

## Chapter-2

### Secularism in Ancient Periods: Jainism and Buddhist Philosophy

#### VEDIC AGE

After dealing elaborately how the concept of secularism contributes to the development of Indian culture and polity, the present chapter will try to show the journey of religion through the secular thoughts of Jaina and Buddhist philosophy.

*Hindu* religion is a culmination of many cultures and many races, if it predates the Indus civilization, the oldest civilization of India is still unclear, but the essence of India was certainly present in that ancient civilization. The reason why the Indus civilization perished is still surrounded by an air of ambiguity, even though many answers are offered by the Historians. A new phase of Indian culture started when several groups of Aryans, nomads by nature decided to settle down in the heart of the fertile Indus valley. They were clearly polytheistic in nature, and almost all of their gods were derived by the natural forces, like thunder, wind, fire, and even sun and moon, their theistic beliefs were infested by sacrifices in open air, and a direct connection with nature. They worshipped what they desired or feared the most. Eventually the Aryan and non-Aryan mythologies merged together to form a more viable religion that was best suited for that place, some Gods were sacrificed and some new Gods were brought into existence. From the point of view of believers, however, different outlooks upon life had influenced each other, and compromised to develop the philosophies of the *Upanishads*, the *Gitā* and so on. By the beginning of the first millennium BCE, the two religious traditions seem to get together and the *Vedic* religion accepts ideas of renunciation, asceticism and so on.

The *Upanishads* centred mainly on the doctrine of *Brahman* and *Ātman*. By *Brahman* it is meant the all-pervading God and *Ātman*, means self. According to *Upanishadic* view *Brahman* and the *Ātman* are the same. The Supreme has manifested *Himself* in every soul [*Tat tvam asi*]. This idea provides the core of most *Hindu* religious thought and is developed later by *Samkara* into his doctrine of *Advaita*. It concerns itself with non-duality. This is a monistic doctrine, which denies the existence of the world as separate from God. *The Bhagavad-Gitā*, discusses, not the unreality of the world, but man's duties in the world. The indestructibility of the soul is claimed, selfless work is put forward as an ideal, and the duties of every human being are emphasized. It is in this

period that the main foundation of modern *Hinduism* was laid. Polytheism eventually gave way to monotheism, because the future religions were to be more determined and organized. Meanwhile *Jainism* and *Buddhism* emerged. Both developed the *Hindu* ideals of renunciation and use the *Hindu* metaphysics of renunciation, but the emphasis was considerably changed. India becomes largely the *Buddhist* for some time, particularly from the third century BCE under the great Emperor *Asokā*. Later, *Hinduism* gains predominance again. *Buddhism*, however, leaves behind considerable influences on *Hinduism*, adding to its mythology, expanding its cultural content and affecting its moral code.<sup>1</sup>

Post-*Buddhist Hinduism* shows different trends. *Hindu* documents states three main ways of reaching God; *Jñāna* (knowledge), *karma* (action) and *bhakti* (devotion). While some school of thought depended upon knowledge like *Advaita Vedanta*, some emphasized on sporadic devotion not taking time to appreciate the calm profoundness of God. This is, not only a post-*Buddhist* phenomenon, the tradition of *bhakti* was found from the time of *Vedas*, but it is true that it is actually a non-Aryan tradition. In the later part of first millennium, the idea of *Avatar* or divine reincarnation came into existence, because it was easier for people to worship a personal god, than an omnipotent entity derived from *Upanishad* as *Brahma*. The *Bhakti* movement has almost always centered the *avatars*, *Krishna* or *Rāma*, sometimes it has based on devotion to non-incarnate God. Even in the latter case, however, some forms of attributes are offered to the Formless and He is worshipped in the form of, *Visnu* or *Siva* or *Kali*. The *Bhakti* movement was particularly flourished in the middle ages and was inspired by the *Muslim Sufi* tradition.

According to *Hindu* doctrines, the ideal life consists of four *asramas*; *brahmacarya*, the period of discipline and education, *garhasthya*, the life of the householder and active worker, *vanaprasthya*, retreat for the loosing of family bonding and finally *sannyasa*, the life of hermit. In *Hindu* values *jñāna* and *yoga* have always been placed a higher category, and it is only to be expected that disciplined education should be considered the prime religious duty of youth. In a sense *gārhashtya* is considered to be the mainstay of the four *āsramas*, for it gives unity and cohesion to the entire social structure, and the other *āsramas* depend on it for their sustenance. The *Hindu* is supposed to lead an active, married life at this stage. It is often said that the *Hindu* ideal is inactivity, but in fact a considerable part of the *Hindu* scriptures discusses the value of an active life, but the work must be selfless, that is, not for reward or even for the supreme goal of paradise. So

the successes of the material world are not considered sufficient and it is here that the ideal of *moksa* or *mukti* enters. This ideal of liberation is not a negative state. It is a state of completeness, free from the bondage of karma and thus from rebirth. The *Hindu* is supposed to cut his association with the social life at *vanaprasthya*, and later to lead the life of a hermit, *sannyasa*. The ideal man is supposed to retreat from the mortal life gradually and think not of worldly success but of *mukti*. Renunciation, thus, becomes an important part of ideal life. The *Hindu* system of values is a complex one. It includes knowledge, it embraces active work, it emphasizes sacrifice and service to others, and it culminates in renunciation. There are some universal values, like truthfulness, kindness and love, which are considered to be everybody's duty, but man's more specific pursuits are supposed to be relative according to his age and temperament. So renunciation and what is sometimes called 'other-worldliness' are not the only *Hindu* values. Active material service is as much part of *Hindu* life as contemplation and spirituality. Even the approach to the supreme may be either through *jnāna* or through *karma* or with the help of *bhakti*. Those who do not find prayers necessary for the completeness of their lives are, free to approach Him through good deeds. For others, prayers may be a vital part of devotion may be the best path for them. For a proper appreciation of the *Hindu* system of values, it is essential to understand this basic assumption of "many ways to God".<sup>2</sup>

It is not that like every other religion *Hinduism* deviates between the religious scriptures and actual practices, sometimes deriving a life that often contradicts their own sense of ethics. However, *Hinduism* has throughout its history produced great reforming movements to counteract these conflicting tendencies. The spirit of these movements has kept the social ideals alive through the three or four thousand years of the life of *Hinduism*. And it is in this light that we must look at the protests against the debased ideals of their own times made by the great *Hindu* religious thinkers at various moment in history. This chapter mainly tries to bring out the cultural history of the Aryan period to show how the secularist attitude weaves in their dealings.

The cast system seemingly developed due to the wide variety of communities from different races living together. Before the *Sanskrit* speaking *Aryans* arrived, India already contained various racial elements, of which the *Dravidians* were perhaps the most prominent. The *Aryans* who conquered most of India do not seem to have had much respect, at least initially, for the dark-skinned natives. This was because they felt culturally superior, since the urban Indus Valley Civilization, with its scripts, arts, sculpture, town

planning knowledge, and other crafts, represented a more developed, though less vigorous, culture than that of the illiterate, sharp-shooting, *nomadic Aryans*. As conquerors, they must have felt more powerful, and as strong believers in the *Vedic* religion, with its elaborate pantheon, they may have thought themselves more right-minded. Whatever the truth may be, the result is a plural society with different communities, different attitudes to life and occupations, and various religious beliefs, and a rigid caste-structure, as we find it today.<sup>3</sup>

Traditionally there are four castes, *Brahman*, priests and religious teacher, *Kshatriya*, kings and aristocrats; *Vaisya*, traders, merchant and people of other profession, and *Sudra*, servants, cultivators and so on. The division of the society into four castes has in all probability always been theoretical from earliest times. We find references to a much more complicated caste structure. Besides the racial element, the caste structure had an economic element in that it represented a system of division of labor and of class-stratification. The occupational divisions with which castes were associated give us a better view of the role of castes in the working of society. It must be admitted here that hereditary caste structure has supported the artisan skill of a particular section, for skill could be passed on through generation. The stability of the system and the security it offered, provided a firm base for operational efficiency.

There is a group of people who are against the inter-caste marriage, though there is one kind of marriage, *anuloma* which is acceptable. In *anuloma* marriage the bridegroom is of a higher caste than the bride. There is no doubt, however, that inter-caste marriages were much more common than the orthodox religious leaders would have liked. Even in the religious literature we find some mention of *pratiloma* marriage. It is very significant that many of the best-known and most-influential characters in *Hindu* literature were half-castes. The famous wise man of the *Māhābhārata*, *Vidura* was the son of a *Sudra* woman. The great *rishi Vasistha* was born of a prostitute, *Vyāsa* of a fisherwoman, and *Parāsara* of a chandala woman. The idea of a hereditary caste structure is not accepted in many *Hindu* documents, which suggest that caste should be determined by conduct not by birth. *Yudhisthira* defined *Brahmins* in terms of their behavior, (truthfulness, kindness, forgiving), nor need he be a *Sudra* even though his parents were *Sudras*. So when an orthodox *Hindu* suggests that the caste system is an integral part of *Hinduism*, he is ignoring a substantial part of India's religious literature.<sup>4</sup>

Anti- caste movements may be observed at various stages of *Hindu* history. The schools of thought that have emphasized the path of *jnāna* have, on the whole, tended to be supporters of castes. For it is a path that, by its very nature, was restricted to the upper classes. The followers of the path of *bhakti* , however, have tended to be, on the whole, quite liberal on this question. The *Alvar* poets of South India , whose works on *Ramanuja* in the twelfth century described as the *Veda* of the *Vaishnavas*, originated from low castes. Most leaders of the *Bhakti* school throughout the country have been opposed to caste-divisions. The best argument against treating caste-divisions as anything more than a particular social compromise at a particular period in history was put forward by the age-old *Bhavishya Purana* ;'Since members of all the four castes are children of God, they all belong to the same caste. All human beings have the same Father, and children of the same Father cannot have different castes.(*Bhavisya Purana, Brahma Parva,41,45*)

