

## MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT BUDDHISM AND JAINISM

By Sona Parivraj

Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism come under the umbrella of Sanatan Dharma. But many wrongly believe that Buddhism and Jainism were reform movements due to problems with Hinduism such as caste system, excessive ritualism etc. Or, that while Hindus believed in devis/devatas, Buddhists and Jains did not. But if this was the case, would one say they were preaching against temples and so planting the seeds of separateness among people? Not really. Asoka et al made many stupas, viharas etc. If this isn't deity puja what is? These were mainly for the bhikkus to live in and not as a competition for Hindu temples. Also there are ample records of the bhikkus worshipping with fire and ghee because they *were* Hindus. Human society is in a constant state of flux. It is impossible to draw a definite time-line and say that at any given time all were behaving in the same particular manner and thereafter they changed drastically.

Aryas were those who were spiritually advanced and strived to work sattvically at all times. Gradually, over a period of many centuries, society started becoming more materialistic. But it does appear that concept of money developed only in later Kalyug. Before that everyone shared resources like a family, which is what the varnashram illustrates. So obviously at times one finds a clash between Arya values and un-Aryas, who were known as mlecchas or fallen kshatriyas such as Abhiras, Huns, Sakyas, Guptas, Mauryas. One can see from their art and culture that they too were Hindus. But they were not highly sattvic or noble although they too strived to be Arya.

Even in Mahabharat Yudhisthir complains to Krishna about increase in mlecchas. In Valmiki Ramayan, Ram is advised by Varun to direct his missiles in the direction of Abhiras who are terrorising the west coast. These examples illustrate the gradual deterioration of people. Slowly, language changed and more started to speak apabrahmsa or variations of Sanskrit, such as Pali, Prakrit, Ardha Magadhi, etc. Today perhaps one would call them dyslexic. Others like Persians, Yavanas or Greeks etc. were very aggressive too. Each group practiced their own distorted version of Vedic Dharma as is evident from many linguistic similarities. (For example, Tulsi's Ramayan is written in Avadhi, not Sanskrit, and is full of factual errors since he didn't seem to know much about Arya society, yet people accept it as a Hindu text. No-one says it's a different religion.)

The main reason why Brahmans were probably unhappy could be that in Hinduism temples were for activating divine energies and not to worship human saints, prophets etc. Images of Ram, Krushna etc. are of divine energies, not actual humans and made to remind people that they too can achieve spiritual success if they try hard. Ram is about the surya bija mantra in action. The entire

image of Krushna such as cow, cross leg, flute, peacock feather, pitamber explain important spiritual points. We need these images because our minds cannot easily visualize the abstract. Even Guptas, Mauryas etc. were mlecchas. They made temples because people's minds were gradually becoming less powerful and needed such props to understand important spiritual concepts like yagyas, and our relation with the entire universe etc. For example electricity is not a human, but humans can activate it in their bodies, i.e. the kundalini. Surya and Agni are not humans but humans can access those divine energies and powers via yagyas. Scholars like Dr. Subhash Kak have written wonderful books to explain this. They must have had their version of arya society which may not have been as pure as the original. It must have been difficult for both to co-exist and could have led to concepts like 'outcaste' etc. which are more pertaining to those times rather than forever.

In 'Yoga Technique in the Great Epic' E. Washburn Hopkins writes:

*'The exercise of Yoga imparts magical powers. This, as an attribute of the Mahatman, is recognized in early Buddhistic tracts, but the attainment of such powers was lightly set aside by Buddha himself as not conducive to perfection, and the extraordinary fullness of detailed Yoga-technique in later Buddhistic works may be counted as a contemporary phenomenon with that in later Brahmanic literature. Nor are such powers the objective of earlier Upanishad teaching.....to linger in this stage is damnable.'*

