doctrine. The Devi-Bhāgavata is very brief on the point, but the Padma gives details. Its description reveals terms like yogi, barhi-pātradrhara, munḍa, śrāvaka, kesotpātana, Tīrthaṅkara, luṅcana, digambara,
etc. The Purāṇa further tells us that the Asuras embraced the new faith and went to Narmadā for tapas. They very willingly gave up their kingdom in favour of Indra. The Devī Bhāgavata brings a slight change in the end. It introduces Devī, who asks the Asuras to proceed to Pātāla and await favourable moment.

**Conversion of the sons of King Rāji**

Leaving the cases of the Daityas and the Asuras, we now pass on to the human beings. King Rāji, grandson of Pururavā, was a powerful ruler and friendly with Indra. His sons, however, became hostile to Indra and as a result, Brhaspati led them astray by teaching them the false doctrines. The episode has been described in the Viṣṇu 21, the Vāyu 22, the Matsya 22, and the Padmapurāṇa 24. It occurs in the Harivaniṣa as well 22. Descriptions of the Viṣṇu and the Vāyu are fairly close, though one is in prose, the other in verse. The Harivaniṣa follows the same with some alterations. Similarly, the verses in the Matsya and the Padma are common and the description is elaborate.

The story is that, when King Rāji was on throne, there broke a war between the Devas and the Asuras. Victory to the either side depended on Rāji's help. Both approached the King for help, but the king said that he would side the party which would accept him as their Indra. The Daityas did not agree to this condition, but the Devas had no objection. The war went in favour of the Devas and Rāji was to become the new chief. But Indra, the former chief of the gods, flattered Rāji and declared himself as his son. Rāji laughed at Indra's behaviour and allowed him to continue. Now, Rāji had 105/500 sons, who after their father's demise, claimed Indra's seat and when not agreed upon, threw him out of the power. Thereupon Indra requested Brhaspati for help. According to the Viṣṇu and the Vāyu, Brhaspati performed some Tantric rites (abhicāra-karma) giving birth to certain misconceptions (buddhi-moha) in the minds of the Rājeys or sons of Rāji, as a result of which they started disregarding the Vedic faith (Veda-vāda), and became hostile towards the Brāhmaṇas and abandoned the religion (brahma-dveṣi, dharma-tyāgi) and ultimately succumbed.

The Viṣṇupurāṇa and the Vāyupurāṇa do not name any heterodox faith as such. The Harivaniṣa, though following the same line, is more elaborate and describes that Brhaspati preached nāsti-vādārtha-śāstra, causing dharma-vidveṣa among the Rājeys, who, as a result, became vidharmi 26. The terms nāstivādārtha and references to the particular Tarka-śāstra apparently suggests Syādvāda and the Jaina-nyāya.

The Matsya and the Padmapurāṇa, which perhaps owe to some other common source, name the faith taught by Brhaspati as "Jaina-dharma" 27.
Later Rulers embracing Jainism and Buddhism

Leaving aside the Daityas and the Asuras and the contemporary kings, we now pass on to rulers who were very much like us. First is king Vena, father of the celebrated ruler Prithu. The story of Vena has been narrated in the Vāyu, the Brahma, the Vāmana, the Padma and the Bhāgavata. The Harivamśa also refers to it.