A system of beliefs is irrevocably associated with each religious tradition. The accepted philosophical views as given in the 'sacred' texts are given the status of 'settled truth'. The follower of each religious tradition has to be 'faithful'. Those who question the validity of the sacred texts have to face ostracism or even punishment. Whenever doctrinal differences arise the religious community has to split with the inevitable consequence of bitterness, often violent clashes between the different groups occur. The history of all major religions offers examples of such splits. The diversity runs through various races, religions castes, tribes, languages, social customs, cultural and sub-cultural beliefs, political philosophies and ideologies. But in midst of these various diversities run the thread of basic unity which makes Indian society a big society and the nation as a multicultural nation. The unity of India is essentially a religious one. People may worship different deities but the religious scriptures, *Puranas, Brahmanas, Epics* and the *Vedas*, knit the numerous heterogeneous groups together into one religious society and give them the sense that their country is sacred. The worshippers may visit different centers of pilgrimage but all have a common goal of "earning religious merit by visiting a sacred place". People of different language backgrounds and customs and religions are found in one place of pilgrimage and one shrine with one common object of achieving *moksa*. The unity among *Hindus* is found in commonly following the prohibitions, knit in the fabric of the caste system. Similarly people may say that they live in a particular region but the idea of region is contextual. Within one region there are smaller and more homogeneous areas which differ from each other in many ways. A linguistic area thus possessed a 'vertical'

unity which is common to all castes living there {from *Brahmins* to the untouchables} while caste represents a 'horizontal' unity which cuts across a linguistic area. A *Brahmin* is one who, for example, in Uttar Pradesh, may not share values with a local *Dalit* (*Bhangi* or *Pasi*) but he shares same cultural values with *Brahmins* everywhere in India from north to south and east to west. People may speak different languages in different regions but they have common languages of English and Hindi to communicate with each other. Hindi has made good progress in the non-*Hindi* areas and it has come to be accepted as the medium of communication for people in different states. Earlier English played this role as medium of communication for intellectuals from all parts of India though it created a barrier between the learned people and the ordinary folk. The concept of a linguistic state, using regional languages as medium of teaching in schools colleges and universities are the product of independence. But it is not that language differences will create chaos in the society<sup>5</sup>

The caste system has provided a common cultural ideology to Indians. Though it is true that caste has created inter-caste conflicts and has created a major social problem of untouchability and has brought a rift between the higher and the untouchable castes but it is true that the *jajmani* system till recently has succeeded in maintaining harmony and co-operation among various castes in the rural areas. A significant change has taken place in the power relations of different castes in the last few decades. The economic forces and the political and social changes in the last sixty nine years have vastly increased the power of the numerically large castes. The leaders of these castes are aware of the strategic position they occupy in the struggle for political power at the local regional and central levels. It is these castes which take up big issues like uplift of position of weaker sections, untouchability issue, land, reforms issue and so forth. This caste unity to some extent becomes crucial in taking up regional and national issues and thus indirectly contributes to the process of nation's development. Thus religion, caste and language may create some problems in the society yet the idea of the unity of India has its origin in these three areas. These bind people together closely at different levels. Though it is not being claimed that these three factors will be crucially important in integrating the inhabitants of India but it is being suggested that in the course of time people will come to appreciate the idea that members of every religion, caste and linguistic group are equal as citizens. This would generate tolerance and promote secularism as a value.

*Atheism* has generally been looked upon with horror and disapproval as an attitude of arrogance and selfishness. *Atheists* are sometimes considered to be persons who can never be trusted as they have no fear of God . In contrast, a God-fearing person is assumed to be trustworthy, kind and moral. In spite of this popular inclination towards *theism*, atheism has received considerable attention in serious philosophical discourses.

*Hinduism* is a product of many cultures. Every kind of religious act, from the sacrifices of the *Vedic Aryans* to the rituals of primitive animist tribes, can be observed in the system of *Hindu* practices. The meaning of most of these customs has changed considerably over the last two or three thousand years and many of them are now purely symbolical. These customs formed an important part of the life of the *Hindus*. *The Hindu* religious ceremonies of this large country vary in different area and community. These ceremonies can be classified into a number of groups .Like *pratahkriya* (morning ritual)and *sandhya*,(evening ritual)-they are to be observed daily. These meditations, prayers, and rituals constitute the religious duties that the high-caste *Hindu* is supposed to fulfill every day. Most of these are performed at home. Some *Hindus* place images of god or abstract symbols on shrines in their home for the purpose of worship. Prayers, services and various kinds of rituals are performed daily in *Hindu* temples Since *Hinduism* accepts the existence of many ways of reaching the Supreme, no particular practice is compulsory for everybody. Some *Hindus* have weekly religious observances, like weekly fasting, others can be described as occasional, depending on the wishes of the performer. The *vratas*(vows) are mainly performed by women of a little scriptural knowledge, and intended normally for the welfare of the family or the community. *Sāvitrī vrata* is for the welfare of the husband, *Paushā vrata* for good harvests and so on. The annual festivals provide great occasions for particular religious activity, for example, the *pujas of Lakshmi* (the goddess of wealth and beauty), *Saraswati* (the goddess of learning) and so on. Some of them celebrate mythical events, like the birth of the Divine incarnation *Krishna*, or the victory of the Divine incarnation *Rāma over Rāvana*, the king of *Rakshasas*..Other festivals again are connected with economic life of the community. The *Navanna* is the harvest festival. Annual festivals are connected with the sessions, *Holi* the spring festival, when people throw colored powder and colored water at each other.

Some religious ceremonies are connected with the stages of life. *Annaprasana* , weaning ceremony, *vivāha*, the marriage ceremony, *srāddha*, the funeral ceremony. Religious ceremonies are thus performed at every stage of life. Certain astronomical

configurations are considered to be of religious significance. Quite often on those days people gather in temples or at river-banks for bathing or for economic activities. The best known of these gathering is the *Kumbha*, which takes place once every twelve years, of which the most famous are at Allahabad and Hardwar .If a *Hindu* had to perform all ceremonies, he would have no time left for anything else in life. Most of the *Hindus* confine themselves to only a few of them, and some *Hindus* , such as the *Bauls*, perform none at all. Practices vary according to cultural background, social position, caste, sex, age, and sect. It is very important to mention that in the Hindu philosophy there is no contradiction between belief in an all-embracing, all-pervading, omnipresent God and the *puja* of a variety of gods and goddesses of the *Hindu* pantheon. In religious ceremonies the images of gods may help to focus devotion, but in theory they represent nothing more than imaginative pictures of the infinite aspects of one all-pervading God. To appreciate the personification of abstract concepts is very popular in *Hindu* culture.

*Hinduism* accepts not only the omniscience and omnipotence of God, but also His omnipresence. He is One without second. The number of paths to the One infinite is necessarily infinite. It is this recognition of 'many paths', each valid in itself but none alone complete, that gives to *Hinduism* its immense variety and tolerance. The religious beliefs of different schools of *Hindu* thought vary and their religious practices differ; there are different creeds like monism, dualism, monotheism, polytheism and pantheism. Indeed *Hinduism* is a great storehouse of all kinds of religious experiments. The *Vedas* do not accept an antinomy between *Purusa*(soul) and *Prakriti*(substance), it is this that provides the essence of the *Sāmkhya* philosophy. The *Sāmkhya* rejects the idea of a personal God, but the *Bhakti* movements base their religion on devotion to God who is regarded mainly as a person. In contrast to both these, *Sankara* and the *Advaita* school reject the idea that anything other than God exists. He is alone, the universe is his manifestation; the world is *māya*. The *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* accept the idea that God may have human incarnation, *avatara* .Most schools of *Hindu* thought accept the *Upanishadic* idea of an all-pervading *Brahman*, the Supreme, but details of religious belief differ very widely indeed. So it is not doctrinal agreement that provides the unity of *Hinduism*.<sup>6</sup>

In fact *Hinduism* is a *dharma* rather than a religion in the restricted sense of the word. Professor *Radhakrishnan* upheld in his book *The Hindu Views of Life* that it enjoins a strict code of practice. The theist and the atheist, the skeptic and the agnostic may all be *Hindus* if they accept the *Hindu* system of culture and life....what counts is conduct,

not belief. It is an open question whether attempts to unite with God should not be considered part of *Hindu* conduct, and it is thus perhaps debatable whether an atheist can be considered a *Hindu* if he otherwise follows a *Hindu* way of life. There can be no doubt, that *Hinduism* is basically more a matter of conduct than a belief. Social observances can be either *Lokacharas* or *sastracaras*. The former refers to the socially accepted rules of behavior without, necessarily, any sanction in the *sastras*, while the latter to the *sastric* codes of behavior. Some of the *sastracaras* and *lokacharas* are concerned not merely with general codes of conduct (honesty, love), but also with details of forms of behavior, sometimes even specifying performances and rituals. But both *lokacharas* and *sastracaras* are considered to be, ultimately, *bahya* and anyone who feels that his temperament is in conflict with the detailed performances need not feel bound by them. Thus *Bauls* and members of certain *Bhakti* schools have often declared their rejection of these performances without denying the basic *Hindu* ideals. In fact the uniting factor among the enormous variety of religious beliefs and ceremonies which one finds in *Hinduism* has been a belief in a basic code of behavior, including selfless work, detachment and honesty. As far as religious worship is concerned, *Hinduism* is very free. One may try to reach God through karma, or knowledge, or simply through devotion. All are equally valid, natural. He is infinite omniscient, but He may appear different to different people. There are various ways of reaching Him, each as valid as every other. Apparently conflicting views of God may be nothing more than the infinite aspects of the same Supreme. *Hinduism* points out that the important thing about a man is his *dharma*, not necessarily his religion.

In ancient days *Vedas* were not written down. They called for remarkable memories in priests and teachers, the custom of *paramparya*, by which the literature was handed down orally from guru to the *sisya* and so from one generation to the next. The subsidiary arts, which first developed in the gatherings around the sacrificial altar, later became part of the traditional education of the cultured. These too were taught by the gurus in what were called *tapovanas*. These centers of learning were set up in the seclusion of forest retreats, presumably to be far from the distractions of urban life. The students lived as members of the guru's family and besides following their studies, helped in agricultural and other pursuits, so that the *tapovanas* could have economic self-sufficiency. The students probably did not pay any fees in cash, though most of them paid in kind later in their lives after achieving success. As the society was not yet very commercial, the respect with which the society looked upon the teachers was in itself a considerable

reward. The regional kings very often helped these institutions, though they did not seem to have interfered much in their learning. The reputation of the schools naturally varied with the reputation of the teachers, and there are many tales of students travelling long distances to study under a particular teacher.

