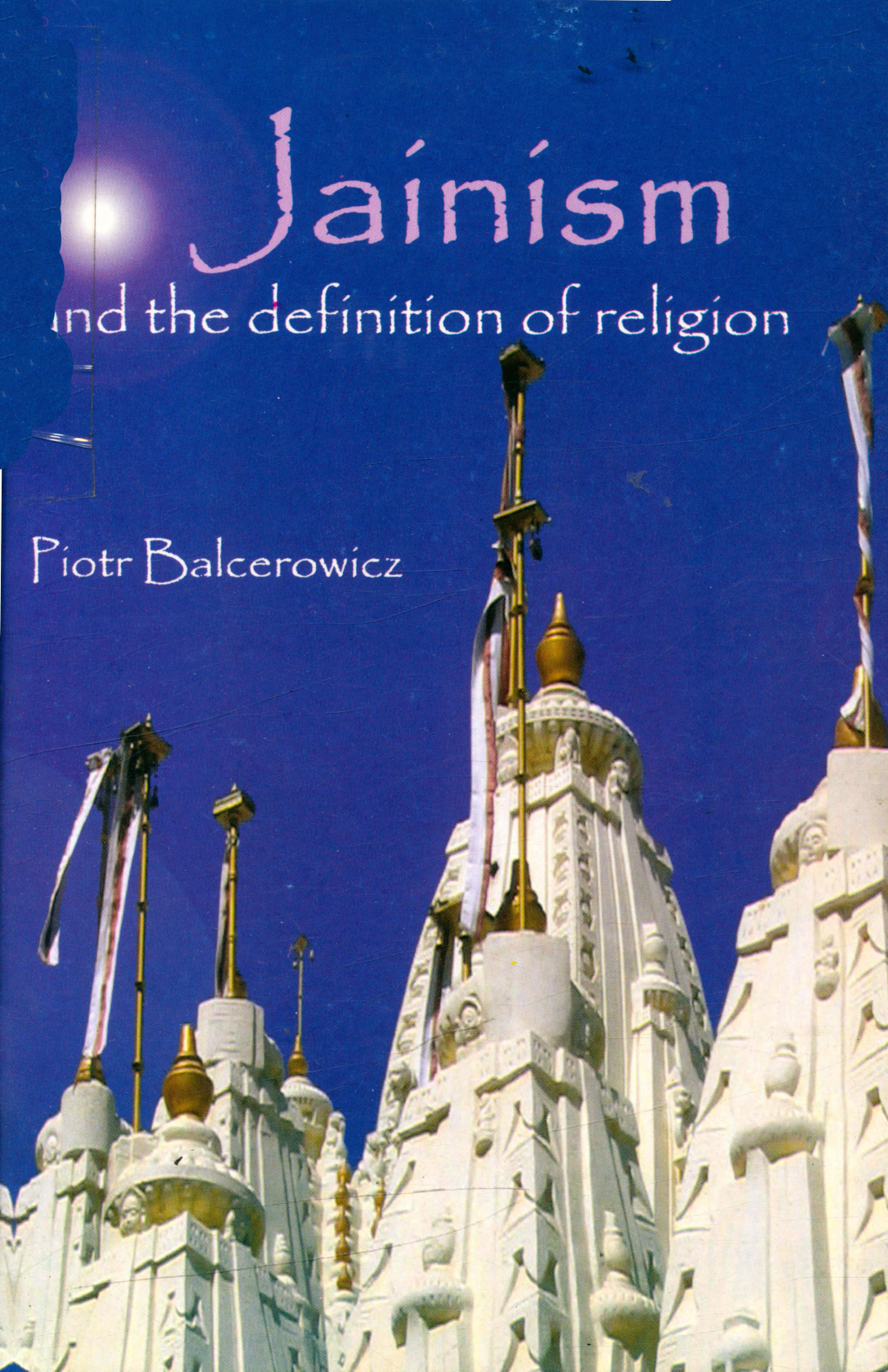
Jainism

and the definition of religion

Piotr Balcerowicz



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JAINISM AND THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION

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In quest of the definition

Can religion get along without a god? Is the idea of god essential to religion? This question might seem absurd to many inhabitants of the Judeo–Christian and Islamic worlds. But there is nothing inherently absurd or logically inconsistent in the concept of a religion bereft of the notion of god, a supreme being or some kind of absolute being who would transcend human condition and lie at the other ontological extreme, qualitatively different vis-à-vis the mundane world, without a being who is essentially different from all other living beings and inanimate entities. And precisely this question—rather than its converse counterpart (with the transposition of the subject and the predicate: 'Is god possible without a religion?'), which in itself would present perhaps an even more intellectually challenging and stimulating issue, despite a palpable dash of iconoclasm and discordance hidden in such a thesis in the eyes of any passionate believer—will occupy the bulk of the present publication. The discussion will be set against the background of the Indian environment of *śramaṇa* 'culprits' who hardly fit the traditional monotheistic concepts of religion.

A number of important theoreticians who analysed the phenomenon of religion consciously avoided any direct inclusion of the idea of god into their definitions, apparently because they sensed that to do so would considerably limit the definition of religion. It is, therefore, this 'god-less aspect' that seems to have been taken into account from the very outset in first mature definitions of the phenomenon known as religion that came up as a result of Eurocentric minds encounters with other cultures and religions. In his, both famous and outdated, definition of religion James George Frazer (1925: 50) deliberately avoids any direct verbal reference to god as a supreme being, preferring the expression 'powers superior to man' instead:

> 'By religion, then, I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed

> to direct and control the course of nature and of human life. Thus defined, religion consists of two elements, a theoretical and a practical, namely, a belief in powers higher than man and an attempt to propitiate or please them.'

The idea of a god was commonly replaced in similar other definitions with the more vague and indeterminate 'supernatural', as it was the case, for instance, with functional definitions formulated at the same time and independently by Émile Durkheim (1912: *livre* 1, I § 3) and Bronisław Malinowski (1911: 67):

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

The above definitions and similar ones emphasising the social aspect of worship as an integral part of religion are summed up in what Leszek Kołakowski (1982: 13) says, leaving the object of worship extremely vague and obscure: 'Religion is ... socially established worship of the eternal reality.'[1]

Joachim Wach (1944: 19–34, Chpt. II *passim*), rounds up the discussion by pointing out that religion encompasses three irreducible dimensions: (1) doctrine as its theoretical or ideological expression, (2) cult as its practical expression and (2) communion, collective and individual religion as its sociological expression.

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 above definition, on various assumptions and with various aims, too simplistic and superficial, and endeavoured to rearrange the seemingly incongruous, or even nonsensical mythological material into a meaningful whole and to reveal

[1] The source of the idea is Rudolf Otto (192

deeper structures hidden in myths and rituals,[2] the definition was further reshaped, elaborated and dissolved, also in order 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,'[3] a formulation which approximates meaninglessness and its descriptive and explanatory value is almost nil.

A definition, often considered very useful,[4] of religion that characterizes it as 'the experience of the sacred'[5]—which Leszek Kołakowski and many others erroneously think was first conceived by Mircea Eliade, but which, in fact, indirectly goes back to Rudolf Otto and Joachim Wach[6]—and similar definitions are tautological and therefore, no matter how revealing they might look at first glance, they are vacuous in direct proportion to their comprehensiveness, for the knowledge of the *definiens*, or its part (viz. *sacrum*, the sacred), already presupposes the familiarity with the *definiendum*. In other words, one has to first know what sacred is to know what religion is, but to understand the nature of sacred presupposes prior understanding of what religion is.