Above tells us that Buddha and Mahavir are on the same page as the Brahmans since the same points are mentioned in Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, a much older text and the Upanishads. They were all ksatriyas who had become ascetics just like Ram. The goal of both roles was to serve the public. They were all brought up in residential gurukuls as per ancient traditions and studied ancient texts in Sanskrit. Thus it is illogical to say that they were preaching something new or different from Vedic dharma. One sees this reflected in the Shaolin way of life. Their senior gurus are all coaches, who don't actively participate in battles unless absolutely necessary. This is because it is considered unfair to fight someone of a lower calibre. (The same rules are observed in sports today). The same were followed by ancient Vedic people as can be read in Dhanurveda. Ahimsa is about not being unduly violent. There are many martial arts texts written by the Buddhists from which Kung Fu has evolved. Even today, Russian forces are using these Sutras, written in Sanskrit, to develop a mighty army. Accepting money was forbidden as it corrupts the mind. So acharyas would accept just the basic hospitality wherever they went. People would gratefully ensure that they were treated respectfully in return for their priceless services like practical spiritual guidance, ayurveda, etc. This is why they were known as bhikkus (bhikshus). Popular phrases like 'Atithi devo bhava' can be read in this context.

Some wrongly believe that ancient Vedic people did yagyas like asvamedha to eat cows, horses etc. This is wrong. No-one would do elaborate rituals just to have animal barbeques. According

to some like Dr. Subhash Kak asva refers to surya. Mr. Prem Sabhlok writes that it relates to the Asvinau or constellations and Vedic scientists, while the Krisishashtra mentions that the word means ‘feet of surya’, probably referring to the rays of the sun. Shankracharyaji explains it as A = not + Sva = tomorrow + tha = stands/remains; that which does not remain the same tomorrow, such as the universe itself. In short, it pertains to higher knowledge both inner and outer. In practice this theory also ties in with tales of Asvattha, the warrior. Therefore one can conclude that the Asvamedha yagya is about spreading spiritual knowledge. The inner Asvattha tree is also known as the Boddhi tree under which all tapasvis got enlightenment, not only Hindus, because in spiritual practices of that high level, there cannot be any labelling. In fact, it works only after removing such attachments so labels automatically disappear.

Jain, Buddhist and Hindu texts all mention chakravartin rajas who were ideal humans endowed with thirty-two major and many minor signs of excellence. Examples being Ram, Bharat, Shibi etc. The Maitrayaniya Upanishad uses the term chakravartin for kings who had become ascetics. They were universal rulers who ruled ethically and benevolently. Their reign was called Sarvabhauma. It is a Bahuvrihi, literally meaning ‘*whose wheels (dharmachakra) are moving*’ or ‘*one whose chariot is moving everywhere without obstruction in context of dharma*’. The Jain puranas enlist twelve chakravartins born in Kasyap gotra. The mother of a Cakravartin sees some dreams at the time of conception. According to the Adipurana, Bharata's mother saw the sun and the moon, the mount Meru, the lake with swans, earth and the ocean. According to Jain Acharya Hemachandra, Marudevi, mother of Bharata, sees fourteen great dreams. Scriptural literature describe their enlightened gurus (the Buddhas and the tīrthāṅkaras) in similar terms, the notion being that religious truth transcends local or national limitations and applies to all people everywhere. Gautama Buddha is referred to as a cakravāla cakravartin, an illuminator of dharma (life in adherence to compassionate truth) in all regions of the world. This also tells us that a chakravarti raja does not always do physical battles. Thus, when during Mahabharat war Karna’s wheel got stuck it is probably in this context. In fact sometimes the entire war appears to be a dharmic battle rather than an actual one.

Some works like those of Buddhist scholars like Dignaga and Dharmakirti (550-610) are very important in Buddhist thought. But we can see that debates they often had with other scholars both Buddhist and Hindu were about minute details philosophical issues, logic and language, and issues of justification. This is nothing new in Bharatvarsha. There are numerous records of different scholars debating each other including Shankracharya and Mandan Misra who were both Hindus.