As a result of the mingling of diverse races, ceremonies other than *Vedic* sacrifices the prayers and offerings were receiving more importance. One of these was the offerings made to the ancestors. From the *Purānas* and the *Mahābhārata* we find that this ancestor worship is a later innovation and the priests who conducted these ceremonies were looked down upon by the more orthodox. Though most *Hindu* religious practices in later days include this show of respect to ancestors as a part of the ceremony, the attitude of the orthodox shows that it must originally have been outside the scope of the more sanctified code of the *sastras*. In spite of this intermingling, the *Sanskrit*-speaking people and the earlier inhabitants of India seem to have had different social customs and different educational systems. While *Vedic* Age shows little evidence of a rigid caste system among the *Aryans*, and all *Aryans* were entitled to take part in the sacrifices, the earlier inhabitants were largely excluded.<sup>7</sup>

The householder followed the *Vedic* ideal, who, through sacrifices and offerings, might reach the joys of heaven, which were his desire. The non-*Vedic* cultures must have contributed to *Hinduism* the ideas of renunciation and asceticism leading to *mukti*, which were quite alien to the *Aryan* code of values. The *Aryans* were non-vegetarian and "slaying cows for guests" seems to have been considered a highly praiseworthy act among *Aryans*. The *Hindu* belief in non-violence, which has its origin in *Buddhism* and *Jainism*, is definitely of non-*Vedic* origin. With such different systems of values, the centers of education of the various communities were naturally different.

The educational centre of the *Aryans* was, to begin with, the sacrificial ground. History, legends, and drama would be told, or enacted around the sacred arena, and lyrics and tales of loves would be recited. A more intellectual form of entertainment was the posing of riddles whose answers were given in the *Vedas*. The forest-schools developed from this sacrificial gathering. For the non-*Aryans* the places for education and the interchange of ideas seem to have been the *tirthas*. In these holy gatherings such non-*Vedic* cults as *Yoga*, *Natha* and *Jaina* flourished. The cleavage between *Aryan* and non-*Aryan* life, thus, extended to education. Only later, during the *Upanishadic period*, there are

traces of mixing of the two cultures and systems of thought. In the age of *Upanishads*, when the cultural streams in India were mingling, *tapovanas* flourished, the schools were mentioned by names, such as *Aranyaka*. There is no doubt that these schools, where students including girls, from various parts of India came, played a very significant part in the propagation of *Hindu* culture and even in its evolution and coordination. Education is integrally connected with *dharma* of a community.

The philosophical and speculative synthesis of the *Upanishads* was largely confined to the elite. The influence of many cultures on the life of the common folk and the synthesis achieved there is no less interesting. The *Vedas* shows the "way of devotion" and the rise of the devotional cults in *Hinduism* can only be explained by the influence of non-*Vedic* cultures. According to *Padmapurāna*, the school of devotion had its origin in Dravidian country. The cult of devotion brought in a new class of guru in place of the older *Vedic acaryas*; at the same time the centre of learning shifted from the sacrificial ground to the more democratic places of pilgrimage and bathing, instead of alters there grew up temples with their special deities. The *Vedas* contain little reference to iconolatry or image-worship, so that this growth also is non-*Vedic*. Of the many races of India, some are worshippers of a river, or a mountain, or a tree, or a animal. Each of these cults has influenced *Hinduism*. *Ganesa*, is half human and half elephant. Sometimes, as a concession to mass sentiments, the *Vedic* sacrifices were preceded by these popular worships- certainly a wise measure on the part of the *Aryan* minority. *Siva* is another god of the non-*Aryan* who has been accepted in the *Hindu* pantheon. Relatively primitive tribes like the *Sabar* and *Kirata* seem to have been his worshippers, though there are a few possible traces of his worship even in the urbanized Indus Valley Civilization. From a study of the process of assimilation, it appears that *Siva* was accepted by the orthodox only after a good deal of hostility and opposition. The amalgamation of the cult of *Siva* and phallic worship, which can be observed later, certainly widened the *Saiva* cult. Whatever may have been the initial simplicity of such a worship, its later philosophization led to quite an elaborate theory. *Siva* was at first associated with *Rudra*, the *Vedic* storm god. Later, besides his association with fertility, we treat him as the lord of the *Yoga* and the lord of the cosmic dance of creation and destruction. This power to sublimate an originally crude concept and to personify the Supreme in many forms seems a typical feature of *Hindu* religion.<sup>8</sup>

Image-worship and idolatry are not same thing, though western observers seem to have treated the two as identical. It is the spirit of adoration of the Formless that is given shape in the images of the deities. Though these are used as aids in religious life, "every *Hindu* hopes to escape someday from the necessity of using images". It is the difficulty which the human mind has in grasping the nature of the all-pervading *Brahman* that often made specification and even personification necessary. In the *Vedas* there are no mention of idols or image. The fact that the Indus Valley Civilization had many images shows that image-worship is a contribution of the non-*Vedic* cultural trend. Some attribute its rise to *Greek* influence on India, which was strong after *Alexander's* invasion. It is believed that the *Greeks*, under *Buddhist* patronage and inspiration, made the first images of the Enlightened One. This thesis does not seem to be fully satisfactory, as there was image-worship in India even before the *Graeco-Buddhist Gandhara* school of sculpture was developed. In fact evidence of image-worship in *Mahenjodaro* suggests that it has existed in India at least since the third millennium BCE. There is no doubt, however, that *Buddhist* of the *Mahayana* school enriched *Hindu* image-worship. Characteristic of *Hindu* images is that the deities, according to the canons, must always be represented as youthful. There are no old gods in India It is a kind of worshipping the youth. The chief aim of the image-maker was the expression of emotion rather than anatomic precision.

Many of the taboos were obviously inspired by sanitary and hygienic considerations. In the *Vedic* period, when the invaders first took to agricultural pursuits, we find mention of diseases that were the results of careless collective living. Later on, in the age of *Smritis*, there grew up a large body of rules and regulations. These civic rules worked within the religious framework and sometimes even had religious sanction. Besides these hygienic rules, however, the peculiar traditions of various tribes and sects were absorbed into the system of *Hindu* religious observances, though their historical origin often lay in crude beliefs in myths and magic. *Vedic* and non-*Vedic* forms of culture were being combined in India to form new cultural trends round about 800 BCE. This period of cultural evolution was thus full of heterodox creeds and opinions. There developed, among other schools of thought, the *Lokayata*, of which *Cārvāka* was the best-known teacher. This school considered experience to be the only source of knowledge. Naturally it challenged the whole of *Hindu* metaphysics. The challenge of these atheists had a beneficial effect on *Hindu* thought, for it forced the religious leaders to defend their views, reconsider their positions, and even perhaps get rid of some of their doubtful practices. It was in this period

of heterodoxy that *Jainism* and *Buddhism* were flourished. The *Vedic* interest in gods were replaced by man and in human greatness; and the *Vedic* ideal of a pleasant life in heaven had been challenged by believers in renunciation, and selfless work. The theory of the transmigration of souls and the theory that life gradually evolves, through many births, towards its ultimate realization had been developed by the *Upanishads*. On the other hand materialist had begun to question the existence of God perhaps even as early as the *Upanishadic* period. In this atmosphere of intellectual experimentation *Jainism* and *Buddhism* arose, and the effects of non-Vedic schools are readily seen in these religions. The founder of both were *Kshatriyas*, not *Vedic Brahmins*, and both creeds arose in the eastern provinces, far removed from the centre of the *Vedic* culture.

The sixth century BCE, in the Indian culture is known as an age of protest against the old order of things. During this century a revolt was organized against the standardization of social patterns, the ritualistic form of religion, and the absolute power of the priest craft. A new philosophy made its appearance which was anti-caste in spirit. It preached pure individualism and spiritualism and discarded the principle of social immobility, inequality and injustice and upheld the sanctity of human intellect and its freedom. It stood for man and women to achieve his/her salvation as human beings. The ultimate aim of the revolt was not materialistic, but spiritual, not the socialization but the spiritualization of life. This spirit manifested itself in the form of two religions movements *Jainism* and *Buddhism*. The thinkers of these new movements were pure intellectual philosophers and conceived life as a philosophy of power and knowledge. *Mahavira* and *Gautam* in India protested against the corruption that had crept into *Hinduism*. In that time, *Vedic* religion was full of ritual ceremonies and sacrifices. As most of the common people could not perform these costly rituals and sacrifices, so, they were quite unhappy with the *Vedic* religion. People were quite fed up with the dominance of the priestly class too. The life of an individual was covered with so many rituals that the need of priests was felt at every stage. This greatly enhanced their importance. In fact, the priestly class became so powerful that they came to acquire great influence with the rules and begun to play an effective role in the administration, even the priestly class itself began to be worshipped. The attitude of this priestly class towards the common people was quite humiliating and no wonder the common people developed a disliking for the priests. The rigidity of the caste system contributed to the discontent among the people. By the time the *Hindu* society had come to be divided into four water-tight compartments, *Brahmans* were already in a very

dominating position. The *Brahmans* started demanding certain privileges . The *Kshatriyas* who belonged to the higher caste were not in a position to accept the supremacy of the *Brahmans* and led movements which challenged the dominant authority of the *Brahmans*. The difficult language used for the preaching and propagation of *Vedic* religion were beyond the reach of the common people. Most of the religious works were composed in *Sanskrit* which was not followed by the common people. This provided an opportunity to the *Brahmins* to interpret the religion as it suited their interests.

Both *Jainism* and *Buddhism* started as movements for the reformation of *Brahmanism*. They were not a new creed but an appeal for a better living in the heart of the existing *Hindu* religion and society. Both *Mahavira* and *Buddha* urged their hearers to give up their vices and follies and to practice that purity of conduct and sincerity of belief which is the essence of every true religion. They neither taught any new dogmas nor any new rituals nor a new philosophy. *Mahavira* laid stress on asceticism, reference to which are found in *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. *Buddha* based his teaching on the philosophy of *Sāṅkhya* and later *Upanishads*. The eight-fold path prescribed by *Buddha* for relieving the early miseries of soul caused by the cycle of birth and death is only a code of general ethics . *Gautam Buddha* preached to the people the futility of the various rites and rituals and insisted that true piety consisted in leading a life of simplicity and purity. He did not advocate any new principles. Even the principle of *Ahimsā* which he emphasized was taken by him from the later-*Vedic* texts.