Perhaps the most widespread attitude nowadays is an approach which is all-including, on the verge of meaninglessness, that is expressed in the idea—being more a hermeneutic principle or interpretatory device than a definition proper—articulated once by Leszek Kołakowski (1982: 9): 'What people mean in religious discourse is what they ostensibly mean.'[7] 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

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[2] 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).

[3] Redfield (1956: 362).

[4] In fact, Kołakowski follows Wach (1944: Chpt. I, § 3).

[5] Eliade (1949: esp. 'Introduction' and Chpt. 1).

[6] Otto (1926: 132): 'those primary numinous experiences by which long ago seers had experience of "aweful", "holy", numen-possessed places', which corresponds to the original Otto (1917: 154): 'mit jenem numinosen Elementar-erlebnissen durch die einst einmal durch seherische Erfahrung "schauervolle" "heilige" vom numen besessene Stätten'. In fact Wach (1944: Chpt. I, § 3, n. 49) mentions that 'religion is the experience of the sacred' and refers to Otto (1926) as the source.

[7] Kołakowski (1982: 16).

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.'[8]

Most of these definitions have one element in common as a constituent aspect of religion, i.e. an implicit belief in the supernatural, not necessarily a belief in supernatural beings in the sense of superhuman divinities or god(s), but certainly an admission of certain phenomena that lie beyond the range of everyday experience (though it does not have to imply their strict subjectivity), that transcend everyday experience and are inaccessible to common-sense explicability.

The catalogue of essential components of religion is often extended and may include various other features. For instance Glock–Stark (1965: 20–38) have outlined five such dimensions: experiential, ideological, ritualistic, intellectual, and consequential.

Certainly, such an inventory might be almost endlessly extended but the question remains what minimal set of features is indispensable for one to speak of religion and distinguish it from other social or psychological phenomena.

This brief survey of definitions of religion reveals a strong tension among researchers as regards the actual nature of religion which is the tension between the reductionist and non-reductionist approaches. For obvious reasons, I am not going to enter a discussion on how believers of various religions would define their own respective religions against 'pagan' background.

Perhaps, the best exemplification of the tension was the debate between two approaches, one sociological-anthropological that goes back to Bronisław Malinowski, and the other the phenomenological tradition, which is most frequently associated with Rudolf Otto or Mircea Eliade. The reductionists, generally speaking, would maintain that religion can be understood in terms other than strictly religious, to wit, as a strictly cultural phenomenon that is conditioned by a particular psychophysical human structure and responds to various human needs, such as a psychological need for group identity or community belonging, need for basic clarification of unfathomable

[8] Lienhardt (1956: 322).

world structure and phenomena or need for some justice in the fundamentally unjust world, but is also driven by human fears, such a fear of the termination of one's own existence, of one's own dearest and one's own world, a fear of the unexplained, of unpredictable and morally unjustified catastrophes that plagues humans etc. Further, this approach maintains that religion with its all accompanying phenomena, beliefs, hierarchies and cults is conditioned by general social structure, actual conditions and tradition of the group's culture which it aims to maintain through the mechanisms of religious practice, or by economic or environmental circumstances etc. As such, though, it cannot be reduced merely to a social structural factor or any other single determinant, being a *cultural* phenomenon in its own right.

The other approach, the non-reductionist one resists any attempt to analyse religion and religious experience in terms of cultural, social, economic or psychological factors, and claims that religion directly points to a superhuman condition that is intrinsically irreducible as is the human reference to (worship and awe of) it. The major problem with this approach is that it hardly offers any inter-subjective proof or basis for its claims that could be independently analysed, verified and observed *unless* one uncritically acquiesces to the claim (viz. unless one becomes a believer) which then becomes a case of self-corroboration, which actually no longer needs any proof or verification.

If we were to mention the cardinal features that define the phenomenon of religion, with its all aspects, we should rather put aside the definition of religion as 'the experience of the sacred' or numinous[9] experience in which the transcendent reality ('the other') appears as a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* ('fearful and fascinating mystery'), to use the well-known phrase of Rudolf Otto (1917: Chpts. 4 & 6), that is, a mystery before which one both trembles and is fascinated. I would agree that such descriptions may indeed occasionally prove useful, provided the context of their application has already been specified, viz. we *already* know what religion is (and as long as we do not, such an approach explains nothing). On the one hand, such definitions of religion either involve logical and

[9] From Latin *numen* ('spirit').

methodological problems of circularity etc., or are bereft of any serious explanatory function and can be applicable to phenomena which we could easily classify as non-religious: when one witnesses an extremely turbulent and awesome thunderstorm, such experience can equally also be wrathful or awe inspiring, but hardly anyone would nowadays associate a violent thunderstorm with divine presence merely on the basis of one's experiencing fascination, awe and fear. On the other hand, 'numinous experience of fearful and fascinating mystery' does not necessarily accompany the activities of a theologian who rationally glosses on intricate interpretative problems of the scriptures, or an astrologer who calculates the auspicious day for a religious wedding, albeit both are essentially part of religion, or religious reflection and practice.

The proper definition of religion, which serves the purpose, i.e. which suffers neither from the fault of over-extension (*ativyāpti*), i.e. it does not extend to such cases that cannot be subsumed under religious experience and practice, nor from the fault of under-extension (*avyāpti*), i.e. it does not comprise all genuine cases of religious experience and practice, but only some of them, should involve four factors, in my opinion.

1. The first is the doctrine as the theoretical expression of religious intuitions and world-view (*Weltanaschauung*), either strictly codified in the body of dogmas or held as a loose and hardly codified scheme of beliefs.

2. The second is the religious practice or the cult as the practical expression of the doctrine and belief.

3. The third is the community as its social materialisation, including both collective and individual aspects. The first aspect of it pertains to interpersonal relations and actions of individuals (individual-to-individual relation) vis-à-vis the cult and doctrine and relations and actions that link an individual with his or her community (individual-to-group relation), whereas the second aspect focuses on strictly individual experience and individual link to what is sensed as something that transcends the human condition in one's own personal experience (this aspect is often neglected in definitions). An *integral* part of the communal aspect is the hierarchy, which involves the idea of a distinguished individual or group in a very broad sense. Religious hierarchy or group stratification does not necessarily have

to entail the existence of some kind of clergy, priests, monks or an elite of the *illuminati* or the educated, although in most cases, at least in the broader well-established traditions, it does. I would, however, claim that every religious community does functionally have at least a temporally delimited group of the few selected who perform religious functions in the cult. Even in most egalitarian religious groups which may not know of permanent and established religious functionaries, in every religious act, rite or ceremony which is performed in a group there is always at least one person, be he or she equal to everyone else in all other situations, who *actually* performs the ritual action, whereas all others participate in it and attend to it. The leading person(s) may easily change in the sequel, but as long as (s)he performs the religious act, (s)he is distinguished through this (temporal) function from every one else. Even in a group dance when everyone performs in a large circle that manifests equality and absence of a hierarchy[10], there are always certain individuals (either dancers or drummers) who have a leading role (they determine the direction, speed, rhythm etc.): the persons may change in the next dance round, but as long as the traditional dance is being performed, functionally they form a crude *hierarchy*.