Some believe that India was strongest and most united during Ashok the Buddhist’s rule and it is the fault of Brahmins that things started deteriorating since they were instrumental in the downfall of Buddhism. This entire premise is wrong. It is the nature of maya that things deteriorate and age. Since a lot of groups were fighting many acharyas would travel to mediate and help people

maintain psychological, spiritual and physical health by teaching, guiding and re-training as and when required. If Asoka had given up weapons he would have been conquered by others like Greeks, Persians, Huns etc. who were fighters ready to conquer. This tells us that he didn't 'convert' to Buddhism. The idea of ahimsa was to not be cruel or do mindless violence. He declared himself as chakravarti. This, I think is maybe technically wrong because in vedic times a chakravarti raja was one who had effectively done various yagyas, such as Asvamedha etc. While Asoka had done a lot for his people this would not put him in the category of those spiritually advanced chakravartins like Ram etc. This too tells us that standards were falling.

Hanumant means hanu(war) mant(mantri or advisor). He has Vajra-deha (pure diamond body). Hanu ties in with Humm or AUM and Mant ties in with Manthar the inner churning. War does not necessarily always mean physical fighting. It is often used as a metaphor for inner spiritual struggle. He is known as Kesari nandan. His mother was Ajna. These aren't names of humans. Ajna is one of the chakras and his Kundalini could be activated to that level. Inner chakras are also known as lotus or padma. (Padma is also another name of Ram). Kesar is the pistil, which produces special essence (semen which transforms to ojas) on achieving vajra awareness, or spiritual realization. Colour of kesar and spiritual courage is yellow. This is probably one reason for ascetics, devi/devatas wearing yellow/pitambar dhoti.

In Buddhist rituals, vajra, held in left hand represents the male principle, 'upaya'; action or means. Bell held in right hand, represents the female principle, prajna or wisdom. Vajra body is considered to be base of tantra. On its right is the red Rasana channel in which the sun energy moves, decreasing essence, and on the left, is the white Lalana channel in which the moon energy moves, increasing, cleansing and cooling the essence. Krishna was probably known as Lalan for this reason. The word does not mean 'child'. This is probably why we use abir which is white and gulal which is red to do puja and also play holi. The sun and moon nadis are also known as Ida and Pingala.

Buddhist mantra for invoking blessings is '*This is the realization (HUM) of the path and wisdom, which is supreme (GURU), unstained (PADMA) ultimate attainment (SIDDHI).*'

In the above, if one reads guru as Hanumant, Padma as Ram and Siddhi as Sita it makes perfect sense. This illustrates that Buddhists just had another way of explaining the workings of the panch tattva. Ramayan is an example of these in action. Many people practiced mantra, mudra, mandal, tantra, yantra, yagyas, and did various sadhanas as per their abilities. In fact, it is believed that Buddhists were strongly influenced by the Kapalikas. One author says that kapalikas were those who had done Brahma hatya and were punished by the Brahmans, who were judges, to wander for twelve years. This has been incorrectly taken literally as murder of a human. But it could be any serious crime.

Texts on Krisishastra mention: ‘*Sirajñāna "the knowledge of plough", or its amended form sítajñāna "the knowledge of furrow".....*’ Could this be what the Ramayan is trying to point at, among other things? Sita has come out of the earth and probably represents jnana rather than being an actual human in many cases. And Janaka was a farmer-*raja* (as were all others), who developed the jnana. Maybe the name Krisna originated from Krisisastra or vice-versa because he is also known as Gopal, or, that divine power which protects pruthvi tattva. In Buddhist traditions Sitajnana is associated with Vajravarahi tantras. She is the consort of Heruka and the descriptions suggest similarity to Siva and Parvati. The mention of skull and drinking of blood is similar to Kali and also like Chinnamasta. Vajravarahi comes from the navel and is associated with triumph of knowledge over ignorance and has face of boar; just like Varaha avatar of Hinduism. She stands in the fire of exalted wisdom (like Sati and Agni parixa of Sita). This also tells us that avatars are not part human and part animal. They are usually metaphors.

Then there is the ***The Vajra Seven-Line Prayer***.