So, the two religious movements were the outcome of the spirit of scientific enquiry and intellectual discussions which prevailed at that time. The emergence of these two religious movements was a significant development in the process of religious and secular development in India and went a long way in the reformation of the existing religions. <sup>9</sup>

## JAINA PHILOSOPHY

Two heterodox systems have established themselves as well-defined philosophical schools surviving in this country till now. These schools may be termed as secular in their modes of thinking. They are *Jainism* and *Buddhism*. The two sects have some basic doctrinal similarities. Complete liberation from the cycle of rebirths is the highest aim of life. Morally sound conduct in this life can attain the highest aim. The moral code is devised to accord with *karmasiddhanta*, a theory that seemed to explain several discrete facts of life. The concept of a non-material soul in every living body was a perfectly reasonable conclusion based on observation. No known fact contradicted the inference. As all attributes of life suddenly disappear at the time of death leaving behind the inert corpse, it is reasonable to infer that something, the *jiva* is separated from the living body. Further elaboration of the concept was 'logical'. It took the form of the well-known *karmasiddhanta*. Jain *Sravakacāra*, the ethical moral code to be followed by lay householders may be considered a model of secular moral code and its integration with the *karmasiddhanta* is not inconsistent with its secular nature. The existence of an immoral soul, the idea of its transmigration and recognition of *Nirvana* as the highest goal seemed to be valid as they were based on observation and inference. Indeed pristine Jain philosophy is a form of proto-science. It deals with *dravya*, defined as 'what exists'. Recognition of *Jiva* as a *dravya* seemed logical though not confirmed by independent evidence. Interpretation of pristine Jain philosophy by subsequent thinkers led to its degeneration into a typical religion, characterized by ritualism. Any philosophical doctrine, if trapped in a text that is declared to be a statement of *sarvajna*, fossilizes and loses the ability to improve and incorporate new knowledge. Besides, this attitude excludes assimilation of valid doctrinal elements from other schools of philosophy. If only ancient Jain philosophy were to accommodate growing knowledge, it would have developed into modern science.

On the basis of three kinds of Knowledge, the *Jainas* form their view of the universe. Perception reveals the reality of material substances, composed by the four kinds of elements. By Inference they come to believe in space (*Ākāśa*), because material substances must exist somewhere, believe in time (*Kāla*), because changes or succession of the states of substances cannot be understood without it and believe in the two causes of motion and rest respectively. For without them, movement and cessation of movement in things cannot be explained. These last two are called respectively *dharma* and *adharmā*

which should not be taken here in their ordinary moral sense, but in the technical sense of the causes of motion and rest. But the physical world, consisting of the four elements of matter, space, time, *dharma* and *adharma*, is not all. Perception, as well as inference, proves the existence of souls in all living bodies. We can internally perceive pleasure, pain and other qualities of the soul directly. Consciousness cannot be said to the product of matter. There are as many souls as there are living bodies. There are souls not only in animals, but in plants too and even in particles of dust. The existence of very minute living beings in dust and other apparently non-living material things is admitted by modern science. All souls are not equally conscious. Some, those, in plants and dust-bodies, have only the sense of touch and have tactual consciousness alone. Some lower animals have two senses, others three, still others four. Man and some higher animals have five senses through all of which they know things. But, however developed the senses may be, the soul living in the body is limited in knowledge; it is limited in power and is subject to all kinds of miseries. But every soul is capable of attaining infinite consciousness, power and happiness. These qualities are inherent in the very nature of the soul. They are obstructed by Karmas. In a word, Karmas lead to the bondage of the soul by matters. By removing Karma a soul can remove bondage and regain its natural perfections.

The most important teaching of *Jainism* is *Moksa marga* or path of salvation. *Samyak darsana* (right faith), *Samyak jnan* (right knowledge) and *Samyak caritra* (right conduct) known as *Triratna*, together constitute the path to salvation. They are wholly different from the *Bhakti-marga* of the *Bhagavatas*, *Jnana-marga* of the *Vedantins* and *Karma-marga* of the *Mimamsakas*. Unlike these religious schools, which lay all the emphasis one of them, as means of salvation. *Jainism* holds that all the three must co-exist in a person, if one is to walk along the path of salvation. The *Jaina* commentators make the meaning quite clear by bringing the analogy of medicine as a curative of some malady. Faith in its efficacy, knowledge of its use, and actual taking of the medicine—all these three must be present if a cure is to be effective. In the same way, the misery of the universe can be cured by this triple panacea. There are two courses of moral discipline or conduct in *Jaina* ethics, one prescribed for house-holder and the other for *Sannyasins*.

*Jain* canon recommends a well, defined code of conduct (*achara*) for its followers. The code consists of five elements called *vratas*. Refraining from sinful acts is *vrata*. The five *vratas* are *Ahimsa* {non-violence}, *satya* {truthfulness} *asteya* {non-stealing} *brahmacarya* {non-lustfulness} and *aparigraha* {non-possession}.

In addition to the five *vratas*, gambling, consumption of alcohol and meat are taboo in *Jain ācharā* . Gambling and drunkenness are not treated as good actions in any civilized society .About consuming meat it is difficult to get unanimity, as food habits are determined not only by religion but also regional traditions. Use of filtered water is recommended so that any tiny creatures in it are saved. Besides, drinking filtered water is a hygienic practice. So, there can be no argument against it. Eating food at night is another taboo since tiny creatures, falling by chance into the food, might get killed inadvertently. Some of these trivia are best left to the direction of individuals. If the rules of moral conduct are not in conflict with any philosophical or religious doctrine, they can be adopted universally. Violence, dishonesty, lustfulness and gambling ,are not recommended in any civil society . So, adopting Jain *srāvākācārā* as a secular common minimal moral code is a kind of morality which are acceptable to all .<sup>10</sup>

The first *vrata*, *Ahimsā* means not injuring or hurting in any way to any living being, an animal or even an insect, either by thought ,word, or deed. It includes forbearing from binding them cruelly with ropes, thus preventing free movement, compelling them to carry burdens beyond their capacity and not freeing them properly. It is not enough if he does not himself inflict direct injury ;he should neither cause injury through an agent, nor indirectly approve of the conduct of others when they indulge in such an act of cruelty. The second *vrata*, not to utter falsehood, is quite obvious. But it is interesting to note that even speaking truth which results in injury to others should be avoided. Thus it is clear that this principle is sub-ordinate to the principle of *Ahimsā* which is primary principle . This second *vrata* of *satya* includes refraining from teaching false doctrines with the object of misleading people, openly proclaiming from sheer wantonness certain secrets such as those pertaining to the private life of people, scandal mongering out of envy; sending anonymous letters containing mischievous insinuations and suppressing the truth for the purpose of deceiving others. The third vow, *asteya* or non-stealing has to be interpreted in the same comprehensive manner. A thing may be left by one due to forgetfulness; it may accidentally fall on the road. Such things belonging to others should not be taken possession of , for it may amount to stealing others property. This principle forbids indirect stealing in five different ways; instigating a person to go and steal in somebody's house , receiving stolen property, accompanying a victorious army in a military campaign with the object of looting the enemy's town, using fraudulent weights and measures, and adulterating things in selling them. The fourth principle, *brahmacarya*, refers to chastity

in thought, word, and deed. The last vow, *aparigraha*, refers to limiting one's attachment to wealth and other worldly possessions--*parimita parigraha*, inordinate longing for worldly goods will never result in contentment and happiness. It prevents spiritual harmony and peace in life. Hence even a householder has to reduce his wants and limit his desires, if he is to pursue his spiritual career and not be altogether lost in the world.

They may be practiced in two grades of severity: *yatyacāra*, a very rigid observance of the *vratas*, recommended for those who seek nirvana the final *liberation* from the cycle of rebirths; and *sravakacāra* for the lay followers who while being householders and pursuing normal professions for livelihood aspire to progress in the direction of attaining the ideal goal. Here it may be mentioned with emphasis that Jain canonical texts have recommended only a moral code that is necessary to ensure social stability and progress. They do not recommend any rituals characterizing theism. Thus *Jain āchāra* is secular and is the essential aspect of *dharma*. Atheism was in those days probably marginalized and regarded as an 'inferior' system. So in order to get rid of the blemish of atheism, they started imitating the ritualism of those who dominated in the society while striving to retain their own doctrinal foundation. In this process idol worship, wearing a holy thread and sandal paste mark on the forehead and hair tuft seems to have entered into Jain *āchāra*. In fact, modern followers of this faith strive to show that they are not atheist. *Jain* worship is of two kinds, meditational and material. Meditating on the virtues of *Jain Tirthankaras* and the latter resembles the conventional worship of *Hindu* tradition. *Jains*, ancient medieval or modern, have not formulated a criminal or civil code of their own. *Jains* assume that the legislation formulated by the ruling king or democratically elected government have to be obeyed by everyone without question. This is just as is expected in a secular state.<sup>11</sup>

The basic tenets of Jainism can be epitomized in two words; namely *Ahimsā* and *Anekānta*, the two principles of peaceful co-existence – philosophically and socially. There is no denying of the fact that if we accept *Ahimsā* as the regulative principle of our conduct and *Anekānta* as the beacon light of our outlook, barbarism and exploitation, obstinacy and cold war in their subtle and gross forms may come to an end. It is no exaggeration to say that *Ahimsā* and *Anekānta* are the greatest contribution of Jainism to world thought in general and Indian thought in particular. No other religion in the world has worked out the principles of *Ahimsā* in the minutest details and no other philosophy has brought out the profoundest ramification of *Anekānta* as *Jainism*. Thus if *Ahimsā* is the flower of Jainism,

*Aneākanta* will be its crown. One cannot flourish without the other. Whatever different shades of meaning these two terms may have, *Ahimsā* is the principle of respect for life and *Anekānta* is the doctrine of open mindedness, it is based on the conviction that a thing is constituted of diverse aspect and its proper understanding requires the consideration of as many aspects as possible. The comprehension of a thing from different points of view develops in us a secular outlook necessary for peaceful co-existence.