All these aspects are deeply embedded in actual culture, social structure, political environment, and economic conditions, and without them actual experiences and actions can hardly be ascribed any meaningful contents and context.

4. There is still one more aspect shared by various manifestations of 'the experience of the sacred', generally overlooked in most earlier definitions. This fourth factor is namely the believers' consent to some kind of tacit irrationality, for which we could use a shorthand 'belief'. We can distinguish at least four layers of this *essentially* irrational aspect of religion. It is an expression of (1) the believers' acceptance to partially cede their own responsibility for their lives to some supernatural factors, (2) the unquestioned admittance of a set of

[10] A good example of such an 'egalitarian' dance is the famous and picturesque Attan dance (*Attan-e-Mili*) of the Pashtun tribes, performed at various social occasions, such as preparation for combat and war, engagements, weddings, family gatherings or at ceremonies that are a prelude to the arrival of spring. As it is often the case, in traditional cultures it is sometimes impossible to draw a clear line that would demarcate the secular and religious sphere: these two often merge, as in the case of Attan.

readymade norms, that include explicatory and moral rules (these rules never constitute a point of debate), (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 a critical examination has spoken in favour of a contrary hypothesis (opposite of the accepted tenets), and (4) the voluntary renouncement of one of basic human drives, the desire to cognise, 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, and are in most cases accepted not *after* a rational analysis but come to be accepted through the process of acculturation, whereby a child becomes a member of the group and unwittingly adopts its customs, beliefs and norms.

Strangely enough, the above classification, at least as far as its first three factors (doctrine, practice, community) are concerned, resembles—I do agree—long discredited nineteenth century insistence on the presence of some kind of 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 demonstrating the superiority of Christianity above them, as described 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.' [11]

Admittedly, the modern formulation of this outmoded triple typology is susceptible enough to incorporate 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

[11] Quoted after Lienhard (1956: 310).

universe, the role and place of human being, eschatology and soteriology, that are often expressed also in the form of 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,[12] 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 the sacred and may concern also tradition and hierarchical structuring of a religious community. Truly, the above four factors, including the unquestioning acceptance of the irrational, may not make up an exhaustive definition, but certainly are a helpful heuristic tool that avoids the tantamount and circular character of many other definitions. At least, equipped with this definition we do not have to first know what sacred is in order to know that we are talking about religion.

[12] On a wide range of manifestations revealing this aspect, cf. Leeuw (1933: esp. §§ 48–92).

How far off the mark is *dharma*?

It has been repeatedly claimed that the Indians traditionally, i.e. in the classical and early mediaeval period, knew of no suitable equivalent of 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 also precisely how most modern Indian dictionaries translate the Sanskrit term.[13] No doubt that modern practice has been influenced by the usage of, e.g. Hindi and other modern Indian languages, and the usage does not reflect the ancient semantics of the term. I do not think 'religion' would be the most fitting European parallel of *dharma*, which is clearly a socio-religious norm or imperative of moral and social implications, outwardly enjoined by tradition, felt as inborn and perceived in 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, found in the quadruple definition (doctrine–practice–community [irrationality]) formulated above may also be 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 Brāhmaṇic 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 of strongly pronounced social, doctrinal and political character, such as Islam was (which includes a cultural clash with political and social impact of Islam in South Asia), in the consciousness of the Hindus that could have led to devising a respective term for 'religion'. Furthermore, at its outset, *dharma* was primarily a concept of socio-specific relevance, not a religious one, and its aim was, in brief, to preserve the social, strictly hierarchical structure, certain privileges of higher social strata and a corresponding conservative set of

[13] On *dharma*, the question of variety of its meanings and European equivalents of the term, see Richard Gombrich (1997).

values. In this sense it was supposed to hinder an axiological change or a development of social structure in an undesired direction.

That *dharma* could hardly be used as an equivalent of the European term 'religion', is apparent 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* and *buddha*, or the doctrine, the community of believers, or the 'church', and the promulgator of the doctrine, as a distinguished individual. 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. In other words, the Buddha was related to religious practice not necessarily as a central object of the cult as a human flesh and blood but as an initiation of religious (salvific) practice and an object of cult as an equivalent of the Buddhist doctrine. 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 only, i.e. the true teaching or the right salvific 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. And it should be remembered, the term 'religion', by definition, presupposes plurality, even if one might accept superiority of his/her own religion over other religions.

Furthermore, the negated *dharma*, viz. *adharma*—both in its usage within Hinduism and Buddhism—was not simply another religion or another body of beliefs, but evil, perverted nature, deviancy, abnormality or conduct that would not correspond to socio-religious norms, 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—as another religion in its own right.

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 mainstream thought of Hinduism: it is *tīrtha*. The term occurred, or rather it was invested with a new meaning, in the first conceivable historical context that could produce the notion of 'religion', ensuing from the emergence of non-Brāhmaṇic religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Ājīvikism[14], that all belonged to the *śramaṇa* tradition, whose followers are felt to be in minority. True, the term was already in use before the origin of the three 'heterodox' (from the Brāhmaṇic viewpoint) religions and meant 'a ford', or passage to the other shore (liberation) through the ocean of beginningless circle of births and deaths (*saṁsāra*). However, the origin of the religions brought a sudden shift in the meaning of the term 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 *tīrthaṁ-kara* (or optionally, *tīrtha-kara*; Pāli: *tittha-kara*; Prakrit: *tittha-gara* and *tittha-yaa*), which literally means a 'ford-maker', or a founder / promulgator of a salvational teaching, or simply, 'a founder of [*our*] religion', applied most commonly to the twenty-four preachers of the Jains and of the Ājīvikas alike. Intuitively, one might suppose that the expression 'ford-maker' (*tīrthaṁ-kara*) is suggestive of a doctrine or, perhaps, a religion founded by such a religious teacher. And indeed such intuition would prove right, for in Devabhadra-sūri's *Gloss on 'Introduction to Logic'* (*Nyāyâvatāra-ṭippana*), a commentary on an important work composed by the celebrated Jain thinker Siddhasena Mahāmati[15], we read:

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[14] Still the best to-date monograph offering the most comprehensive picture of Ājīvikism is Basham (1951); see also the recent publications on the Ājīvikas: Bronkhorst (2000), (2003) and (2007).

[15] The tradition accepts Siddhasena Divākara as the author of *Nyāyâvatāra*. However, there are strong reasons to maintain that Siddhasena Divākara composed his *Saṁmati-tarka-prakaraṇa* around 450–500, whereas the *Nyāyâvatāra-ṭippana* is post-Dharmakīrtian work composed around 720–780 (or: 710–770) by another author, Siddhasena Mahāmati, see Balcerowicz (2001), (2002), (2003) and (2009: ix–xlix).