*‘By the nectar pouring down from the body of the Guru, all the illness, bad karma, and sufferings of one’s body, speech, and mind are washed away in the form of pus, blood, insects, soot, and offal. At the end, one’s own body dissolves, like salt into water, and then the liquid goes down into the mouth of Yamaraja, the Lord of Death, and other creditors of karma beneath the ground.....’*

This clears doubts as to why menstruating women, though respected as creative energies, are forbidden from entering temples. At that time they are undergoing the inner cleansing and so impure due to the organic waste. (There is a temple of the menstruating Kamakhya devi in Assam). This also applied to men who were impure due to physical or mental impurities. Also, important symbols like Kumbh, Matsya, Srivatsa and Svastika among others are considered important in all three ideologies. The three aspects of Buddhahood are; attainment of purity of all sound with the speech mandala, the perfection of thoughts with the mind mandala and seeing equality in all appearances as the body mandala. These goals are the same in Jainism and Hinduism too. Mantras like ‘Om mani padma hum’ and ‘Om namo arhantanam’ have the word ‘om’, just like in Hinduism.

See below taken from ‘History of Krsisastra’ page 7. By Gyula Wojtilla:

*‘It is true that climatology, based on astronomy, or even rain-making, based on ‘magic’, form an essential art of agriculture and consequently of the krsisāstras. This branch of science can be traced back to the Vedas. It appears, for instance, in a hymn addressed to Mitra-Varuna (RV,5,63), in the relevant portion of the Buddhist literature (Mahāmāyūri ‘The peacock spell’, Meghasūtra (“Cloud sermon”cf.Schmithausen1997,56-58) and later*

*(Brhatsamhitā chapters 46,47). Greek accounts on ancient India observe that this science and the related subjects were the privileges of the brāhmanas. As Arrian puts it: "Alone of the Indians they are expert in prophecy, and none save a sophist is allowed to prophesy. They prophesy only about the seasons of the year and any public calamity." (Indike 11, 4-5 . P.A.Brunst's translation). Similarly, the establishment of irrigational systems demanded learned persons. Kāśyapīyākṛsisūkti speaks of water-finders who are conversant with the kṛsisūtra (KKSū683). This statement is well in line with the respective descriptions of the Brhatsamhitā. (BrSamch.54.) The planning of dams, sluices, channels and water reservoirs required engineering experts.'*

Above tells us that Buddhist used the same knowledge and 'believe in' Mitra, Varun, Yamraja etc. Also, that Brahmins were expert at prophecy among other things which is why they were given that position, not other way round. For this they needed to maintain their spiritual purity which is probably why they didn't touch *anyone*, not only Sudras. Hindus, Jains and Buddhists used tantra, mantra, mudra, mandala which are high level vidyas. Images/murtis of devi/devatas are representations of the divine energies that manifest on using these vidyas. At times they may have debated technical points, but that does not mean they were entirely different religions. People forget about the many Buddhas and Tirthkaras who lived many centuries before Gautam and Mahavira. What about their teachings? Since modern Afghanistan, Kandahar (Gandhara) etc. were all Vedic areas, they would have been living in the middle of Aryavart! How do they explain this?

A lot gets distorted in translations. Most of us read the English version since we do not understand Pali or Prakrit which were the main languages of the groups labelled as Buddhist and Jain. Today, some scholars say that Buddha preached there was no atman. But this is not true. In 'The ātman and its negation-A conceptual and chronological analysis of early Buddhist thought', by Alexander Wynne it is mentioned that '*early Upaniṣadic speculation on the ātman was well known in early Buddhist circles, and determines the form and content of some important early Buddhist teachings*'.

Another interesting work is the 'Buddha Mimamsa' by Yogiraja's disciple, Maitreya. It mentions how Buddha was known as Arkabandhu and was a fire worshipper just like his Vedic ancestors. He also did yagyas and was never without an *usnisa or sirastrana*, the turban that everyone wore when doing yagyas. His place of worship is called chaitya (which means place of the sacred fire), and ghrutam of cow's milk is used. Buddha often explained importance of Brahma (sabhapati or