Vena was the son of Sunithā. She was the daughter of Kāla, god of Death. The Vāyu just describes Vena as taking recourse to wrong means (apācarana ), the Bhāgavata takes him to be one treading on wrong path (uppathagata); but the Brahma, the Vāmana, and also the Harivamśa give some more details. These sources talk of Vena's anti-sacrificial attitude, and orders issued by him to that effect. He took on notice of the sages, who themselves were proceeding for a long term sacrifice. Those sages at last put him to death. None of these sources exactly pinpoint Vena's adharma, but none denigrates him as a tyrant who indulged in wine and women or causing harassment to his subjects. His only fault was that he did not allow Vedic sacrifices. Alone among these the Padma clearly tells us that Vena had embraced the Jaina faith. According to this Purāṇa, the mother of Vena had physically harassed Śaṅkha, an ascetic before her marriage and he reacted by cursing that she would be begetting a son who would indulge in evil acts (pāpācāra) and would always speak ill of the gods and the brāhmaṇas. In due course this girl was married to king Aṅga and gave birth to Vena. In his early life Vena studied the Veda-śāstras, mastered the science of archery, and other disciplines (vidyās). He was a very powerful prince and was accepted as Prajāpati. Once it so happened that a Jaina ascetic, who was of fine body built, naked, shining (mahāprabha) and had his head shaved, came to him with a peacock-feather broom (śikhipatranāni marjani) in one hand and a bowl of coconut shell in the other. He was murmuring passages from the false scriptures (asat-śāstra). The monk introduced himself to the king as Jīna-rūpa, Arhat and Nirgrantha. Vena had discussions with him and the ascetic propounded his doctrine at length. The king was fully convinced and then he got himself converted. According to this Purāṇa, Vena was not killed by the brāhmaṇas, but being afraid of them he concealed himself in ant-hills. The sages brought him from there and purified him. This source further indicates that the Jaina teacher was none else but Viṣṇu himself who had assumed that form.

Next ruler who was influenced by the heterodox faith was Divodāsa, the king of Vārāṇasi. His story has been given in details in the “Kāśi-khaṇḍa” of the Skandapurāṇa. The account in brief runs as follows:

"Once there were no rains for 60 long years. Therefore, Brahmā requested Ripuṇjaya, a scion of Manu's family practising penance at Avimukta, to accept the throne and revive the dying prosperity. Ripuṇjaya accepted the offer on the condition that all Devas would retire to the heaven quitting the earth solely for him. Brahmā agreed to this and even
Śiva had to vacate Avimukta or Vārāṇasī for Rupuṇjaya, who now came to be known as Divodāsa. He ruled Vārāṇasī with success, but Śiva was extremely eager to get back to Vārāṇasī, which was never possible during the régime of Divodāsa. Ousting the King was possible only by finding faults in his dealings and administration. With this end in view Śiva started sending his persons one after the other, but none could be successful. At last Gaṇapati was sent. As a brāhmaṇa, he impressed the royal ladies with his unfailling prophecies and even the king approached him to seek solace. Gaṇapati told the king that on the 18th day from the day of the event another brāhmaṇa would appear from north before the king and that the king should follow the new comers's advice without any hesitation.

Next role was to be played by Viṣṇu. He assumed the garb of a Buddhist bhikṣu (Saugata rūpa), Puṇyakīrti by name, and found a sacred place (dharmakṣetra) for himself in the north of Vārāṇasī. Gauruḍa became his disciple, Vinayakīrti by name; and Lakṣmī too joined the party under the name Vījñanakauumūdī holding a manuscript in her hand (nyasta-hastāgra pustakam). Bhikṣu Puṇyakīrti had mastered religion (dharma), polity (arthasastra), and different sciences (jñāna-vijñāna) and possessed great power of sweet, tender, and distinct speech. He also had knowledge of various practices of black magic like stambhana, uccāṭana, akrṣṭi, vaśikarana, etc. His discourses were heard with deep interest even by birds and the entire flock of deers around remained spellbound and paid reverence. The Purāṇa devotes 30 verses for describing the teachings of Puṇyakīrti, which very much reflect the Buddhist way of thinking. Vījñanakauumūdī preached the ladies of the town, but her teaching and activities were more akin to the Gārvāk and the Tāntric doctrines like achievement of happiness at every cost, use of añjana, yantra, tilakauṣadha, vaśikarana, etc. This group of the Buddhists successfully disturbed the subjects of Vārāṇasī.

On the 18th day, as predicted by Gaṇapati, Bhikṣu Puṇyakīrti from the dharmakṣetra assumed the form of a brāhmaṇa and appeared before king Divodāsa. His actual teachings to the king are not of much use to us. However, on advice of the new brāhmaṇa, Divodāsa, says the Purāṇa, installed a Śiva-linga at Vārāṇasī. There is no indication that king had himself became a bhikṣu, but his superior position was certainly torpedoed and Śiva’s return to Vārāṇasī was thus facilitated.