> 'That with the help of which the ocean of birth is forded through is the ford consisting of the twelve Limbs (i.e. the Jain Canon) or the community recognising that [Canon].' [16]

The definition explicitly mentions two elements that correspond to the above heuristic triple (quadruple) definition of religion (doctrine–practice–community [–irrationality]), viz. the doctrine incorporated in the body of the twelve main canonical scriptures (*dvādaśâṅga*) 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 the Buddhists, also the Jains conceived of their community in terms of a monastic–laical quadruplet, which was an outspoken manifestation of recognition of the crucial role of the lay community, including female followers, instrumental in the survival of the religion as such: 'The community is said to be fourfold, namely monks (*śramaṇa*), nuns (*śramaṇī*), male followers (*śrāvaka*) and (*śrāvaikā*)[17] female followers'. The third element of religious practice that seems to missing in the above statement is indirectly implied in Devabhadra-sūri's definition of the *tīrtha* in the doctrinal aspect, for the Canon not only is a repository of the doctrine but it also contains an enormous number of prescriptions, rules and practices which are to be conscientiously carried out by both ascetic and lay followers.[18]

We also encounter a similar definition of the term *tīrtha* in Jain Prakrit sources that explicitly mentions the three aspects of religion, e.g. in Jinabhadra's *Viśeṣâvaśyaka-bhāṣya*:

> 'The "ford" [means] the propounded Ancient texts (i.e. the "original" Jain Canon), the community, knowledge, conduct with regard to the community.' [19]

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[16] NAṬ ad NA 1.1: *tīryate bhavâbdhir anenêti tīrtham dvādaśâṅgaṁ tad-ādhāro vā saṅghaḥ.*

[17] Thāṇ 363 (p. 165): *cau-vvihe saṁghe pannatte, taṁ-jahā: samaṇā āmaṇīo sāvagā sāvigao.*

[18] 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).

[19] VĀBh 1380/1026: *titthaṁ ti puvvaṁ bhaṇiyaṁ saṁgho jo nāṇa caraṇa saṁghāo.* I do not intend to enter upon a philological discussion regarding the reading of the Prakrit passage, which in its linguistic layer is not equivocal and allows for more grammatical interpretations, e.g., alternatively, 'The "ford" [means] the propounded Ancient text (i.e. the Jain Canon) [and] the community which consists of knowledge and conduct' (*titthaṁ ti puvvaṁ bhaṇiyaṁ saṁgho jo nāṇa-caraṇa-saṁghāo*). Whatever the final solution of the Prakrit text (either

Apart from the triad consisting of (1) the doctrinal layer, present in the quotation as 'the Ancients texts' (in the original sing., *puvvam*; Sanskrit, *pūrvam*) that according to Jain tradition came into oblivion and were later replaced with the 'Twelve-limbed' Canon (*dvādaśâṅga*), (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 it is often the case that 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 numerous statements, such as the following explanation in Siddharṣi-gaṇin'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.'[20] It should be, however, noted that the derivative terms *tīrthya* and *tīrthika* may carry a negative connotation as well.

Indeed, 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 *tīrthântara* ('[an]other religion', or 'heterodox system of thought'), that is elucidated by Siddharṣi-gaṇin as '"errant paths", [that is] evil paths, [or] *other religions*.'[21] Hence, not at all uncommon are further derivatives such as *anya-tīrthika*, *tīrthântarīya* ('adherent of other religion[s]', 'non-believer', 'heretic')[22] and *kutīrthika* ('adherent of wrong religion[s]', 'false believer', 'heretic').[23] True, the term *tīrthika* denotes not infrequently a heretic, as well, a meaning also found in Jain texts.

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compounded or not) and its syntax, and whether *saṁghāo* is Sanskrit *saṅghātaḥ* ('compounded, consisting of') or an Ablative of *saṁgha* (**saṅghāt-tas* = *saṅghāt*, *saṅghatas*), the most essential elements of the sentence relevant for us are clear.

[20] NAV *ad* NA 32: *sarva-saṁvyavartiṇāṁ laukika-tīrthikâdi-bheda-bhinna-samasta-vyavahāravatāṁ.*

[21] NAV *ad* NA 9: *kutsitāḥ panthāḥ kāpathās tīrthântarāṇi.*

[22] 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).

[23] 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 Jain literature in Sanskrit and in Prakrits.

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 Jains. 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,'[24] or the Pāli equivalent *anya-titthiya*[25].

As we can see, the Indians did have an idea of religion, even in a form pointing to more developed social structures and institutions, that involved most important intrinsic elements such as the doctrine (preserved mostly in a corpus of sacred compositions and in the oral tradition), the cult (more or less elaborate rituals and religious practices aiming at liberation or afterlife prosperity) and the community (a group of believers set against the background of heretics), which was also hierarchically organised (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 not in the folds of the Brāhmaṇic, 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.

[24] MV 3.49.12, 412,7.

[25] E.g. DN 3.115, or MN 1.494, 512, Vol. II. p. 114.

'Godless' religion?

What is conspicuous in all definitions of 'religion' listed in the beginning of this publication 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 non-theistic, or rather atheistic religions such 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 also used as a honorific of a king in secular domain, frequently occurs throughout the Jain Canon and in subsequent non-Canonical Prakrit and Sanskrit literature, as well as it does in ample Buddhist literature. In mediaeval philosophical writings, it is gradually replaced by its synonyms, *īśvara*, *īśa* or *indra*. Even one of the most celebrated Jain philosophers and the first one to write what came to be considered a doxographic treatise proper in India entitled *The Compendium of Six Systems*, Haribhadra-sūri (eighth century CE) begins the exposition of his own system of thought by stating that 'There [in Jainism], the deity is the sovereign, the Jina.'[26] In his perhaps best known work, *Manual on Religious Conduct* (*Yoga-śāstra*), the most distinguished Jain erudite Hemacandra—while characterising basic ethical and religious Jain concepts, viz. the righteous attitude (*samyaktva*), or righteousness, often interpreted as the predilection for truth[27], and its

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[26] ṢDSa 45a: *jinêndro devatā tatra.*

[27] TST *ad* TS 2.3: *tattva-ruciḥ samyaktvam.* The author of the *Tattvârtha-sūtra* is generally identified with the author of the commentary *Tattvârthâdhigama-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 *Tattvârtha-sūtra* was Umāsvāmin (c. 350), affiliated neither to the Digambaras nor to the Śvetāmbaras, and the commentary bearing a slightly more elaborate title *Tattvârthâdhigama-bhāṣya* was composed c. 50–75 years later by a Śvetāmbara Umāsvāti. As for the commentary on it entitled *Tattvârthâdhigāma-ṭīkā*, sometimes called *Bhāṣyânusāriṇī*, 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 (1933: II, 557)—with the famous logician Siddhasena Divākara, the author of *Nyāyâvatāra* is highly unlikely. Unacceptable is Suzuki Ohira's (1982: 38) identification of the commentator with

opposite, viz. unrighteousness (*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 spiritual teacher, as well as the understanding that religious norm is religious norm [proper] 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 a religious norm is called unrighteousness, because it is the contrary of that [righteousness].'[28]

Nothing, however, would be further from truth than a conclusion surmising that some divine being, or supra-human 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 intermediate world, in hells], who expounds things (*sc.* truth, cf. *tattvârtha*) in conformity to the state of affairs is God, the Venerable One, the Supreme Lord.'[29]

In subsequent 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-*

Siddhasena-sūri, 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) Siddhasena-gaṇi 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.