prajapati Daksha), Mara (Kamdev) and Devraja Indra etc. to his disciples. This work mentions that contrary to popular belief, Buddha was not against the 'caste system' since in those days it was the actual varnashram which is different. He took Brahmans too as pupils. This does not imply that they converted, but only that some, not all, needed extra tuitions. Any society always has a structure with a hierarchy based mainly on values such as education/knowledge and experience. Ancient Vedic society called this structure varnashram which was based on a person's spiritual abilities and karmas because they were expected to do both in order to improve position in maya and eventually attain moksha. This was not rigid or based on biological lineage. There is mention of Buddhavamsa or lineage of Buddhas. They are not biologically related so we can safely assume that vamsa refers to karmic heir, after being mentored by a superior. Rajyas is not to be read in terms of independent kingdoms (like countries today), but like different states like today.

Everyone had to help maintain eco-balance. People were trained to look after Vanas (both inner and outer). Even Krishna is known as van-ke-vihari, or one who tends inner and outer vanas. This has been discussed in the Upanishads, Mahabharat, Ramayan and also in Jain and Buddhist texts as Nirvana. Important Jain and Buddhist texts mention how only people born in kshatriya or Brahman families can reach position of tirthkara or bodhisattva. These positions were based on qualifications and abilities and mentees were called children of mentors. If today someone tells us that only graduates can get certain jobs or apply for doctorate that would not be discrimination. While today, everything is geared around money, in those days many were interested in attaining moksha and worked accordingly. A lot of ancient stories should be read in that context. Also, they are case studies and may not apply to all.

Buddha supposedly died after eating *Suska Sukara Mardava*. Many believe this has been wrongly translated as pork. Suska means dried. Sukara Mardava was a type of mushroom. His father Shuddhodhan is believed to have actively preached and practiced vegetarianism since they all wanted to maintain Arya-ness. So it is unlikely that his son would be a meat eater. Although he may have accepted flexibility just the way one advises an addict to give up alcohol gradually. Another important point is that the Vinaya Sutras are a recapitulation of the Griya Sutras. Buddha used to quote verbatim from Vedic texts which preached against violence and slaughter of animals. The phrase *ahimsa parmodharma* occurs many times in the Mahabharat too and was not coined by Buddha or Mahavir. Like the rishis they believed in the soul, rebirth and karma.

Jain, Buddhist and Hindu dharma believe in Vinayak as the deva who removes spiritual obstacles. Although there are different traditions within the three groups which may give slight variations and details for this, the main concept remains the same. This is obviously due to people's memories being faulty and the number of millennia having gone by. Rishabhdev the first Tirthkara

was highly venerated and people used to proudly say how he also attended Taxashila, the same university as Ram. This would not be the case if they were of a 'different' religion.

Please see this from Isavasya Upanishad-

*'He who knows at the same time both the spirit (sambhūti) and the destruction (vināśa), overcomes death by destruction and obtains immortality through the spirit.' (IU 14)'*

Here Vinasa is not cruelty or destruction, but about metaphorically destroying maya bondage. Someone with knowledge and experience of this could be called Vinayaka. Also, 'Vigatha Nayakah Vinayakah' - one without a master above him is Vinayak. Apparently people used to ask Gotama Buddha why he was acting like a 'Venayiko', which the western scholars wrongly translate as nihilism. (They even spell it this way). Buddha would defend himself by saying that he did not claim to be a Venayiko but was only preaching about how to get rid of sorrow etc. Santa Danta or appeasement of the passions and taming of the senses were constant themes of Buddhism. Santa Danta is in the same veins as Ekadanta or Vinayaka. Here Sam (Santa) means to appease and Dam (Danta) means to tame. Since they are all using the same sanskrit terms it proves they were discussing the same sanatana dharma. In fact Buddha and Jain acharyas were respectfully known as Shramanacharyas.