The Buddhist activities referred to in the Padmapurāṇa suggest the following points:

i. The dharmakṣetra or the seat of Puṇyakīrti, in the north of Vārāṇasī with flocks of deers is the present day Sāranātha, old Mṛgadāva or Ṛṣipattana. Near by the present Sāranātha, there is a locality called Sārāṅga or Sārāṅgā, which has got something to do with words Sāranā and Sārāṅgapāṇi meaning thereby deer and Viṣṇu respectively. Sāranātha, as we all know, was a famous Buddhist seat of very long standing.
ii. The description suggests a period when the Buddhist church had come under the Tāntric influence and a number of evil practices had crept in.

Vena and Divodāsa were royalties; but the Padmapurāṇa records one more episode wherein efforts were made to preach a common man by an heterodox teacher. This man, named Tulādhara, was a śūdra by caste, but by nature he was very pious and ideally devoid of any temptation or lust as such. Viṣṇu, in order to test his merit, assumed the form of a Nirganta or Kṣapaṇaka and tried his best to mislead him, but his efforts proved futile. In the end Viṣṇu was much pleased, and Tulādhara was awarded a seat in the heaven.

Apart from Viṣṇu and Brhaspati, the Purāṇas talk of Śiva also as one who played the role of a teacher of heterodox sect. According to the Padmapurāṇa, once Viṣṇu said to Śiva that he would like to remain concealed in Kaliyuga for proper running of the universe (सष्टि) and with that aim in view he would be producing Moha for misleading the people. To add to this Śiva on his part should create imaginary (कल्पित अगम) which would divert public attention from Viṣṇu to Śiva. Accordingly, Śiva created Moha-śāstras to highlight himself. This story seems to refer to two facts; first, the creation of the Moha-puruṣa (obviously the same as Māyāmohya) by Viṣṇu, and second, coming up of the Śaiva-gamas of the Pāṣupata sect, which are also anti-Vedic.

The Varāhapurāṇa also refers to the creation of the Moha-śāstras by Śiva for the greedy (लौल्याठि) brāhmaṇas of Kaliyuga, who carried matted locks (जाताजुता) on their heads. In this connection there goes the story that once Gautama cursed the Brāhmaṇas for playing a fowl trick against him, to remain out of the Vedic fold (Veda-bāhyā). The Seven Sages pleaded for them to Śiva and requested some scriptures to be created for those brāhmaṇs in Kaliyuga. Thereupon Śiva created the Niśvāsa Saṁhitā of the Pāṣupatas, which was further to be developed by people in Kaliyuga.

In this connection, it is further interesting to note that the Mahābhārata at one place calls Śiva as Rṣabha among the holy people. Iconographically speaking, there is remarkable closeness in certain points between the Jaina Rṣabha and Śiva. The points of similarity are as shown below:

i. Among all the Tīrthaṅkaras only Rṣabha is shown with the locks of hair dangling on his shoulders.

ii. Rṣabha’s lānhana is bull, which is Śiva’s mount.

iii. Rṣabha’s Yakṣa is Gomukha, who stands in similarity with the bull-headed Gaṇa of Śiva.
iv. Ṛṣabha's sacred tree (caitya-vṛksa) is the ficus tree (vata-vṛksa) which, according to the Purāṇas, is the form of Śiva, others being the Pipala and Palāśa trees representing Viṣṇu and Brahmā respectively. The banyan tree is the caitya-vṛksa of no other Tirthaṅkara.

v. According to the Digambaras, the Nirvāṇa-sthāna of Ṛṣabha is mount Kailāsa, which is the permanent abode of Śiva.

vi. According to the Medini-kośa, the term Ṛṣabha-dhvaja stands both for Ṛṣabha and Śiva. So is the term Ādinātha, which denotes the first Tirthaṅkara Ṛṣabha as well as Śiva, the Founder Teacher of the Nātha Sect.

Ṛṣabha

This brings us to Ṛṣabha, who finds mention as an avatāra of Viṣṇu in the Bhāgavata as well as the Skandapurāṇa. Neither of the two specifically call him Jaina pontiff. The Skanda names his dharma as paramahānīṣya and mentions Nābhi and Marudevi as his parents. This is acceptable to the Jaina tradition.