*Anekāntavāda* is one of the most important and fundamental doctrine of *Jainism*. It refers to the principles of pluralism and multiplicity of viewpoints, the notion that truth and reality are perceived differently from diverse points of view, and that no single point of view is the complete truth. Jaina theory of *Anekāntavāda* emphasizes the truth that all the approaches to reality give partial but true pictures of reality, and because of their truth-value from a certain angle, we should have regard for other ideologies and faiths. Thus *Anekāntavāda* forbids us to be dogmatic and one-sided in our approach. It preaches a broader outlook and open-mindedness, which is essential to solve the conflicts caused by differences in ideologies and faiths. The spirit of *Anekāntavāda* is very much necessary in society, especially in the present day, when conflicting ideologies are trying to assert supremacy aggressively. It brings the spirit of intellectual and social tolerance. For the present day society what is awfully needed is the virtue of tolerance. This virtue of tolerance, regard for others ideologies and faiths, is maintained in Jainism from the very beginning. *Jaina* saints have tried at all times to maintain harmony among different religious faiths and they tried to avoid religious conflicts. .

The origins of *Anekāntavāda* can be traced back to the teaching of *Mahavira*. The dialectical concepts of *syadvāda* ‘conditional viewpoints’ and *nayavāda* ‘partial viewpoints’ arose from *Anekāntavāda*, providing it with more detailed logical structure and expression. The *Sanskrit* compound an-eka-anta-vada literally means ‘doctrine of non-exclusivity or multiple viewpoints (*an-‘not’*, *eka-‘one’*, *vada-‘viewpoint’*)’’, it is roughly translated into English as ‘non-absolutism’. An-ekanta ‘uncertainty, non-exclusivity’ is the opposite of *ekanta* {*eka+anta*} ‘exclusiveness, absoluteness, necessity’ {or also ‘monotheistic doctrine’}.<sup>12</sup>

*Anekānta* is an epistemological tool for understanding the nature of reality. In Indian Philosophy, epistemology is usually related with ontology. The *Jains* in their search not only evolved their own sense of understanding to know the nature of reality in their

diverse aspects but were also concerned about the nature of valid knowledge. The concept of *Anekānta* helps one to accept a pluralistic approach to reality without discarding other religious systems and in this way to maintain a smooth functioning of the secular system.

By virtue of this doctrine of *Anekānta*, Jainism has been able to appreciate the viewpoints of others in the field of philosophy. What is decried by it, is the one-sided obstinate approach to a thing which is at the root of all disagreements. Open-mindedness fosters magnanimity and balance of mind. Thus *Anekāntavāda* along with its corollaries of *Nayavāda* and *syādvāda* supplies us the necessary basis for easing national and international tensions and for developing the attitude of intellectual honesty in an individual. *Anekānta* does not mean compromise or doubt or uncertainty; but it means that Truth is many-sided; and one must be tolerant enough to understand the view-point of others. *Anekānta* is an idol in the intellectual field. *Anekānta* says that no ism can be condemned as absolutely wrong. Every statement has an intermixture of right and wrong. We have to adopt, an attitude of neutrality towards two apparently contradictory statements. It is not a case of indecisiveness but a case of clear understanding of what is right and what is wrong in a statement. We would find that there is no occasion for dispute, if we look at things from this angle.

*Ahimsā* in Jainism is a fundamental principle forming the cornerstone of its ethics and doctrine. It is the virtue of all virtues in Jaina System-“*Ahimsā parom dharmah*”. Though *Ahimsā* is a core value in other systems but *Mahavira*'s contribution is unique as he explicates the nature of life and living through six main categories of life forms: earth, water, fire, wind, vegetation and mobile beings with two or more senses. The term *Ahimsā* means non violence”, “non-injury” or absence of desire to harm any life forms. Vegetarianism and other non-violent practices and ritual of *Jains* flow from the principle of *Ahimsā*. According to *Adian Rankin*, the concept of *Ahimsā* is so much intertwined with *Jainism* that it conjures up images of ascetics who cover their mouths and sweep the ground before them with small brushes to avoid injuring the most minuscule forms of life and Jain-owned animal sanctuaries where even the sickest most deformed birds and beasts are protected and cherished. These overt manifestations of an ancient faith challenge the comfortable and near-universal-assumption of human precedence over other creature.<sup>13</sup>

The Jain concept of *Ahimsā* is quite different from the concept of non-violence found in other philosophies. In other religious traditions, violence is usually associated

with causing harm to others. On the other hand, in Jainism, violence refers primarily of injuring one's own self – behavior which inhibits the souls own ability to attain *moksa* or liberation. At the same time, it also means violence to others because it is this tendency to harm others that ultimately harms one's own soul. Furthermore, the *Jains* have extended the concept of *Ahimsā* not only to humans but to all animals, plants, micro-organisms and all beings having life or life potential. All life is sacred and everyone has a right to live fearlessly to its maximum potential. The living beings do not have any fear from those who have taken the vow of *Ahimsā*. According to *Jainism*, protection of life, also known as *abhayadānam*, is the supreme charity that a person can make.

The principle of *Ahimsā* recognizes that every individual irrespective of caste, colour and creed is an end in itself and has a dignity of its own; consequently one should treat all human beings accordingly. No man should be deprived of availing himself of the opportunities of advancement. The movement of life to the plane of *Ahimsā* signifies that the idea of domination over others and of being dominated by others is to be relinquished in the domain of politics and economics; and the principles of freedom of progress and equality of opportunity by recognized for all people, whether in Europe or America, Asia or Africa. The deeper significances of *Ahimsā* consist of the elimination of war, which has harassed mankind since the dawn of civilization. The easing of tensions and cessation of conflicts among states, the maintenance of universal peace and the promotion of human welfare can only be effected by suffusing world's atmosphere with the spirit of *Ahimsā*. Thus the principle of *Ahimsā* implies “life should be elevated altogether from the plane of force to that of reason, persuasion, accommodation, tolerance and mutual services.” The virtue of truth, non-stealing, continence and non-acquisitiveness are just the extension of *Ahimsā* to different modes of human existence. With the practice of these five virtues an atmosphere of security, freedom, equality and proper distribution can be created in human society.

*Ahimsā* or non-violence is a negative word; it indicates the negation of that which is unnatural as against that which is natural.. It means that non-violence is the negation of the unnatural and at the same time the affirmation of that which is natural. <sup>14</sup>

*Jaina* philosophy preferred the negative term to a positive term like love or compassion. In this point of view Jain approach is peculiar. It asserts that we cannot speak of the positive aspect of love in our present state of mental make-up. We live a life,

without a taste of what is natural. Unfamiliar as we are with the positive aspect of non-violence, if one speaks in positive term, we are likely to be misguided. If we speak of love, we can think of one form or the other of attachment only. It was, therefore thought fit by *Jaina* thinkers to speak in negative terms like non-violence or non-attachment rather than using the positive term like love and compassion, though, they occasionally use positive terms like affection or compassion (*koruna*). This emphasis on negative terms however should never be taken to mean that the *Jainas* conceived of non-violence as a void state of mind, where there is no love. Non-violence is as natural as good smell to a flower. Flower emits good smell unmindful of the fact, where the smell is desirable to others or not and where those who receive it are grateful to him or not. It emits smell equally to one who plucks and crushed it. The flower emits good smell equally not only for its friend and foe but when the flower exists and there is none to receive its smell. Its good smell is not conditional. It is something which is unconditional of its surroundings.

The *Jainas* have very important contributions to the field of religion, philosophy, literature, and art. But these academic strivings did not deprive them of attending to the call of social and national duties. They seem to be aware of the fact that without social upliftment and national security nothing worthwhile can be achieved. The *Jaina* monks have always directed the attention of people to individual and social values which are essential for the establishment of a rational social order. Since they move from one place to the other they are capable of making contacts with the large number of people with the result that to a very great extent they could persuade them to regulate their physical needs in tune with the principle of *Ahimsā*. Some of the *Jaina* monks because of their austerity and learning attracted the attention of kings. *Jainacandrasuri* prevailed upon Akbar to Issue 'Farman' prohibiting the slaughter of animals for seven days every year in the month of *Asadha*. The most significant illustration of the influence of *Ahimsā* is that of *Mahatma Gandhi* who calls *Rajachandra* ,his Guru in inculcating in him the spirit of *Ahimsā*. *Mahatma Gandhi* can be rightly be called an incarnation of *Mahavira*.<sup>15</sup>

It is often thought that *Jainism* has carried the doctrine of *Ahimsā* to its logical rigidity and has thus made it impracticable for ordinary layman. It is true that *Jaina* monks are expected to observe this vow in an extreme form. The monks of the *Svetambara* sect even keep their mouths covered for fear of breathing in minute insects which cannot even be seen with naked eyes. However the rules of *Ahimsā* for layman as prescribed by *Jainism* are by no means impracticable or unreasonable. *Jainism* no doubt prohibited deliberate and

calculated injury to any being or wanton slaughter of animals. For layman it has made three exceptions. A householder or a housewife has to keep his or her house neat and clean and must keep the sanctity of the body. For this, the house has to be swept, the grain has to be grinded or pounded and finally cooked and water has to be stored in jars. If all this involves unintentional killing of minute creatures, there is no violation of the principle of *Ahimsā*. Similarly though one should not adopt a profession like that of a butcher or fisherman which is founded on *himsā* or killing of animals, one may sometimes be led to unavoidable injury to animals even in other professions. A farmer, for example, has to protect his crop from pests. This kind of injury to life is also not regarded as a violation of the principle of *Ahimsā*. The third exception which Jainism has made for layman is the injury which one inflicts on another being in self-defense. If somebody attacks you and you injure or kill the aggressor in self-defense, you do not violate the principle of *Ahimsā*. When these three exceptions are taken into account the Jain concept of *Ahimsā* remains by no means impracticable. We can in fact, call it a precious contribution not only to Indian culture but also to the well-being of the entire humanity.<sup>16</sup>

Philosophy and religion of *Jainism* have a great impact on Indian culture. The main tenet of Jainism is *Anekāntabād*. Literal meaning of *Anekāntabād* is that objects are infinite in their qualities and modes of existence, every doctrine is partial and even *Jainism* is not absolute. Only the *kevalis* can comprehend objects in all aspects and manifestations; others are only capable of partial knowledge. Differences of opinions start when we begin with a partial truth taking it to be an absolute one. Tolerance of others' opinions is an example of *Jain Anekāntabād*, which is one of the main characteristics of Indian secularism.