[28] YŚ 2.2–3:
yā deve devatā-buddhir gurau ca guratā matiḥ /
dharme ca dharaṁ-dhīḥ śuddhā samyaktvam idam ucyate //
adeve deva-buddhir yâguru-dhīr gurau ca yā /
adharme dharma-buddhiś ca mithyātvaṁ tad-viparyayāt //

[29] YŚ 2.4:
sarvajño jita-rāgâdi-doṣas trailokya-pūjitaḥ /
yathā-sthitârtha-vādī ca devo 'rhan paramêśvaraḥ //

dhyāna) in the eleventh chapter of his *Yoga-śāstra*, where we can read:

> 'The adept of *yoga*, after having attained ' absolute knowledge and absolute perception (conation), which are difficult to obtain, knows and perceives accordingly the world and the realm beyond the world in conformity with the 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.' [30]

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 certain religious-philosophical traditions or to the personal God well-known from Jewish or Christian mythologies under the name Yahweh / Jehovah (the rendering of the Tetragrammaton יהוה).

In contradistinction to such an idea that connotes a being who is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, good, essentially and qualitatively different (i.e. of a supreme ontological status) than all other beings and entities, who precedes all other entities and who is their creator, the Jain 'god' is a perfected human being, or rather: a perfected soul (*siddha*), an adept of spiritual path who has accomplished the ultimate goal, i.e. has realised his true essence, and thereby reminds all other mundane souls that they too possess such a perfect essence which has to be actualised through spiritual practice. Theoretically speaking, this state of perfection is within reach of practically everybody, with the exception of certain beings that are doomed forever (*abhavya*) [31]. It is in itself a fascinating issue to find such an, eschatologically speaking, inexorable and heartless idea of eternal damnation in Jainism, especially in view of the Jain concept of all-encompassing ethics of non-injury (*ahiṁsā*). The conception of

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[30] YŚ 11.23–24:
samprāpya kevala-jñāna-darśane durlabhe tato yogī /
jānāti paśyati tathā lokâlokaṁ yathâvastham //
devas tadā sa bhagavān sarvajñah sarva-darśy ananta-guṇaḥ /
viharaty avanī-valayaṁ surâsura-narôragaiḥ praṇataḥ //

[31] See e.g. TS 2.7: *jīva-bhavyâbhavyatvāni ca*. On the issue see Jaini (1977).

a selected group of beings predestined never to leave the circle of *saṁsāra*, called the *abhavya*—whose most outstanding exemplar was supposed by some Digambaras to be typified in the figure of the Ājīvika Gosāla Maṁkhaliputta (Pāli: Makkhali Gosāla, Sanskrit: Maskarin Gośāla lub Gosālīputra), believed to be the only instance in the whole universe of a devolution back to the insentient state of a *nigoda*[32]—is hardly reconcilable with the generally benevolent Jain attitude embracing all creatures. Like the Jain idea of the colourings of the soul (*leśyā*)[33], the whole idea might have been developed in

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[32] In fact, it was one such minor doctrinal points that became the subject of Śvetāmbara–Digambara dispute. The former were convinced that Gosāla Maṁkhaliputta would eventually attain liberation (see Basham (1951: 142–3)), whereas the Digambaras were less favourably disposed towards him and believed he was the only creature in all times to undergo a process of 'devolution', i.e. he was 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; see Dundas (1992: 90).

[33] 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: *kāu*), red (*tejas*; Prakrit: *teu*), pinkish yellow (*padma*; Prakrit: *paṁha*), white (*śukla*; Prakrit: *sukka*); see 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 (*haridra / halidda*), white and supremely white (*parama-śukla / parama-sukka*), the latter reserved only for the highest spiritual teachers of the Ājīvikas such as Gosāla Maṁkhaliputta and his predecessors; see 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 neither black, nor blue, nor red, nor green, nor white ...' (*se ... ṇa kiṇhe, ṇa ṇīle, ṇa lohite, ṇa hālidde, ṇa sukkile*)—Āyār 176 (1.5.6.4, pp. 56–57.15 ff). Noteworthy in the passage is not only the fact, that the list of the 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 of the Ājīvikan enumeration, that is to say, it is not *teu* (Sanskrit, *tejas*) of conventional enumerations of *leśyās*, as one might expect here. The soul in the liberated state is therefore free of all mundane predicaments associated with the *abhijātis*. This remark further corroborates my thesis the *abhijātis* of the Ājīvikas directly influenced the Jain concept of the six *leśyās*. Furthermore, The Digambara highly hostile attitude towards Gosāla Maṁkhaliputta reflects, I would claim, a historical fact: actual dependence of Mahāvīra Vardhamāna's doctrine and ascetic practice on the Ājīvika Gosāla Maṁkhaliputta. In short, their encounter, described in Chapter 15 of the *Bhagavatī-sūtra* (Viy 15), would—under a closer examination—reveal that the relationship between Gosāla Maṁkhaliputta and Mahāvīra Vardhamāna was a highly complex one, and it was apparently not Gosāla Maṁkhaliputta who joined, as a disciple (*śiṣya*), a spiritual teacher Mahāvīra Vardhamāna, but rather it was the other way round. Several important features of Jain practice, such as nakedness, certain ascetic practices or initiation rites, go back to the second year of Mahāvīra's mendicancy, and that was precisely the time when he met Gosāla Maṁkhaliputta. This could hardly be a coincidence. Digambara hostility against the Ājīvikas, also reflected in the way Gosāla Maṁkhaliputta instantiates an *abhavya* soul, could partly be explained both by their desire do downgrade the position of Gosāla Maṁkhaliputta and by the Jains' fear that they might be confused with the Ājīvika not simply because of very similar practices but also because of the actual close link between Mahāvīra and Gosāla.

early contacts with, or have been influenced by the ideas cherished by, the Ājīvikas, who believed that liberation did not have to be the ultimate unconditioned state and some emancipated beings were still exposed to the risk of falling back to *saṁsāra*[34].

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

> '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.'[35]

The most appropriate description of the nature of such a perfected being, or Jain 'god', is the one once employed by the anonymous author of *The Résumé of the Doctrines of all Systems* (*Sarva-darśana-siddhānta-saṅgraha*): 'He is the omniscient spiritual teacher of the world.'[36] Potentially, everyone is capable of attaining perfection and all necessary resources requisite for the attainment of liberation lie in the soul itself, albeit concealed by *karmic* matter, as Nemicandra Siddhānta-Chakravarttī (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.'[37]

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[34] See Basham (1951: 257–259).

[35] ĀA 234:
maṅkṣu mokṣaṁ susamyaktvaṁ satyaṁ-kāra-sva-sāt-kṛtam /
jñāna-cāritra-sākalya-mūlena svakare kuru //

[36] SDSS 3.16b (*Ārhata-pakṣa-prakaraṇa*): *sa sarva-jño jagat-guruḥ.*

[37] DS 39:
samma-ddaṁsaṇa ṇāṇaṁ cāṙaṇaṁ mokkhassa kāraṇaṁ jāṇe /
vavahārā ṇiccayado tattiya-maio ṇio appā //
For the form *ṇiccaya / ṇiccaa* of *niścaya*, instead of expected *nicchaya / nicchaa*, see Pischel (1900: 243, § 301).