The Bhāgavata devotes four chapters for the Ṛṣabha-carita and discusses his preachings at length, but apparently there is no indication of their being connected with the Jaina philosophy. This Purāṇa, too, calls Ṛṣabha's dharma as paramahānīṣya-dharma. According to this Purāṇa, Ṛṣabha, in the later part of his life, went wandering to the southern countries like Koṅka, Veṅka, Kutaka, etc. and met his end in a jungle fire in southern Karnataka. Thus the Purāṇa holds that Ṛṣabha himself did not advocate any heterodox faith, but further adds that in the Kaliyuga, Arhat, a king of Koṅka, Veṅka and Kutaka would study Ṛṣabha's teachings and misinterpreting them will establish Pākhāṇḍa-mata or heterodox faith, which would be embraced by people for generations after generations and subsequently they all would be sent to the darkest naraka (tamasyāndhe) or hell.

Obviously, the Bhāgavatapurāṇa distinguishes between Ṛṣabha and Arhat, dissociates Ṛṣabha from Jainism, and makes Arhat responsible for propagating the heterodox doctrines based on misinterpreted views of Ṛṣabha.

The Buddha

The Purāṇas like the Matsya, the Agni, the Varāha, the Padma, the Skanda and the Bhāgavata accept Buddha as the ninth incarnation of Viṣṇu, while a few others like the Viṣṇu, the Vāyu, and the Brahma altogether omit him. In spite of accepting Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu or even at times speaking of him in high terms like Prajñāpāramitēśvara, Akhilā-kṛpa, Akhilēstada, Jagatpriya (VI. 71. 277-79), nobody
recommends the worship of his image. On the other hand, some Smṛtis like that of Vṛddha Hārita pointedly lay down that the Buddha should not be worshipped. We do not come across independent figures of Brahmanical Buddha though he is seen as one of the avatāras on the back slab of some of the Viṣṇu figures, specially from eastern India, and in the parikara-frames showing the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu.

In this connection some of the Purāṇas like the Matsya and the Varāha recommend another line of action. Describing the Nakṣatrapuruṣa-vrata, the Matsya recommends worship of the Vāsudeva or Viṣṇu figure—specially its forehead on Citrā nakṣatra—in the name of the Buddha. The Varāhapurāṇa also does the same when talking about Buddha Dvādaśī. It prescribes the worship of a gold figure of Dāmodara, placed on a jar, on the 11th day of Śukla pakṣa of Śrāvana. Next day, the jar was to be given in dāna to a brāhmaṇa well-versed in the Vedas.

So much about the Buddha and his image, but there is something more interesting about the tree that is Āśvattha or Pippala, which is sacred to the Buddha, normally known as his Bodhi-vrksa. In the Brahmanical tradition, the Āśvattha tree has been regarded as sacred and cutting any of its part has been prohibited, this is because of its identification with Viṣṇu. The Padmapurāṇa tells us the story of the brāhmaṇa Dhanañjaya, who once cut the Āśvattha tree for collecting fuel. Thereupon Viṣṇu himself came out of the tree with blood oozing from the wounds on his body. On being questioned, the god said that Dhanañjaya himself was responsible for that cruelty, because he had used his axe on the very person of Viṣṇu. At another place perhaps due to the Buddhist influence, this Purāṇa calls the Āśvattha tree as Bodhi-taru and Bodhisattva.

Perhaps to exercise some check on the ever-spreading popularity of Āśvattha as a sacred object under the Buddhist influence, some of the Purāṇas tabooed touching it on other days of the week except Saturday. By way of giving a reason for this taboo, they created two myths:

1. Rāksaśa Kaitabha had two sons named Āśvattha and Pippala. The first would assume form of the Āśvattha tree and killed all those who embraced the stem of the tree. Pippala on the other hand became a brāhmaṇa, a teacher of the Sāma-veda, and devoured the students who would come to him for learning the hymns. At last the two demons were punished and killed by Śani or god Saturn, and declared that, only on his day, the Āśvattha could be freely touched by the people, specially to ward off his planetary effects.