Buddhist Suttas (sutras) often give case studies of how Buddha is correcting faults of Brahmins, or office holders. There is the popular story of Kutadanta the Brahman. Ajatasattu had given the town, Khanumata, to the Brahman Kutadanta to govern; *'a political structure, which was common at the time.'* He wanted to do a sacrifice involving many animals. But the Buddha taught him not to do this. Such stories cannot be used to jump to the wrong conclusion that 'all brahmins were violent to animals'. The whole purpose is to illustrate how even learned leaders can make mistakes. Just the way one may today be able to point out mistakes of government officers. He does not object to the Brahman being made governor. If we understand the word Brahman as a synonym for governor, rather than merely a surname or a caste appellation, this becomes clear. Constant supervision is always required to ensure things work smoothly. Even today, if a high ranking officer is found to be a thief, investigations will be done etc. That does not mean ALL officers are thieves. As part of yagya rituals a rushi would stand over the raja doing the yagya and tap him on the shoulder with his staff saying 'dharma dandiyosi' meaning dharma is higher than you and can punish you. This was to remind that power can corrupt.

Even during the times of Buddha there were many who would misunderstand and misquote him and he would try to correct them. This can be read in 'Conversations with the Buddha' by Alexander Duncan. This was important since entire society and law and order were based on dharma. Therefore, when some points of dharma (law) were refuted by some acharya and they won the debate,



obviously the law would have to be changed. There were no 'isms' in those days; only that sometimes people got certain practices of sanatana dharma wrong. For example, if there was a famine people would debate about whether it was right to eat meat to survive. Or, after the famine was over, they would have to help people to go back to being vegetarian after years of eating meat perhaps. This was not a conversion to another religion. Dharma was not sidelined or an option, like it is today. In fact, even during times of Shivaji and Meerabai there were conflicts between the Brahman law keepers and the rajas, who were not necessarily absolute rulers or dictators. While they were at war, the Brahmans governed otherwise the whole place would fall apart. We should bear in mind that they did not have electronic media and so less chance of reaching out to people very fast. In the meantime people would obviously be practicing their versions or understandings of dharma and some would find it difficult to change when some acharya from outside their area would come to preach eventually.

Some people use the Nachiketa story to demonstrate wickedness of Hindu/Vedic rites of sacrificing animals. Luckily at least they don't say that Nachiketa was a Buddhist or preaching a new religion. But there are some mistakes in understanding this too. In this story the word 'pasu' has been taken too literally to mean actual animals. Yagyas involve making mantras manifest to achieve eco-balance by maintaining population of those particular animals and also the balance between pruthvi and the constellations. These animals also represent certain constellations. Example, goat, cow etc. This also includes humans who are an animal too. That is why Siva is known as Pasu (all life forms), pati (leader, protector), nath (controller). So, in the Nachiketa story, the yagya effect is probably being weakened because perhaps the raja's mantra powers are weak. He may not be 'donating' weak animals. The raja, Vajashrava, is the one who has become na+chiket or one who is spiritually weak. So the raja himself in the form of Nachiketa (a descriptive noun), a Brahman boy, i.e. with the attitude of a child who wants to learn, goes to Yama who is Dharmaraja. This means death of ignorance, not of body.

Yama is reverse of Maya and so is about knowledge of moksha. Going to Yama is not an actual physical journey but that done during deep meditation over several centuries, involving the whole difficult process of doing intense japa, tapa, sadhna, fasting etc. It is impossible to switch from being a bhogi into a yogi instantly. Or it could also be about a young yogi who challenges the raja for doing something incorrectly, and is then asked by raja to prove his points which the youngster does by getting Brahmagyan. Since most experts don't like being challenged by their juniors, such stories were told to create awareness about people's foibles. Whenever one reads about rushis, gurus, gods, becoming 'angry' and giving shaap or ashirvad etc. the same rule of thumb should be applied for a more logical version of the tale.

All three dharmas have their own versions of the popular Rishyashrunga story (Ekasunga in Buddhist tale). It is about a young boy brought up as a celibate rushi. Later he gets tempted by a girl

and becomes a king. This tale explains to us the lifestyle of the people rather than being the story of just one person. It tells us that in those days it was common for people to train in vanas under rushis, remain celibate until they felt ready for marriage, and also work as raja, because there was no law that only a kshatriya fighter can be overall ruler. There are ample stories that tell us how the governors were high class Brahmans (in terms of education and calibre). Government of the times had both wings; the dharmic and the military and at times duties of both could overlap. It also tells people that there is nothing wrong with returning from a hermitage and joining mainstream society if the karmic pull is felt. This flexibility is very important in karma yoga.