From the very beginning of the twentieth century ethical values are being ascribed on ecology-centric discussions. The Norwegian philosopher *Arne Naess* in his "Deep Ecology" advocates the idea that all of nature matters and deserves equal considerations. His thoughts are similar to *Mahavira's* teachings. There are mainly two aspects of his deep ecology theory—shallow and deep. Shallow theory is known as anthropocentric because they only care about mankind. But the bio-centric ethics based on deep ecology is called non-anthropocentric which carries a motto of reverence for life. And it is unethical if one tries to disturb the natural balance of nature.

The views that the modern environmental scientists are sharing in this twentieth-first century are the views that have been preached by *Mahavira, the Jain Philosopher about*

2500 years ago. *Mahavira* may be regarded as modern *Viswamanab* whose teachings are still equally relevant today.<sup>17</sup>

Jainism still survives in India though the popularity of *Jainism* is decreased overall the country. *Jains* believe that Jainism will decline day by day as it is written in their sacred texts. It will continue to decline until the end of this era. But scholars ignore the internal reason. To them, the most important internal reason is that *Jains* failed to keep its distinction. *Jains* adopted many *Hindu* faiths and rituals and many *Hindu* Goddesses. The most unfortunate thing was adoption of *Vedic Varna* system. This is the main cause of the *Jains* towards development of caste system within their community. Although the untouchability was a *Vedic* invention, orthodox *Jains* are mainly responsible for spreading it.

*Jainism* was divided into two major sects, namely *Digambara* and *Svetambara*. Further, they were divided into many sub-sects. The monk of each sect and sub-sect started to tell the layman that only their sect/ sub-set is true one and the others are wrong. The monks became enemies of other *Jain* sect. Thus for *Jain* monks *Jainism* became a secondary thing and sectarian views became prominent. *Jainism* became a victim of both castes and sects.

While *Jain* monks of ancient India initiated millions of people into *Jainism*, but in later period *Jain* monks stopped such kind of initiation. Orthodox *Jain* monks forced many people to quit *Jainism*. Extreme *Ahimsa* is one of the causes for leaving *Jainism*. And the worse impression was that *Jain* monks closed their doors for new comers.

Still, it is hold that, *Jaina* philosophy has a great impact of our mind even today. We know that the most burning problem of our age is the problem of mental tension. Nations that claim to be more civilized and more economically advanced are much more in the grip of mental tension. The main object of *Jainism* is to emancipate man from his sufferings and mental tensions. For *Jainism* the basic human suffering is not physical, but mental. Mental suffering or tension is due to our attachment to worldly objects. It is attachment which is fully responsible for them. The *Jain* text states that the root of all suffering, physical as well as mental, of everybody, including gods, is attachment to the objects of worldly enjoyment. It is attachment which is the root cause of mental tension. Only a detached attitude towards the objects of worldly enjoyment can free mankind from mental tension. The efforts made to satisfy human desires through material objects can be linked

to the chopping off of the branches while watering the roots. If mankind is to be free from mental tension, it is necessary to grow a detached outlook on life. *Jainism* believes that the lesser the attachment, the greater the mental peace. It is only when attachment vanishes that the human mind will be free from mental tension and emotional disorders.<sup>18</sup>

## BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

*Buddhism*, the most popular religion, grew up not only in India but in entire *Asia*. *Buddha* was not an originator of a new religion but a reformer of the *Hindu* religion. The basic doctrine of *Buddhism* sprang from pre-existing Hindu philosophy of the *Sāṅkhya* system and the later *Upanishads*. Thus, so far as the original philosophy of *Buddhism* is concerned there is hardly any break of continuity between *Buddha* and the *Hindu* sages who had preceded him. Nor did *Buddha* lay down a special ritual for his followers. Even the rules of monastic discipline left by him are few, simple, and undefined. The rules of morality preached by *Buddha* were not new. He simply emphasized a few of them which already existed.

*Gautama*, the founder of *Buddhism*, was born about 566 BC at *Luminivana* in Nepal on the Indian border. His father *Suddhodana* was a king of the *Sakya* clan. He was bought up by his mother's sister *Gautami*. He was married and had a son named *Rahul*. However his mind was influenced by the prevailing spiritual unrest and attracted by the appearance of a *sanyasin.*, left home at the age of twenty-nine. He first became the disciple *Arada* and afterwards, *Rudraka*, but did not feel satisfied . He then practiced meditation himself. Ultimately on the forty-ninth day of his continuous meditation under a *pipal* tree at *Uruvela* near *Gaya*, he got enlightenment. Henceforth, he was called *Buddha*.

*Buddhism* was a revolt against the prevailing systems. It was the first organized religion in the modern sense of the term 'religion'. The fundamental principles of *Buddha's* teaching are the four *Aryasatyas* or Noble Truths [1] that worldly existence is full of misery; It is admitted by all in some form or other. But with his deep insight *Buddha* saw that misery is not simply causal; it is universally present in all forms of existence and in all kinds of experience. Even what appears as pleasant is really a source of pain at bottom.[2] That thirst, desire, ignorance are the causes of worldly existence; He points out that the existence of everything in the world, material and mental, is caused by some other thing. There is nothing which is unconditional and self-existent. Nothing is, therefore, permanent in the world. All things are subject to change. Our sufferings depend on birth in this world. Birth again is caused by our desire for the worldly objects. The force of desires drags us down to the world. But our desires can be traced ultimately to our ignorance. If we develop a correct knowledge of the things of the world, understood their transitory and painful nature, there would be no desire for them; birth would then cease and along with it also

misery. [3] That worldly existence can be ended by the destruction of thirst; As sufferings, like other things, depends on some conditions, it must cease when these conditions are removed. This is the third truth about cessation of misery. [4] That in order to do this one must know the right path. And the right path is Eightfold path- Right views, Right determination, Right speech, Right conduct, Right livelihood, Right endeavor, Right mindfulness, and Right concentration. The fourth truth about the path that leads to the cessation of misery concerns the control of the conditions that cause misery. This path is known as the eight-fold noble path as it consists of eight steps. *Buddha* preached that the ultimate goal of one's life is to attain Nirvana, the eternal state of peace and bliss, which is free from sorrow and desire, decay or disease and of course from further birth and death and in order to attain it, one should pursue the Noble Eight-fold Path. These eight steps remove ignorance and desire, enlighten the mind and bring about perfect equanimity and tranquility. Thus misery ceases completely and chance of rebirth also stopped. This attainment of this state of perfection is nirvana.

*Buddha's* ethical teaching or eight-fold path consists of three main things-- knowledge (*prajñā*) ,conduct (*silā*) and concentration (*samādhi*). In Indian philosophy knowledge and morality are thought inseparable-not simply because morality, or doing of good, depends on the knowledge of what is good, about which all philosophers would agree, but also because perfection of knowledge is regarded as impossible without morality, voluntary control of passions and prejudices. *Buddha* explicitly states in one of his discourses that virtue and wisdom purify each other and the two are inseparable. In the eight-fold path one starts with 'right views'-a mere intellectual apprehension of the fourfold truth. The mind is not yet purged of the pervious wrong ideas and the passions or wrong emotions arising there from; moreover, old habits of thinking, speaking and acting continue still. In a word, conflicting forces- the new good ones and the old bad ones- create, in terms of modern psychology, a divided personality. The seven steps beginning with right resolve furnish a continuous effort for resolving this conflict by reform of the old personality. repeated contemplation of what is true and good, training of the will and emotion accordingly, through steadfast determination and passionless behavior, gradually achieve the harmonious personality in which thought and will and emotion are all thoroughly cultured and purified in the light of truth. The last step of perfect concentration is thus made possible by the removal of all obstacles. The result of this unhampered concentration on truth is perfect insight or wisdom, to which the riddle of existence stands

clearly revealed once for all. Ignorance and desire are cut at their roots and the source of misery vanishes. Perfect wisdom, perfect goodness and perfect equanimity-complete relief from suffering- are simultaneously attained, therefore, in *nirvana*.

The teachings of Buddha are contained in the four noble truths. It is clear from this that Buddha himself was not concerned so much with the problems of philosophy as with the practical problem how human misery can be removed. He regarded it as a waste of time to discuss metaphysical problems, while man is suffering in misery. But though showing his aversion to theoretical speculation, he could not avoid philosophical discussions altogether. Thus we find from early literature the following theories among his teachings; (a) All things are conditional; there is nothing that exists by itself. (b) All things are, therefore, subject to change owing to the change of the conditions on which they depend; nothing is permanent. (c) There is, therefore, neither any soul nor God nor any other permanent substance. (d) There is, however, continuity of the present life which generates another life, by the law of karma, just as a tree generates another tree through its seed, and the second conditions while the first withers away. .<sup>19</sup>

According to *Buddha* everything is transient in this Universe. There is no immortal soul. The transmigration passes over from one life to another- only a new life arises as part of events which include the old or rather it is the reaction of one's own actions. *Buddha* did not believe in the existence of God or soul. According to him, it is a delusion which one develops because of one's ignorance. It is this ignorance which creates desire in man, then, desire leads to action and that action to the impulse to be born again in order to satisfy desire. This leads to the chain of birth and rebirth which is the primary cause of misery of man. This chain can be stopped only by knowledge. *Buddha* had no faith in prayer, *Yajna*, or sacrifice. Therefore, he preached to pursue right action and acquire right knowledge in order to attain Nirvana According to him, the true knowledge is to acknowledge the absence of soul. He who realizes the absence of soul or substance in the constituents knows that he does not exist as an individual, and as such there can be no relationship between him and the objects around him. Therefore, there is nothing in the world to make him happy or sad and so he is free, he is *an Arhat* . Those who wish to attain this knowledge to Nirvana should keep faith in the "*Four Noble Truth*" and pursue the Noble Eightfold Path.

The moral doctrines of Buddha were simple. He preached that every individual is the arbiter of his own destiny. Good deeds lead to higher life till salvation is achieved while evil deeds retard the progress. An individual should avoid pursuing both the extremes, i.e. a life of luxury and a life of severe asceticism. The best course to be pursued by an individual is the *Middle Path*. He laid stress on truth, charity, purity, and control over passions and further declared that an individual should practice the Four Cardinal Virtues, viz. *Maître*, *koruna*, *mudita* and *upeksha* towards all beings in order to lead him to a better life in his next birth. Besides, one should avoid pursuing bad instincts such as ill-will, anger, deceit, jealousy etc. The common man was asked not to kill, not to steal, not to lie, not to get drunk and not keep sexual relations outside marriage. For a monk or a nun it was necessary to observe complete celibacy and to possess nothing except a yellow-dress, a rice bowl, a razor, a needle and a Steiner

Thus *Buddha* preached a high system of ethics. The central idea of his teachings was living a holy life. The Noble Eightfold Path, whereby a man attains Nirvana, is not merely a matter of belief or knowledge, but of conduct while the Four Cardinal Virtues of *Buddhism* are more positive in character as compared to the non-violence of *Jainism*. and the abstinence of the *Upanishads* of *Hindus*.<sup>20</sup>

Besides, *Buddhism* had some main characteristics which helped in its speedy and widespread progress. These were-the establishment of the *sangha*; the admission of female members into the *sangha*; enjoyment of equal rights by all its members irrespective of classes or castes and practice of holding religious discourses in language of the common people, particularly *Magadhi*.