2. In the Padmapurāṇa, on being questioned by the Rṣis as to how the Bodhi-tree became untouchable on days other than Saturday, Suta told that Jyeṣṭhā, the goddess of Poverty, resides at the root of the Āśvattha tree and only on
Saturday her younger sister Lakṣmī pays her a visit, and therefore, on that day alone one should worship the tree and enjoy permanent stay of riches with him.

Epilogue

The above discussions would show that the deep-rooted influence of the heterodox faiths on society was felt by the Purāṇas also and has been expressed in the following ways:

i. The heterodox views were allowed to be spread in the society to misguide the powerful enemies of the Devas, specially the Daityas. Viṣṇu had taken this responsibility upon his shoulders.

ii. This trick was played against the mortal enemies of the Devas like the sons of Rājī and King Divodāsa.

iii. King Vena was punished for embracing the heterodox faith and a commoner named Tulādhara was also put to test by this method.

iv. Besides Viṣṇu, even Brhaspati and Śiva played the role of heterodox teachers.

v. Worship of the image of the Buddha, even though he was accepted as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, was tabooed; but if the Buddha's worship was a must and difficult to avoid, use of an image of Viṣṇu instead was recommended.

vi. There is a close resemblance between Rṣabha and Śiva.

vii. Aśvattha, Vaṭa, and Palāśa trees enjoyed sanctity as representatives of Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Brahmā; but touching Aśvattha on days other than Saturday was totally tabooed.

ix. References to Jainism are more in number than those to Buddhism, but perhaps to balance the wider spread and influence of Buddhism, the Buddha was accepted as an incarnation of Viṣṇu by a larger number of authorities.

x. Perhaps to meet this very situation in the realm of icons, some of the sculptors adopted a different course. Iconographical canons often describe composite figures of deities like Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha, Hari-Har-Ārka, Hari-Hara-Sūrya-Pitāmaha, Brahmeśanārka, etc. On the same pattern some of the sculptors of Bengal made composite images of Sūrya-Lokeśvara and Hari-Hara-Buddha. Such examples are of course very rare, but no figure of Viṣṇu or Śiva-Rṣabha, or for that matter any other Tīrthānkarā has yet been reported.
References:

1. ब्रह्मसूत्र, मलसुत्राण, अनिन्दुण, ब्रह्मदुःध, वशदुप्र, स्कन्दपुराण, भगवतः.

2. स्कन्दपुराण, भगवतः.

3. The Viṣṇupurāṇa uses the two terms 'Asura' and 'Dāiśya' as synonyms in this verse (III. 17. 9).

4. Obviously this refers to the two sects of the Jainas, namely the Digambara and the Śvetāmbara.

5. इत्येकालाबं स माहायोदेहं वैकष्णा।
   तेन दर्शमत देश्या: त्वाधर्म्य त्यामलत हिंसा॥ Viṣṇu III 18. 11.

6. नन्दलो तैयर्त्तक्षक्क नवी संवर्ण तथा: Viṣṇu. III. 18. 35.

7. मायामोहसूरुः शुद्धोऽनुतोऽभवत् - २
   तेन (देश्या) च वशुषुः त्रिभोवन्ये वेदवैचित्रा: -३
   आक्ङ्क्ष इस्वरत्त पश्वत: आर्क्षात्मकोत्सस्तानुः
   एवं पांढ्रिद्यो ज्ञाता: वेदवैदमिचवैचित्रा: - ४ Agni., 16. 1-4, p. 27.

This suggests that Jainism was followed by Buddhism. The Viṣṇupurāṇa describes the event in the reverse order.

8. असुराज्ञ महतेजा: पुरुषात्मसंविश्वम्
   एकं मायामं तेषां धर्मविविधायांम्य: - ७३
   शाखां च तीखता सर्वभाकारस्मृतोऽस्मृतर् - ७४
   मायामं सासं प्रन्योऽदि तथा तथा तथा तथा तथा
   युमिः विविष: प्रछिपैवं संवृतं सर्वतं: स्वभम् - ८२
   पाबः खायिने सेतु विक्षुण्या विक्ष्योनिना - ९५ Līγga, 71. 73-94. p. 219.