In the Buddhist story the boy, Ekashunga was carried away by the girls in a boat full of Ashoka trees to make him feel at home. This tells us that these trees were important for tapas. And also, there is mention of many hermitages of sadhvis too, so it was not only males who took this path. This story gives us the same information that the Ramayan does. Ravan too had kept Sita in the Ashoka van and hoped she would join him, (not necessarily marry him). People of those times were highly advanced and wanted their governors to be the same. Being a celibate raja was a virtue and not an exception. It does appear as if some women were usually dharmic rather than personal partners. Some people have wrongly categorised this as a myth simply because they have mistranslated the word Ekashunga and Rushyashruna as a 'one-horned' beast. The word shrunga also means pinnacle. So Rushyashringa would mean one who has reached the pinnacle of rushi-hood. The word 'Eka' means one and only in context of divine; so unique rushi. Other examples being the names Ekanath and Ekalavya.

I think the actual name of Luv (son of Ram) could be Luvya. See dictionary meaning-

लव् य adj. lavya to be cut or mown or hewn down

लाव् य adj. lAvya to be cut or reaped

एकलक् ष् यता f. ekalakSyatA state of being the only aim

That which has to be mowed or hewn down is our pasu nature, negativities etc. One can do this by doing yagyas with kusha grass which also has many medicinal properties. They are the metaphorical children of Ram (divine power, surya, agni tattva) and Sita ( pruthvi tattva, knowledge of agriculture). This is the symbolism in Ramayana.

Dhirajlal Thokarshi Shah (among others), has written wonderful books like 'Aumkar Upasana' in which he has compiled his research on such mantras which proves that Jainism is not a different religion. Sometimes people just tend to remember certain things and forget others. Some people such as Savar/Sabar specialised in mantras that were less difficult as compared to others due to

their limited abilities. So they had a less important role in varnashram. That cannot be interpreted as caste discrimination. But they too could attain divinity as demonstrated in Ramayan where inner divine energy HRam, (not human) activates in Shabari. Unfortunately a lot has changed so people develop doubts. For example, traditional Jains don't eat root vegetables, onions and garlic. This is because such foods are very rajasik. It could also have been due to soil contamination in certain areas at that time. But it does not have to apply to everyone forever. Ayurveda too considers garlic as rajasik but good for digestion. People tend to forget that history should be read in context of the life and times of those people, not today.

Tirthakaras were the ford makers who helped the sadhakas cross bhavasagar. Even Balabhadra was a tirthkara, had gone on tirtha and had not participated in most of the Mahabharat war. He was not a skiver or coward. This tells us that it is about actual spiritual practices rather than just the superficial rituals. Also, while all able-bodied warriors were at war, it would be necessary for someone to ensure that no foul play happens with those who are not participating, such as women, children etc. He too is known as an avatar. But one does not call him Jain or Buddhist inspite of following ahimsa. It was always about taking the correct decisions and not fighting indiscriminately. Going for tirthas has today become more like a picnic for many but was not so in those days. Until recently, Jainism too was considered to be a sect of Hinduism as mentioned in 'Autobiography of a Yogi' by Paramhansa Yogananda. So we see that while each area of Bharat may have favoured different words, they originate from the mother language, Sanskrit, and the rules of Sanatan Dharma.

There are versions of Mahabharat which mention that Dritarashtra etc. were of the Naga clan. Buddhists and Jain texts too have these tales and they have names starting with 'naga'. The Pandyas of the south were allies of the Pandavas. This would place Mahabharat in Kalyug. Yet some stories of Krushna Leela place Krushna avatar in Dvaparyug. Each group also has their own versions of Ramayan too. They would not have this if they were a different religion. Many today illogically say that whatever is wrong in our patch of kaliyug is due to ancient aryavart or Vedic Dharma. But this is impossible since lifestyles are completely different. Also, there are ample records of western and Chinese travellers and Muslims chroniclers who have praised the Bharatiya way of life.