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 actual god:

> 'Man! Only you are your friend, why do you want an external friend?' [38]

It is a logical consequence of a consistent treatment of the doctrine of *karman*, or the ethically-bound deeds and moral retribution, which would assign no place to the idea of a *boddhi-sattva* either, who could lend others a hand in the spiritual advancement and transfer auspicious results of his own deeds onto miserable beings immured in *saṁsāra*.

To say that, since Jainism has no concept of god, it does not know of any gods, would amount to falsifying the picture of this religion and we would commit a fallacy of equivocation by using one and the same term 'god', or '*deva*', in two different meanings without noticing it. Of course, when the plural is used, 'gods', what is meant are deities, or divine beings that at the same time happen to be objects of certain religious cult. Here we should distinguish divine beings that constitute a part of a cosmological picture of Jainism as inhabitants of higher worlds, or heavens, but have no bearing on religious cult, from a range of non-human beings, that may be either divine beings that dwell in heavens or belong to other classes of beings that inhabit the earth or lower regions but *are* an object of religious cult.

There is indeed a widespread cult in Jainism of minor divinities, protective deities, natural spirits etc. such as the worship of *yakṣa*s or *yakṣī*s / *yakṣiṇi*s,[39] or attendant deities associated with *tīrthaṁ-kara*s. The Jain practice, certainly not restricted only to Jainism, to absorb local cults and cater to the religious needs of the lay community resembles the policy of the ancient or mediaeval Catholic Church of incorporating local so-called 'pagan' idols and mythical personages in the disguise of

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[38] Āyār 125 (Ch. 1.3.3.4, p. 36.7): *purisā! tumam eva tumaṁ mittaṁ, kiṁ bahiyā mittaṁ icchasi?*

[39] On the cult of *yakṣa*s and *yakṣī*s / *yakṣiṇi*s see Cort (1987: 242–3), Jaini (1991: 195), Dundas (1992: 182–3) and Zybendos (1993: 19–27).

saints. This practice is generally found in all religious movements, including Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism, and explains regional and local varieties of cult and practice of apparently one and the same religion. 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.'[40] Another group of such attendant deities consists of a range of so-called *śāsana-devatās*[41], viz. tutelary spirits, mostly goddesses, who not uncommonly bear names well known from the Hindu pantheon, e.g. Ambikā[42], Gaurī, Kālī, Kūṣmāṇḍinī, Lakṣmī, Padmāvatī, 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 mundane predicaments and suffering their worldly existence would incessantly bring into their lives, 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 Jain scriptures, betrays, on the one hand, some similarities with the cult of Christian saints and, on the other hand, echoes, to a certain extent, the historical scenario of the evolution of a once entirely marginal figure in the New Testament[43] which eventually came to be recognised as the Blessed Virgin Mary and the rapid spread of the Marian cult in the Christian world after the fourth century CE.

But to search for the idea of a god or the absolute in such cults of Jain tutelary divinities would be as legitimate as a desperate attempt to find in the notion of guardian angels or various Saint Antonies, Francises of Paduas and Assisis an instantiation of a god or God himself (herself?). The role of the Jain local cults of various spirits and deities resembles quite closely the protective and psychologically supportive function of a

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[40] Dundas (1992: 182).

[41] Cf. Dundas (1992: 182–3) and Zybendos (1993: 26–28).

[42] On Ambikā see the monograph by Tiwari (1989).

[43] The apostle 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.

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[44] resembles Saint Margaret of Antioch, also known as Saint Marina, invoked by women in childbirth. Padmāvatī is associated with wealth and beauty[45] and her function as a curer of snakebites and various diseases in the eyes of the Jains 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 popular 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[n].' [46] By the same token Saint Jude, invoked in cases of special difficulties, echoes the South-Indian Jain tutelary deity Kūṣmāṇḍinī who, when implored, renders protection and help, even in case of earthquakes in the vicinity of Halebīḍu in Karnāṭaka, provided her image is formally installed.[47] Another convergent trait is the intermediary character of the Virgin Mary, prayed to by many votaries who approach her with a belief in the efficacy of her intercession, on the one hand, and of a respective Jain *śāsana-devatā*, on the other, who act as middlemen between the worshippers and the main object of their worship (Jesus or a *tīrtham-kara*, respectively).

It should be borne in mind that such mediatory deified beings as *yakṣa*s or *śāsana-devatā*s, 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

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[44] Cf. Dundas (1992: 183).
[45] Cf. Dundas (1992: 183).
[46] Cf. Dundas (1992: 183).
[47] Cf. Zybendos (1993: 26).

> *karmic* matter [and] of amassed mental defilement[s] of ignorance...,'[48]

—and, as a result, he attains liberation whereby he never returns to the mundane existence and eternally enjoys a supreme condition characterised by full accomplishment of the soul's (*jīva*) own intrinsic cognitive faculties (*upayoga*) and powers (*vīrya*).[49] Thus, the liberated beings continue to exist on the top of the world in an emancipated condition that is

> 'the liberation, or freedom from all *karmic* matter, [attained] on account of either the absence or destruction of the causes of bondage [in *samsāra*].'[50]

The disposition of a ford-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 Jain 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 or corrupt a soul is the lower are the 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 any further involvement in the material and heavy universe is no longer possible. Therefore, in default of actual capability of a *tīrtham-kara* to respond to the devotee's entreaties, prayers and wishes, this religious function, highly important for lay believers and an integral part of religious practice and its meaning, is transferred to the deities that are not liberated and are still subject to *karmic* determinants.

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[48] Dasav 4.20:
jayā saṁvaraṁ ukkaṭṭhaṁ dhammaṁ phāse anuttaraṁ /
tayā dhunai kamma-rayam abohi-kalusaṁ kaḍaṁ //

[49] On the concept of liberation in early Jainism, see: Bhatt (1989).

[50] TS 10.1: *bandha-hetv-abhāva-nirjarābhyāṁ kṛtsna-karma-vipramokṣo mokṣaḥ.*

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 Jain intellectuals, monks and mystics understood the concept of the *tīrtham-kara* and does not have to coincide with the laic 'amateur' perspective. As it is the case with 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 perhaps 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 Ravajibhai 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 Mahātma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.[51] Despite recent tendencies to deify *tīrtham-kara*s, 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 creator of the universe, (2) numerically one, (3) all-pervading, ubiquitous and omniscient, (4) self-dependent (unconditioned and independent) and (5) eternal, formulated by Malliṣeṇa in his *Syād-vāda-mañjarī*[52], who commented on Hemacadra-sūri'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 humbug, who have you [the Tīrtham-kara] as [their] teacher.'[53]

[51] Cf. Dundas (1992: 224–227).
[52] SVM *ad* AYVD 6, p. 21–31.
[53] AYVD 6:

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 that all religions have a common basis, communicate the same supramundane reality and goal and have the same ideal. Relgions such as Jainism and Buddhism expose the falsity of universalists who would like to bring all religious phenomena to the same denominator. Furthermore, Hemacadra's above aphorism, alongside Malliṣeṇa's commentary thereupon, is one more conspicuous example, beside Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's critique of the existence of god, found in the *Mīmāṁsā-śloka-vārtika*, that belies the universally acknowledged myth of Indian mystical spirituality allegedly resting on the notion of a supreme spirit, god, or the absolute in whose ideal, conscious and blissful essence all souls eventually merge.