9. असुराज्ञ महतेजा: पुरुषें स्वात्मसंविश्वम्
   एकं मायामं तेषां: धर्मविविधायांम्य: -
   मुहिः म्बानवसं च गूढः पवार समविन्तम्
   द्वारमणु पुरुषां हसे चालयते पदे पदे - २
   चालुक्यं तथा हसे क्षीरम्यं सूक्ष्मम् सदा
   ध्यानं च वाचं हि वाचं दिक्कलया वृद्धि - ३
   -Śiva; ("Rudra Saṃhitā" V. Yuddha Kaṇḍa) II. 5-4. 1-3.

10. चलावे मुहिः म्बानवसं ध्या वस्तुपत्तिमाण:।
    हसे पवार द्वारां च तुर्ज्जलस्वाय थागत:। ॥२॥
    मलस्माण्येन बासात्सि ध्यायांते ध्यातिनां।
    ध्यानं लाभं भैरवं वहतो शिरयं भावनाम।। ॥२॥

Sūtra; ("Rudra Saṃhitā" V. Yuddha Kaṇḍa) II. 5-4. 1-3.
This is a very true picture of the Jaina monks. None of the five has been described as 'naked'; rather they are putting on dirty clothes. This suggests that the passage refers to the *sacela* monks of the *Śvetāmbara* sect.

11. **Visnu says:**

\[
\text{ममामानम् समुपन्नो मल्कार्यः काँचुमर्गिः।}
\]

\[
\text{मदिमस्ति सदा पूर्णो भविष्यति न संस्कृतं।}
\]

\[
\text{अधिनामं ते स्वातु हन्नानि न शुभानि च।}
\]

\[
\text{र्वमाने वहामाने ते पदाच्छुन प्रस्तुतमादयतु॥२१॥}
\]

\[
\text{मालिनामवयं शालं तलोदासःसहकम्।}
\]

\[
\text{श्रीतपारिवर्धजे च वर्णःश्रम विकसितम्॥२१॥}
\]

\[
\text{अयंशयंशं शालं कर्मावदयं तथा।}
\]

\[
\text{वर्षयित प्रयलनacijaवन्तो भविष्यति॥२१॥}
\]

\[
\text{ददहर्म पाल निम्नग्रा गामत्यं तद्रवविष्यति।}
\]

\[
\text{माया च विविधा शोभे तददहर्मा भविष्यति॥२२॥}
\]

\[
\text{भोहनीया इमेद्वृत्या: सर्वेन प्रियोजाली:॥२३॥}
\]

\[
\text{कायादेहार्द्धिता: नूतन प्रातिगीदिता: प्रयत्तिः॥२४॥}
\]

\[
\text{तत्तद्वं पुनर्ल्या महत्विल्या तथा विषो।}
\]

\[
\text{स्वत्वं च स्वधर्मम् कलिर्यवस्तुस्मात्स्थानेतु॥२५॥}
\]

\[
\text{प्रहस्ते तु युगे तत्त्वम् च्वथे धर्म: प्रकाश्यतम्।}
\]

\[
\text{शिवेश्वर प्रतिपश्चेष्ठ कर्मीयवत्या पुनः॥२६॥}
\]

\[
\text{Śivapūraṇa, Ibid.}
\]

12. **Yama says:**

\[
\text{यथा तथा च तद्वैते मार्ववा चै न संसार:।}
\]

\[
\text{आदित्यां च तनाम युयवत्यापूर्व उच्चते॥२७॥}
\]

\[
\text{ष्टथि: अति: तथाकीर्ति: प्रवाधमः इति स्वयम्।}
\]

\[
\text{इमथथि तु नामानि प्रतिष्ठिता नत्रमु: व:॥२८॥}
\]

\[
\text{मानि: च पविद्रथ नामग्राहू यूर्य: पुनः।}
\]

\[
\text{अधिनिनीति तनाने भैयं पापप्रणावतम्॥२९॥}
\]

\[
\text{Śivapūraṇa, Ibid.}
\]

13. **Nadiśa says:**

\[
\text{नदीशिका तथा मायी नियोगायामि: प्रभो।}
\]

\[
\text{प्रवित्तय तत्त्वुरूं तेन मायिना सह दीक्षित:॥३०॥}
\]

\[
\text{इयुक्तास स दु मायावत: दैत्ययाजय सच्चान्।}
\]

\[
\text{ददौ दीयकां स्वाध्यायं तस्मै विधिविधानं॥३१॥}
\]
14. 