In those days everyone worked by hand. To the best of our knowledge they didn't have machines like we do today. They were mainly farmers and soldiers. As mentioned in dhanurveda all varnas participated in wars so obviously trained for them together too. The four categories therefore appear to be more about their expertise in weapons too. Balabhadra always carries a plough, so does Janak, which is not a name but means father of the nation. Mithila had many Janakas. They also specialised in mantra siddhis which infused the flora fauna with holy vibes and made them sattvic. They believed strongly in doing karmas correctly and didn't mind getting their hands dirty. Even today we have people like undertakers, forensic teams, sanitation department, hospital staff etc. who

have to constantly deal with cleaning. They are not reviled. Everyone knows how important they are. But, mantra siddhi does require having to maintain sattvic and physical purity. This is why it was necessary to stay away from them. Logically speaking is it possible for us to literally keep avoiding such people? So, it does appear as if they are trying to make some relevant point. Rajas and acharyas were highly educated which is why they were labelled as such. So it doesn't make sense if people tell stories in which they needed instructions from juniors like chandalas and vyadhas. Just the way a highly qualified doctor today doesn't need training from a nurse who is junior. Maybe these stories are for the public so that they understand how there was no prejudice in society.

For example, vyadha also means one who pierces. So in Yudhisthir's story it could be more about a smart man with piercing wit rather than a hunter, i.e. 'low class' person. A lot of words are descriptive nouns, not always proper nouns. Even the word Chandala could be about one of Yama's attendants, Chanda or Mahachanda, rather than a 'low caste' person. Dog has been used as a symbol for vedic knowledge and is used in context of Kala Bhairava and even Dattatreya. Yama is dharmaraja. He is god of death only in context of death of ignorance and ego of a tapasvi who then becomes enlightened with brahma gyan. One should consider all these possibilities instead of jumping to conclusions.

Ancient stories cover millions of years with people adapting them as per requirement to help their society in their patch of the city, not necessarily entire bharat. This is why there are so many versions. One cannot say for sure that they all come from same century or decade. In Buddhist texts there are four guardians of the world. Dhritarastra, leader of the gandharva lives on east of Mt. Meru. The others are Vaishnavan, Virupaksha and Virudhak. This tells us that these were common rather than proper nouns. We can't always be sure that they refer to only one person. In many stories they are like archetypes.

Another point is that at times our ancients have been affected by diseases, solar flares etc. which could have made them ill. So they would have had to quarantine the affected, like for example lepers. But since they too have to make a living they could have been given some easy task like sweeping. They also knew about genetics and how some diseases can jump a generation. So obviously people would avoid them to not get infected. For example if we find out that someone has AIDS or leprosy we are not going to marry them. This cannot be read as religious or caste discrimination. It would be up to some gyani person to march from town to town to inform people about news as well as instruct them what to do. Many would train to be sanyasis and do this role. There are also records of some areas being deserted at different times in history such as after the Mahabharat war. Populations did get diminished due to various reasons. New groups didn't always defeat or kill previous groups.

Ancient rishis were geniuses and siddhars with divine knowledge. It is people's understanding that can be faulty not the original theory. In just a few decades some people have decided that Sikhism too is a 'different' religion. This is wrong since all their gurus practiced Hinduism. If we look at present society objectively we will see class distinctions. Do all socialise together? Are all poor, or ineligible people welcome in exclusive clubs? Do rich people find partners among the poor as a norm? Is that 'caste system' or just the rules of society? Will we be able to change that? If the future generations criticise us for that will it be correct? People like Romila Thapar should honestly ask themselves these questions. We should not try to read ancient history in context of today's problems. That is completely illogical since everything has changed drastically. Every species in nature has a hierarchy. That is natural. If currently people use caste as an excuse to be mean to anyone, we should educate them, not blame the ancients. Variables have changed, and so should the rules that govern society. We suffer according to our prarabdha karmas. Therefore one should accept responsibility for one's condition. Today Bharat needs to focus on being united rather than look for excuses to be divided.

-----HARI AUM-----