The followers of *Buddhism* were divided into two parts; *Bhikkus* or monks and *Upasakas* or householders. It was primarily for the training of monks that *Sanghas* were established though, of course, they served the purpose of meeting places for the gatherings of the *Upasakas* to listen to religious discourses given by the monks. *Buddha* had himself framed a number of rules concerning the *Sanghas* though many more were added to them after him. The membership of the Buddhist *Sangha* was open to all persons without any distinction of caste or class and males or females who had completed the age of fifteen years, dependents had to seek permission of their guardians. But disable persons, Lepers Criminals, Slaves etc were not permitted to become members of the *Sangha*. There was no central organization of *Buddhist Sanghas*. Each *Sangha* carried on its works as an

independent entity. All *Sanghas* were accepted as merely parts of one Universal *Sangha* and therefore, every member of every *Sangha* was regarded as members of all *Sanghas*. This was the bond of unity amongst them. Whenever any occasion arose, General Councils of the monks were convoked at various times.

Every *Sangha* functioned on strictly democratic principles. The general assembly of all the monks of a *Sangha* constituted the supreme authority concerning that *Sangha*, its member and all their activities. No meeting of the assembly was legal, unless all the members were either present, or being absent, formally declared their consent. Every matter was decided by majority votes in the assembly. The head of the *Sangha* and all the officials concerning routine work of the *Sangha* were elected by the assembly. But the nuns were subordinate to the monks. The organization of the *Sanghas* had two other special features. One was that regular assemblies of all monks residing within fixed boundaries of a locality were held on the 8th, 14th, and 15th days of each fortnight for the purpose of religious discourses. In these very assemblies, every monk had to accept his guilt or breach of any rule by him. If any, before all present and punishment to him was decided according to rules and regulations. During the three months of rains, the monks were required to take up a fixed abode. The rest of the year the monks used to wander all over the country. The *Sanghas* were primarily the training centers for monks and nuns. They had to practice certain spiritual exercises besides observing the code of conduct and rule of morality. Among the most important of the monk's or the nun's spiritual exercises were the four Sublime Moods (*Brahma Vihara*), in which sitting quietly cross-legged, he or she endeavored to fill his or her mind with four cardinal virtues of *Buddhism*-love, compassion, joy and equanimity. A fifth mood was that of impurity, in which he or she considered all the vileness and horror of the world and of the life of flesh. One more exercise for mental discipline was necessary for a monk, it was 'Right collection.' It meant that he had to train himself to be continually aware of what he was doing, what faults or mistakes he had committed and prepared to accept them and take remedial measures.

Apart from *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*, the *Vajrayana* sect created further split and controversy. The *Tantrik* philosophy which led to the emergence of *Vajrayana* sect of *Buddhism* was not unique to it. The *Tantrik* knowledge was one which helped an individual to attain *Nirvana* with the help of the *mantras* and *tantras*. The *tantra* was a diagram drawn with the help of lines or rice on earth or a paper representing a particular deity. The sect believed that by pronouncing the right *mantra* in the correct manner and by

drawing the correct magical symbol, one might force the gods to bestow magical power on the worshipper and lead him to the highest bliss- the *Nirvana*.<sup>21</sup>

The contribution of *Buddhism* in Indian culture has been appreciated by all. It has provided a glorious heritage in India in various fields. It helps to promote secular feeling among the masses. *Buddhism* promoted among the people a national feeling which greatly helped in the achievement of social harmony and the evolution of a strong empire in the country. *Buddhism* gave a serious blow to the caste system which had divided the Indian society and hampered the growth of harmonious relations among the people. By discarding unnecessary rites and rituals it aroused the conscience of the people and encouraged them to treat each other with respect. This sense of social unity proved greatly helpful to the *Mauryan* rules in evolving a powerful empire. *Buddhism* rose as a revolt against social and religious malpractices prevailing in the *Hindu* religion. It condemned caste system which accorded predominant position to the priestly class and relegated the *Sudras* to the sub-human conditions and emphasized the equality of all human beings. No doubt, caste system made its appearance after some time but its rigors were considerably reduced. Another notable contribution of *Buddhism* to Indian culture was that it greatly simplified religion. In *Buddhism* there was no place for numerous rites, rituals, *Yajanas*, and priestly class. Instead it laid great emphasis on the moral upliftment of man and insisted on leading a various and pious life. It pleaded for the development of qualities like truthfulness control over passions, non-injury to living creatures, charity and *self-scarifies*. It is true that these virtues were not emphasized by *Buddhism* for the first time and were advocated by the *Upanishads* too, yet the credit of giving these virtues a practical shape goes to *Buddhism*. It greatly contributed to the upliftment of the moral standards of the people. *Buddhism* largely is responsible for an improvement in the position of women and *Sudras*. Before the advent of *Buddhism*, the women and *Sudras* were treated with utmost disrespect.

*Buddhism's* contribution to Indian education and literature is commendable. The *Sanghas* became the centers' of learning, established universities and libraries and attracted teachers, students, and scholars from all over India and even from distant countries outside India. *Taxila, Nalanda, Udaypuri, Vikramsila* and alike other *Buddhist* Universities earned all India fame and were well-known in Asia. These universities were not only the centers of *Buddhist* learning but contributed a large share in the education and enlightenment of the Indian people in general. The contribution of *Buddhist* scholars like *Nagarjuna*,

*Vasumitra, Dinang and Dharmakirti* became a permanent asset to Indian literature. The literature written both in *Pali* and *Sanskrit* and enriched by scholars of *Hinayana, Mahayana* and *Vajrayana* sects successively has its importance not only from the point of view of religion and philosophy but from that of history by becoming the source-material for contemporary history. Besides, religious texts, literary works like *Lalit-vister, Millnd-Panhan, Buddha-charit* and *Jataka-stories* are its permanent assets to Indian literature. Most of this literature was destroyed by *Turkish* invaders. Yet, whatever has remained has been regarded as precious heritage of Indian culture and has been translated into many languages of the world. The Indian Academy of Indian Culture is still pursuing its efforts in this direction.<sup>22</sup>

*Buddhism* contributed to the consolidation of the changes in the social and economical life of the people in the sixth century B.C. The rule that debtors were not permitted to be members of the *Sangha* naturally helped the moneylenders and richer sections of the society from whose clutches the debtors could not be saved. Similarly, the rule that slaves could not join the *sangha* helped the slave-owners. Thus the rules and teachings of *Gautama Buddha* took full account of the new changes in the material life and strengthened them ideologically. *Buddhism* created and developed a new awareness in the field of intellect and culture. It was taught the people not to take things for granted but argue judge them on merit. The emphasis laid on democratic values by the new religion was also largely responsible for the plurality of this religion. As most of the important decisions regarding religion were taken by the monks in consultation with the people, the people came to regard this religion as their own religion. This was in complete contrast to *Hinduism* where the ultimate decision rested with the *Brahmanas*.

The contribution of *Buddhism* fully flourished in the time of King *As'oka*. The terrible destruction and human misery of the war *Kalinga* changed *As'oka* 's views on life. He gave up wars of conquests and tried to find solace in peace and non-violence. And, according to *Buddhist* tradition, he was converted to *Buddhism* after the *Kalinga* war.

In the beginning *As'oka* was a follower of *Brahmanic* faith. According to *Buddhist* text, the *Mahavansa*, he worshipped several gods and goddesses and distributed food to sixty thousand *Brahmanas* every day. *Kalhana* in his *Rajtarangini*, described him as a worshipper of *Shiva*. Therefore, it has been expressed that it was only after the war of

*Kalinga* that he accepted *Buddhism*. Yet, his *Dhamma* was different from the *Dharma* which he pursued.

*Dhamma* is the *Prakrit* form of the *Sanskrit* word *Dharmā*. However *As'oka*, tried to use it in a much wider sense, Dr R.G.Bhandarkar says, *As'oka* 's *Dhammā* is nothing more than secular *Buddhism*. *As'oka* did not propagate the fundamental tenets of *Buddhism* but only its moral precepts which were very much common to all religions of India. This is accepted that *As'oka* accepted *Buddhism* after the war of *Kalinga*, and visited *sanghas* and *Buddhist* religious places. Dr R.K.Mukherjee says that *As'oka* 's position was midway between that of an *Upasak* and a *Bhikku*[monk]. Therefore, most of the scholars have agreed that the personal religion of *As'oka* was, of course, *Buddhism* but what has been described as *As'oka* 's *Dhamma* and which was propagated by him amongst his subjects was different and contained those moral precepts which were certainly inspired by *Buddhist* teachings but were common to all religions of India.<sup>23</sup>

In reality, *As'oka* 's ideal was more ethical and social, than religious. He was not concerned with the particular religion of any individual but he desired that all people though pursuing different religions, should live in harmony with each other and cultivate habits of social good conduct. *As'oka* pursued this ideal and built up his policy of *Dhamma* on this basis due to several reasons. Primarily, his own private beliefs, the circumstances of his age and the political necessity of holding a big empire intact were responsible for this policy. *Mauryas* were not against *Brahmanism* but were definitely more sympathetic towards *Jainism* and *Buddhism*. *Chandra Gupta Maurya* had accepted *Jainism* during the latter years of his life. Therefore, *As'oka* 's family traditions were in favor of support to these new religious sects though , of course, with tolerance. *As'oka* attached great importance to principle of *Ahimsā* and himself gave up hunting, as well as meat eating. He forbade the killing the animals on certain days. As *Ahimsā* was intimately linked with *Buddhism*, a large number of people were attracted towards the new religion. It may be observed that *Ahimsā* was not entirely a new principle which originated with *Buddhism*. This principle finds mention in the *Smrities* and other *Brahamanical* literature as well. The description on the 12th Rock-edict of *As'oka* stated that the people should not only tolerate all religious sects but also develop a spirit of reverence for all. It declared that all people should behave properly, purify their hearts, study the religious texts of each other, abstain from criticizing each other and praising their own religions, and they must observe non-violence in their personal, social, national, and international life.<sup>24</sup>