**Śivaprāṇa**, II ("Rudra Saṁhitā") V, Yuddha-Kāṇḍa 4. 1:63.

15. 

This Purāṇa totally excludes the Śiva-stuti, which is noticeably present in the Vāyu and the Matsya noted above.

Also the Padma., I. 13, 268-78, p.88.

Subsequent portion of the Padma differs in content.

19. 


This Purāṇa also omits the Śiva-stuti. Also, here exists a good deal of difference in the succeeding portion.

This verse is to be seen in the Vāyu (III. 98. 17 p. 492) and in the Matsya (47. 182, p. 120) also.

This Purāṇa (11. 57. p. 283) also.
N. P. Joshi

23. Padma., I. 12. 87-90, p. 73.
25. तेषां च बुद्धिद्विगुणः भक्तेवद्विगुणसमवेत्।
नास्तिवादार्थशास्त्रं हि धर्मविलक्षणं परम्। (A)
पसं तर्कशास्त्रालंकारशतं तत्मोनुसय।
नाहि धर्मप्रगतिनां वेदोऽद्वयतात्॥३१॥

ते तद्वृद्धस्वत्तूर्तं शास्त्रं शुल्यं अल्पस्वतं।
पूर्वकं धर्मशास्त्रालंकारमछन्दस्वदा। (B)

ते यदा हु सर्बपौर्णः रागोऽन्वेष्टः। विश्रामिणः।
ब्रह्मविद्या संस्कृतः हत्वोऽण्वरञ्जनः। || Harivamśa, 28. 30-35.
(A) and (B) do not appear in the Vāyupurāṇa.

26. गताङ्गोऽद्यावाक्यं दिव्यवच्चयते।
विनिध्वम् समास्ताष्ट्रे केदाराः स धर्मसंि। || Padma., I. 12. 89. p. 93.
Also the Matsya., 24. 47. p. 59.
32. Harivamśa., Hari. 5. 4-6. p. 21.
34. Ibid., II 36. 43-49. p. 112.
35. Ibid., II 38. 33-41. pp. 118-119.


A number of verses following 58. 81 of this *Purāṇa* are to be found in the *Śivapurāṇa* also (*Śiva.*, "Rudra Saṁhitā", Yuddha Kānda 65. 5-33); but some changes in words have been introduced to establish that the faith advocated was Jainism. This could have been the fact because Sāranātha in the north of Vārānasī is a sacred place for the Jainas as well.


44. *Varāha*, 71. 8-58.
Śiva says to the Saptarśis—

मरैव मोहितामे तु भविष्यन्नाता द्विजा।
लौकिकांनि स्वरुपार्थ करुणानि कल्याणे।

निन्दृश्यांसहिता च हि लक्ष्मणेऽप्रभापं।
सैभ पापुपती दीर्घा योगः पशुपतस्वथा।
एतत्स्वरूपाविष्टी यद्यपार्थ ह्यायः।
तत्तदृश कर्म विशेष सैद्धे शैवतविष्कणितम्।


47. Bhāgavata, i. 3. 13. p. 28, II 7.10 p. 77.


49. The name Rṣabha and its association with Nābhi and also with bull gives an interesting allegory. The distinctive musical note (Svara) “ri” or Rṣabha is well represented by the bull’s roaring and it originates from the naval portion (nābhi) of a human being.

50. Matsya., 54. 19. p. 149.

वुष्णाय शान्ताय नमो ललात्व विषमुप संपूर्णतम् युलले। नक्षत्रपुरुषवत्
Matsya., 47. 244. p. 123
Vyāsa is the eighth incarnation and the ninth is the Buddha.