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kartâsti kaścij jagataḥ sa câikaḥ sa sarvagaḥ sa sva-vaśaḥ sa nityaḥ /
imāḥ kuhevāka-viḍambanāḥ syus teṣāṁ na yeṣāṁ anuśāsakas tvam //

Atheism, materialism, nihilism

Jain thinkers belonged to a dominant tradition of Indian philosophy, which included Buddhists (all Indian schools, but not necessarily later Chinese schools for instance), the Mīmāṁsā school, the materialists (Lokāyata, Cārvāka) or the sceptics, that denied the existence of god. As a matter of fact, *all* Indian schools of philosophy, including the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, were atheistic until the fifth century CE, when some of them embraced theistic beliefs.

Interestingly, we can observe something which I would call 'a fear of atheism' or a 'fear of atheistic stigma' among Jains in modern times. A frequent tendency in recent decades is to ask a question: 'Is Jainism atheistic?', then enter a longer discussion in which the Jains would mention, among other things, that 'in Jainism, there is no creator god, *but*...' Then there comes an even lengthier explanation why Jainism is not atheistic. There are almost innumerable instances of such approach found in various non-academic popular brochures, books and other publications but also expressed by Jain academicians or popularisers of Jainism. We find this 'fear of atheistic label' attachable to Jainism in recent publications as well as in those published a century ago, and considerable effort is devoted to exonerate Jainism of the atheistic stigma. The tendency is so widespread that there is hardly any need do offer too many examples.

We find this approach for instance in *An Encyclopaedia of Jainism*, a popular publication, in which P.C. Nahar and K.C. Ghosh (1917: 260) vehemently deny any association of Jainism with atheism:

> '...are the Jains too atheists of similar type? "No", is the emphatic answer, we have to offer to the enquirers. The Jains do believe in a God after their own way of thinking...'

They (1917: 264) further explain that not only could Jainism be by no means described as atheistic, but even agnosticism would not properly apply to it:

> 'God is, in short, the coalescence of this spiritual principle emancipated from the bondages of matter in all is purity, perfection, freedom and blessedness. They do us wrong

when they say that we are agnostics; for we worship this Supreme Essence.'

P.C. Nahar and K.C. Ghosh would concede that there is no superhuman being in Jainism who is a creator of the world or the source of life and moral law in the world, and they would also notice the paradox in tying to reconcile this absence with their denial of atheism in Jainism. 'Where do we find god in Jainism then?', one could ask. A reply which P.C. Nahar and K.C. Ghosh (1917: 257) give is a straightforward one: '"Nirvan" is the idea of the God-head of the Jains.' There is indeed a conspicuous attempt among the Jains to search for some other idea that would replace the idea of personal god. It could be the idea of liberation (*mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa*) or of inner perfection (*siddhatva*), for instance.

To give a more recent example, Ravindra K. Jain (1999: 11–17) enters a longer discussion in which he agrees that some critics or researchers might be right in calling Jainism atheistic, but only in a very limited sense. That is why he consistently writes of '"Atheistic" Jainism', but *never* of 'Atheistic Jainism': in order to highlight the *qualified* usage of the term 'atheism' he always puts the term 'atheistic' in inverted commas.

There are, however, two important issues involved when it comes to the Jains' attitude towards atheism and the approach of representatives of other religious traditions, but not only, towards Jainism and Jains' alleged atheism. In the first place, it is a fundamental misunderstanding as to what atheism actually consists in, which is should first be discussed here. The problem, as a matter of fact, entails an implicit identification of atheism with materialism.

In most simple terms, atheism is any doctrine which denies the existence of a supreme being who creates the world or controls the course of events in the world, who is numerically one and ontologically pre-eminent, i.e. qualitatively and essentially different from all other (animate) beings and (inanimate) entities, who precedes the world either in time ('god was before the world') or causally ('god is the cause of the world'), or logically ('the world cannot be thought of, if there were no god'), who is also thought of as omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and morally good. This catalogue of god's qualities or god's essence neither is exhaustive nor

would cover all individual cases of 'god' conceived in various religious traditions. Different religious traditions would emphasise a different set of god's qualities, corresponding to their doctrinal needs, historical development and cultural tradition.

Atheism, however, is *conceptually* something radically different from materialism, although these two terms are frequently conflated. Materialism is any *monistic* doctrine which holds that the only substance that exists is matter, and there exists nothing else which is not matter; further, there is essentially no difference between consciousness and conscious phenomena, on the one hand, and matter or physical events, on the other, because consciousness is a product or derivative of unconscious matter. In other words, there exists no ontological gap between matter and spirit, for the latter is merely non-existent for the monist. The matter–spirit gap of dualistic or pluralistic system is here replaced with conscious–unconscious split, which may involve a problem of how to explain that something as qualitatively distinct as consciousness is directly a product or derivative of unconscious matter, with which it shares its substance.

We should add that materialism is not the only type of monism, i.e. a theory that holds that all existents in the world are made or derived from one and the same substance. At the extreme end of *materialist* monism lies idealist (metaphysical) monism, well-represented also in India, the best exemplification of it being the system of Advaita-vedānta and idealist schools of the Mahāyāna Buddhism, such as the Madhyamaka (with 'emptiness', *śūnyatā*, understood and 'absence of permanent nature', *nairātmya* or *niḥsvabhāvatā*, as the ultimate 'substance', or rather the ultimate *nature* of the world) or the Yogācāra (with unitary consciousness, *vijñāna*, as the ultimate source and essence of all phenomena). Materialism and ontological idealism are not the only possible examples of ontological monism, and we could mention some intermediate monistic positions, such as the monism of Bertrand Russell (1917: 76–93), who formulated his theory influenced by the ideas of William James (1904) and (1911), or reism, also knows as concretism, developed by a Polish philosopher and logician Tadeusz Kotarbiński, under the influence of the ontology of Stanisław Leśniewski.

Atheism in most of its instantiations does, historically speaking, co-occur with materialism, although these are completely different

concepts and should not be conflated. It is logically possible to hold atheistic views without embracing materialism, and it is, at least in theory, not impossible to be a materialist without propounding atheism, although I can think of no empirical instances of such a position. In other words, it is possible to be an atheist without being a materialist.

After this brief exposition of the relation between atheism and materialism, it is no longer difficult to clarify what position Jainism actually holds: it is a strictly atheistic doctrine, without being materialistic (monistic), for Jainism does accept the duality of spirit, or conscious substances (*jīva*), and matter, or inanimate substances (*ajīva*).

A second problem which the emphatic attempt of the Jains to dismiss any association of their religion with atheism involves is the question why the Jains do their utmost to avoid what they perceive as the stigma of atheism. Partly, it is the actual confusion of atheism with materialism discussed above. But it does not explain the actual motivation that underlies Jain insistence on the point that their religion is *not* atheistic.

What makes the Jains defend *theistic* Jainism, although such a concept seems a contradiction in terms, is rather the *fear* that Jainism will not be universally accepted as a religion in its own right if it is atheistic. This is reflected in what Ravindra K. Jain (1999: 11) says, namely

> 'On account, primarily, of the absence of the concept of a creator God and, generally, of the worship of and belief in gods and goddesses, Jainism has been considered non-theistic, and therefore, in certain renderings of that concept, *not a "religion" at all.* [italics—P.B.].'