Thus As'oka's *Dhamma* was a code of moral duties, benevolent acts and freedom from passions for an individual. It comprised both personal and social moral virtues. The principles of *Dhamma* were such as could be acceptable to people belonging to any religious sect. Therefore, it could not be equated with Buddhist *Dhamma*. The *Dhamma* of As'oka was a practical code of conduct of social ethics which formed the basis of all religions. Its primary instinct was social responsibility. "For As'oka " writes Dr Romila Thapar," *Dhamma* was a way of life, the essence of what he had culled from the moral teachings of the various thinkers known to him, and probably his own experience of life. It was based on a high degree of social ethics and civic responsibility "<sup>25</sup> Further, the *Dhamma* of As'oka was based on extreme toleration and its principles were freely drawn from moral precepts of all religions such as *Buddhism* and *Hinduism*. The credit to create his *Dhamma* has gone to him as writes Dr Romila Thapar,' '*Dhamma* was As'oka's own invention'. And, when he propagated his *Dhamma*, he did not propagated any particular religion. Rather, he desired that his subjects should practice religious toleration, engage in various deeds and fulfill social obligations irrespective of religious distinctions. Dr Romila Thapar writes, "In the propagation of his *Dhamma*, As'oka was attempting to reform the narrow attitude of religious teaching, to protect the weak against the strong, and to promote throughout the empire, a consciousness of social behaviour so broad in its scope, that no cultural group could object to it".<sup>26</sup> Further As'oka did not force his *Dhamma* on his subjects. He tried to persuade them to accept it. When he appointed *Dhamma Mahamatras* also he did not desire to pursue and enforce a religious policy to promote any particular religious sect but desired to promote the economic, social, religious, and political life of all his subjects. If he would have desired to promote a particular sect, then there was no necessity to create the office of *Dhamma- Mahamatras* as all religious sects existing at that time were not only free but capable enough to propagate their sects without the support of the state. Particularly, it was very much true of *Buddhism*. *Dhamma- Mahamatreas* did not help in the propagation of any particular religious sect. They, rather, helped the people in due observance of their respective religions without being detrimental to each other's faith and ,one of their primary duties was to assist the destitute, the aged and the unfortunate ones in the society. Thus, the ideal of As'oka in the propagation of his *Dhamma* was a novel ideal.

As'oka wanted a general agreement on the need to conduct arguments with 'restraint in regard to speech'; 'a person must not do reverence to his own sects or disparage the

beliefs of another without reason'. He went on to argue; 'Depreciation should be for specific reasons only, because the sects of another people all deserve reverence for one reason or another'. *As'oka* supplemented this general moral and political principle by a dialectical argument based on enlightened self-interest. For he who shows respect to his own sect only and criticize the sects of others, in reality expresses disrespect on his own sect.

*Gautama Buddha* was primarily an ethical teacher and reformer. In course of time, as his followers increased in number, they were divided into different schools. *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* are the most well known division of Buddhism. The earlier form of *Buddhism*, the *Hinyana*, stands as an example of a religion without God. The ideal set by *Buddha* and the moral law of the universe are meant only for the strong, who are all too few in this world. Otherwise, *Mahayanism* emphasizes the aspect of the founder's life and teachings. The idea of *Bodhisattva* is nurtured by the *Mahayana* philosophy, which comes to think that all individuals are unreal as separate particular phenomena and that they are all really grounded in one transcendental Reality, The God, or *Buddha*.

At the present day the followers of *Hinyana* and *Mahayana* often try to look down upon one another. But to the discerning outsider, they stand as the living examples of a fight between two equally noble motives, namely, greater purity and greater utility. To impartial observers the mighty current of *Buddhism*, like every current, naturally divides itself into two parts, the narrow but pure stream that runs through the solitary uplands near the source, and the gradually widening river that floods and fertilizes the vast plains below, though not unmingled with the indifferent streams that increase its volume on the way and not unsoiled with to be the vast amount of dirt that it carries down. The first without second would remain sublime but relatively useless; the second without the first would cease.

There are all sorts of philosophies available in free society. Kings and Policy makers choose to patronize that philosophy which according to them will provide maximum political mileage. The political mileage and popularity given by *Buddha* and Jain traditions during peace is immense. *Buddhism* expanded in India with the royal support of *Maurya* Empire under *As'oka* , but it came to loss royal patronage in due course. *Brahmanical* revival under the *Guptas* perhaps led to the downfall of *Buddhism* in India. So *Hinduism* began to revive its strength. Attempts were now made to give up the

complex system of rites and rituals and make *Hinduism* simple and attractive. The *Hindus* were ready to accept the *Buddha* as a *Hindu* incarnation and accepted the principle of non-violence. This helped to revive *Hinduism* and made it popular again. The king *Harsavardhan* expelled the *Brahmins* from the religious council held at *Kanauj*. These *Brahmins*, under *Kumarila Bhatta*, fled to Deccan. Under *Bhatta's* leadership, *Brahmanism* staged a come-back. *Adi Sankaracharya* revived and strengthened *Hinduism*. He defeated *Buddhist* scholars' in religious discourses which were held in many places in course of his tour of the whole India. Thus, the superiority of *Hinduism* over *Buddhism* was established. It regained its lost glory, position, and popularity. People started liking the stories in *Puranas* in preference to those in *Buddhist Jatakas*.<sup>27</sup>

*Pushyamitra Sunga*, the *Brahmin* commander of last *Maurya* ruler *Vrihadratta*, assassinated the king and founded the *Sunga* dynasty, replacing the *Maurya* dynasty. The *Asvamedha* sacrifice was done by him. It gave an impetus to the *Brahmanical* faith. Non-violence, the basic principle of *Buddhism*, was given up. He destroyed many *stupas* and monasteries. Many *Buddhist* monks were killed.

*Buddhism* was mainly an urban religion. During the time of *Muslim* invasion, the first thing they did was ransack towns and cities which were mainly inhabited by the *Buddhist* monks. Such invasions forced *Buddhist* monks to seek shelter in Nepal and Tibet. At that time another sect known as *Rajputs* emerged. *Rajputs* were militant rulers and loved warfare. They could not tolerate the *Buddhist* due to their preaching of non-violence. *Buddhism* which was once treated as one of the jewels of Indian culture along with *Hinduism* gradually lost its importance in the land of its birth.<sup>28</sup>

## Medieval Period

In medieval India the *Sufi* and *Bhakti* movements bound the people of various communities together with love and peace. The leading lights of these movements were Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, Guru Nanak Dev, Saint Tukaram and Mira Bai. They contributed to the development of a composite culture in such a manner that nobody dares to challenge them. Most of *Mughal* kings were also tolerant and liberal in their approach. The great *Akbar* to a great extent promoted the policy of toleration of different religions. His propagation of *Din-e-Illahi* was highly inspired by the spirit of secularism.

Akbar not only declared in his kingship, the priority of tolerance, but also laid the formal foundations of a secular legal structure and of religious neutrality of the state, which included the duty to ensure that “no man should be interfered with on account of religion, and anyone is to be allowed to go over to a religion that pleases him.”<sup>29</sup> Despite his deep interest in other religions and his brief attempt to launch a new religion, *Din-ilahi* (God's religion), based on a combination of good points chosen from different faiths, *Akbar* did remain a good *Muslim* himself. Indeed, when *Akbar* died in 1605, the *Islamic* theologian *Abdul Haq*, who had been quite critical of *Akbar's* lapses from orthodoxy, concluded with some satisfaction that, despite his 'innovations', *Akbar* had remained a proper *Muslim*.

The meeting that *Akbar* arranged in the late sixteenth century for public dialogue involved members of different religious faiths. While the historical background of Indian secularism can be traced to the trend of thinking that had begun to take root well before *Akbar*, the politics of secularism received a tremendous boost from *Akbar's* patronizing of pluralist ideals, along with his insistence that the state should be completely impartial towards different religions. *Akbar's* own political decisions reflected his pluralist commitments. This attitude was reflected in his court with non-*Muslim* intellectuals and artists in addition to *Muslim* ones, and, rather remarkably, by his trusting a *Hindu* former king, Raja Man Singh, who had been defeated earlier by *Akbar*, to serve as the general commander of his armed forces.

The coming of Islam to India led to a series of remarkable responses. It is impossible for two cultures to exist side by side without influencing one another and in India the *Hindu* and *Muslim* patterns of culture have had a good deal of exchange.

Evidence for this can be found not only in the development of new schools of painting sculpture and architecture and music but it can be observed in religious movements. The devotional movement of the *Bhakti* cult and the tradition of the Islamic-*Sufis* have so much in common that cultural exchange was easy. The word medieval is a misleading one as it is associated with the ideas and practices of the Middle Ages in Europe. But here the movement is entirely different. The outstanding aspect of Indian medieval mysticism is its complete independence from sectarian organizations and orthodox scriptures. In Sind, the influence of the *Muslim Sufi* tradition was much stronger than that of the *Bhakti* school.<sup>30</sup>

Tolerance is the prime value which the ancients gave importance than secularism, and the modern Indian philosophy reflects upon the secular mindset needed to insinuate a chasm in communally divided India, where not only all the religious communities can live together in tolerance but in harmony. In retrospect it may be commented that medieval India has not seen any astronomical philosopher, compared to ancient or modern India. All the secular movements were mass-movements and the movements were not led by philosophers. But at the same time the medieval secular movements in India has signified a great novelty, where cast or social structure was not only less important, but they were of trivial significance. This period of India was not only opulent in secular notions, but showed signs of a great liberal nation. The idea of the great Indian *secularism* is unattainable without the liberal warmth of the medieval times. Although ancient, and modern India's culture are the main thrust of the present chapter but the philosophical ideas of the medieval times cannot be discarded in binding the profanity of the ancient Indian *secularism of Buddhism and Jainism*.

Besides the cultural collage that are being discussed above, it is necessary to deal with the thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and, Mahatma Gandhi. to consolidate our position regarding secularism further.

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