शान्तात्मा संविकारं गौर्ज्ञाः श्वस्वरूपवत्।
रूपं विकसितो बुधो बरदवपद्यवत्।

52. Varāha., 47. 1-5.

शाबथे भक्ति भूखत्वां एकादशां चौद्वातम्।
कश्चन देवदेवं तु दाहोदर सनतकम्।
संबंधर्यं विधानवेपं गंधुपुष्पादिपि: क्रमार्थ।
प्रागाच्छ भास्मे देहादृ वेदेदोरीशारी।

At another place (16. 9-19) in course of the "Daśāvatāra-Stotra", the Varāha Purāṇa omits Buddha.

नमोसु बुद्धाः च देवप्रसिद्धाः।


बुद्धो भावनिश्चाय देवधरो जगलक्रियाः।

मनिरुधो जगलक्रियाः श्रीरामे दुर्योधनः॥२७॥

देवप्रसिद्ध बहिःक्रिया वेदार्थ शृवत्तीयः।

शृवत्तीयः दश्य ठी ॥ सुखरः सदस्तति ॥२७॥

यथायोगमिक्षाकरः सर्वलोकोंक्षलेष्टः।

चुत्ताकों पुरस्तरः प्रजापारंतेथः॥२७॥

VI 252. 19-20, p. 917.

ञिगुर्वय हनुमानव मध्यसंपुत्तो हरिः।

बुद्धाः श्रीरामे भोहयामास तदशुन।॥२७॥

भोहयामास शर्वेश वर्णु विकारितः।

नायावासेन मध्य निहतः: देवाराजः॥२७॥


बेदा विनिर्दिता वेदं विलोकन पशुहिंसनाम्

सङ्केत सङ्केत वेदं तत्समे बुद्धाय ते नमः॥२७॥


नमो बुद्धाय बुद्धाय सङ्केतयाः नवर्मन:॥२७॥


वैदिके विधिमाणवेष चिन्तकी परमाकारः।

श्रीरामे पवित्रवेस्म भूना बुद्धोपमगुरुः॥२७॥

मध्यः क्रियेन निहतः: सार्दुः सङ्केते ये ॥

प्रवत्तिस्यमुरुषः: तेत्वषिध यदा सिद्धः॥२७॥

धर्मदीवाश्च पराठाः नायावो मुनि:।

जनायने कौशले देवो भूमी हि सामगी हिन्दः॥२७॥

मुनिशास्मानात्म वातनूवास्मात लोकोजगाः ।

ततोऽविता सूर्येऽहांषों सुखस्वपनां न ॥२७॥


वंत: कलो संप्रवृऽ वेस्मोहायावदेभाः।

बुद्धो नामाय जगलक्रिया: कौकात्यः धविविषयः।

Also II. 7. 37. p. 79.
The Viṣṇupurāṇa refers to the avatāras at several places such as II. 2. 50-51, p. 142, III. 1. 36-44, p. 207-8; III. 2. 55-58, pp. 212-13; IV. 15. 4.30 pp. 343-45; V. 17. 10. p. 422.

Everywhere the Buddha has been omitted: so is the case of Vāyu. At one place (III 98. 88-104 pp. 496-7) it agrees with the Matsya (47. 244 p. 123) but omits Buddha. Both place Vyāsa as the eighth avatāra, but, according to the Matsya, ninth is the Buddha, while the Vāyu holds that it was Kṛṣṇa.

At another place the Vāyu mentions Rāhula as of Śuddhodana but refrains from mentioning Siddhārtha or Buddha between.

The Brahmāpurāṇa also does not refer to the Buddha (213. 1-168 pp. 1214-32).

57. Vṛddha-Hārita-Smṛti, 7. 142-43.

58. Padma, VII. 12. 87-90, p. 1023.

59. Padma, VI. 116. 1. p. 377- तस्मादिनः विष्णु धेर्ष्ठि च भूस्तुः: बोधिवर्ती मुनीधर:

60. Padma, I. 60. 16. p. 574- चलतित्व वृक्षाय सदाभिवृक्षिवत्सः यो परिवर्त्तवो येव योग्याय सदाभः तमेवःतुः


Editor's Note:

The data-style in the references is as given by the author. For want of information on the exact published sources at our end we could not convert the details according to the style-sheet of the Nirgranthā.