And his opinion has been expressed on various occasions by his co-religionists. This fear was certainly motivated and strengthened by charges which numerous Christian missionaries, such as an Irish missionary Sinclair Stevenson, brought up against Jainism, and which is succinctly reflected in the title of Chapter XVI of the latter's influential and widely read book *The Heart of Jainism*: 'The *Empty* [italics—P.B.] Heart of Jainism'. The titles comes as a conclusion of her book, in which Sinclair Stevenson (1915: 297) says: '...Jainism

may fairly be regarded as a system of ethics *rather than a religion* [italics—P.B.] ...', and adds that this system of self-centred ethics, which is different from altruistic ethical systems, 'largely accounts for the failure of the Jains as a whole to take their share in social reform.'

Indeed, various interpreters of Jainism would consider it a *deficient* religion, inasmuch as it does not allow for the god-creator etc. or god as such. But here we can precisely see why a proper and *unbiased* definition of religion, which I attempted to formulate in the first chapter above, is so important for the proper understanding of the *whole* spectrum of religious traditions in the world. For all interpretations of Jainism that view it as 'a system of ethics rather than a religion' are directly based on a strongly prejudiced and narrow understanding of the concept of religion which derives exclusively from the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religious tradition. Clearly, such biased interpretation of religion which *by definition* has to necessarily be theistic reflects just one segment of religious phenomena in the world.

Most probably the Jain fear of 'the stigma of atheism' did not come with Christian missionaries, but it had a much longer tradition that certainly goes back to Muslim invasion in India in 12th century. An encounter with a brutal political and military force, which drew its moral and political legitimisation from allegedly unique position of Islam as a direct actualisation of god's divine word, forced many to re-evaluate their doctrines and their position vis-à-vis theism. To prove that one was not an atheist became in some cases also a matter of actual survival, including the survival of a religious minority group. But certainly the change in attitude towards (a)theism did not commence with the destruction of religious centres of Jainism from the Muslim hand and sword, but must have started a little earlier when new theistic ideologies became dominant in mainstream Hinduism and, as consequence, were also upheld by Hindu rulers. To present oneself as a theist was a matter either of survival or social acceptance. To deny the existence of god was further associated with being a *nāstika*, a denier of scriptures and holy tradition. Originally, to be a *nāstika* was tantamount to being a heretic, someone who encroaches upon conservative social order based on *dharma*, who does not follow moral law (*dharmā*) and who poses real threat to the stability of social system, social structure and traditional morality. In

the beginning, the term '*nāstika*' did not necessarily imply atheism, and certainly it did not. When the term was initially used, it simply meant someone who did not accept the principles of 'our' religion or doctrine. For the followers of the Brāmaṇic tradition, the *nāstika*s were the materialists, the Ājīvikas, the Jains, the Buddhists and many others. For the Buddhists, the *nāstika*s were the Jains, the Cārvākas, etc. Also the Jains had their 'own' *nāstika*s in the Buddhists, Cārvākas and representatives of Brāmaṇic traditions. In the course of time, however, the term became closely associated with atheism, and the gradual change took place when theistic doctrines, either developed indigenously in South Asia or brought by Muslim rulers, determined the Hindu orthodoxy and when the dominant doctrines based on the belief in one god determined political ideologies of the rulers or elites of power. As a result, atheism is nowadays rendered in Hindi and other modern Indian languages as *nāstikatā*, 'the condition of a *nāstika*'.

Accordingly, through the gradual process of identification of *nāstikatā* with atheism, the fear of 'the *nāstika* stigma' came to be identified with the fear of 'atheist stigma': The original stigmatisation of being a *nāstika* in the case of the Jains, i.e. being someone who rejects the fundamental tenets of 'our' doctrine (also for the Jains centuries ago, to be a *nāstika* would mean 'to reject the principles of Jainism'), eventually blended with the general late mediaeval or modern understanding of the term *nāstika* as 'atheist'. Therefore, the rejection of 'atheism' (*nāstikatā*) on the part of the Jains is implicitly related to their rejection of 'any doctrine which denies the truth of Jainism' (*nāstikatā*). To understand this point becomes important especially when we think of the widespread association of 'atheism' with materialism. Accordingly, for the many Jains, to reject atheism merely means to reject materialism.

To recapitulate, although there may be strong historical reasons for the aversion of modern Jains towards the term 'atheism', not only there is nothing wrong to call Jainism atheistic doctrine, but it is philosophically or conceptually correct to do so. It would not only be improper, however, but also misleading to associate Jainism with materialism or nihilism (especially with non-altruistic ethics).

Against universalism

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 verbalisation. 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. It is also an expression of hope that all apparent differences, responsible for religious conflicts, can be reconciled and the method is to discover the common denominator for all such discrepant and seemingly irreconcilable religious doctrines.

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, a British, a Pole or a Kashimiri the uniformity of the perception of snow as basically one homogeneous white mass may be beyond doubt. To an Inuit, 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 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 inexpressible' found in the following Jain verse describing the state of the final emancipation (which is one of rare instances of the usage of 'inexpressible' in this meaning in Jain literature):

'All sounds (*sc.* words) vanish;
where reasoning does not exist,
the thought (mind) does not pervade there.
The valiant one (*sc.* the Jain ascetic) is the knower
of the province of that which has no support (*nirvāṇa*).'[54]

Furthermore, I do not think that such adverse religious ideas as the non-theistic, or simply atheistic 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 Christian and Islamic forceful proselytisation and Buddhist missionary activities, Confucian favourable attitude vis-à-vis the state violence apparatus and early Christian anarchical tendencies,[55] etc., are in any way commensurable and can be reduced to the same spiritual core.

If one is to keep the genuine character of respective religions intact and free from any attempt of misrepresenting them, and to represent them correctly, the idea of universalism and doctrinal ecumenism ought to be abandoned. 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.

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[54] Āyār 176 (Ch. 1.5.6.4, p. 56.11–14):
savve sarā niyaṭṭaṁti, takkā jattha ṇa vijjati,
matī tattha ṇa gāhiyā / oe appati-ṭṭhāṇassa khetta-ṇṇe /
Significant in the above passage is the use of the term *khetta-ṇṇe* (Sanskrit, *kṣetra-jña*; 'the knower of the province') which is a very well-known term of the early Sāṁkhya system, widely attested in the Sāṁkhya portions of the *Mokṣa-dharma-parvan* of the *Mahā-bhārata*, in Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddha-carita* and in the *Caraka-saṁhitā*. The term, literally meaning 'the knower of the field', was used in the *Sāṁkhya* 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 of activity and matter called *prakṛti*, which was 'the field' (*kṣetra*) for the *puruṣa*. The term further developed till it reappeared in the *Sāṁkhya-kārikā* as a locution, far more sophisticated philosophically, *vyaktâvyakta-jña* ('the knower of the manifest and the unmanifest [aspects of *prakṛti*]'). For *puruṣa* and the term *kṣetra-jña* in Sāṁkhya see Larson (1979: 8–9, 115–134, 168). The term *kṣetra-jña* hardly ever, to my knowledge, occurs in strictly non-Sāṁkhya contexts.

[55] Cf. e.g. Baigent–Leigh (1991).

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