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Research article

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Samaṇ Śreṇi: Migration, Social Movement and Religious Change

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Abstract: The article tries to explain the recent emergence of the new religious rank within the Jain Śvetāmbar Terāpãth community in India. Traditional Jainism makes a clear distinction between two groups of followers, namely ascetic monks and laymen. Under the sect's late leader Ācārya Tulsi (1914–1997), prolific author and founder of the Vishva Bharati Institute in Ladnun (Rajasthan), an intermediary rank between the monks and the laity was introduced. This paper argues that the main motivation to introduce the new rank follows socio-economic considerations relating to the large and economically prospering Jain diaspora that has been growing outside of India in recent decades. The paper discusses the foundation and development of the Samaṇ Śreṇi, as the new rank became known, through original materials published by the community as well as fieldwork findings and interviews made in the Śvetāṃbar religious centre of Ladnun (Rajasthan).

Keywords: Jainism, Jain diaspora, ascetic monks, Ācārya Tulsi, Vishva Bharati Institute

Q. Shouldn't Jain monks travel outside India and spread Jainism?

A. This is an age-old question. Monks (and nuns) take five great vows when they are initiated into the *sangha*. These vows are quite strict and forbid them to do any *himsa* (violence). It has been argued that mechanical means of transportation can cause *himsa*. However, people argue that when Lord Mahavir was alive there were no motorcars, trains and planes anyway.

Others say that in this day and age one must use the modern facilities and technologies. A scholarly monk can only reach distant places by using cars and planes. This will help the Jain religion, as people who live in countries like England and the USA are deprived of the gracious presence of monks/nuns.

So the issue can be looked upon from both sides. What Lord Mahavir would have said about this is a topic of speculation. However by and large Jain Ācāryas have maintained that it is this strict code of conduct which makes Jainism unique, and a well-respected faith in the world.

(FAQ from the Jain Society of Europe website[1])

1 http://www.jaincentreleicester.com (24.8.2020)

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Introduction

Although it was Max Weber who in his *The Religion of India* compared Jains to protestants (specifically Quakers), though of the Orient,[2] noting their traditional focus on trade and business activities,[3] it was not until the second half of the 20th century that the spread of the Jains all over India and abroad contributed to the emergence of a new entrepreneurial and professional class within the community. This new business class of Jains left its traditional areas in Central and Western India, as well as the Mysore region, in search of better education, employment and economic opportunities. This pattern of Jain migration is characterized in a scholarly discourse as follows: "the Jains emigrated mostly in relation to trade, business, or commerce, or as professionals and semi-professionals".[4] In addition to the traditional and historical explanation of Jain professional choices, this pattern can further be explained by the Jains having one of the highest literacy rates among Indian communities, amounting to 35 per cent in the 1931 census[5] (with a 10 per cent national average)[6] and reaching around 80 per cent by 1971.[7]

This essay focuses on the new socio-economic class of Jains that in the second half of the 20th century has populated Indian states where the Jain community was not so active before, and has even moved beyond India's borders.[8] This new entrepreneurial class of Jains is found in Andhra Pradesh, Bengal, Bihar, Kerala, Orissa, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, etc., as well as in Europe, Oceania, the UK and the USA, where it appears to be beyond the scope of the traditional leadership of sadhus, the ascetics that maintain and even manage the community in all sects of traditional Jainism. Due to their restrictions on using any means of transport, these leaders were for practical reasons unable to reach the locations of the new Jain settlements. This geographical spread particularly affected the Śvetāmbar Terāpāth,[9] which is the only sect that follows the principle of single leadership under consecutive ācāryas.

This essay discusses the ways the leadership of Śvetāmbar Terāpāth, namely then Ācārya Tulsi, approached the issue of retaining connections between the Terāpāth (and generally Jain) monkhood (*sāndus*) and laymen (*śrāvaks*), without violating the ascetic code of conduct. The middle class that came to be known as *samaṇ dīkṣā* or order, established in 1980, made it possible for the newly-initiated "half-monks and nuns" *Samaṇ*s and *samaṇīs* to act as a link between sadhus headed by the incumbent Terāpāth ācārya, and Jain laymen in remote parts of India as well as overseas. The present paper also briefly considers the reverse impact that the increasing contacts of *samaṇīs*[10] with this new Jain business class has had on the Terāpāth ascetics' code of conduct.

2 Weber, Max. 1958. *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*. Illinois: Free Press, p. 200.

3 In 1950 Sangave noted that "A predominately large majority of them [Jains] is engaged in some kind of business… [being] mainly money-lenders, jewellers, cloth-merchants, grocers and recently industrialists" (Sangave, Vilas. 1959. *Jain Community: A Social Survey*. Bombay: Popular Book Depot, p. 277)

4 Jain, Prakash. 2011. Exploring the Global Jain Diaspora, in N. Jayaram (ed.), *Diversities in the Indian Diaspora: Nature, Implications, Responses*. Oxford: OUP, p. 156.

5 Sangave. 1959. *Jain Community*, p. 41.

6 Petrov V. V. 1978. *Narodonaselenie Indii* [Demography of India]. Moscow: Oriental Literature, p. 267.

7 Ibid., p. 270.

8 This claim is based on the definition of class as a historically constituted stratum of society with its own peculiar socio-economic characteristics that emerges at a definite period of time under definite circumstances. This definition has its roots in the classic Marxist understanding of the term, revisited by modern scholars of South Asian Studies. See, for example, Rahman, Taimur. 2012. *The Class Structure of Pakistan*. Karachi: Oxford, pp. xix–xxiii.

9 The name Terāpāth (literally "thirteen ways") according to Kanakprabha has the following explanation: "[first], the name of thirteen sadhus and thirteen laymen whose way is followed…; [second], five great vows, five unions and three protections – the thirteen laws that are compulsorily followed by sandus and sandvis…; [third], the way of God, You [*terā*] way [*panth*] is Terāpāth. (Kanakprabha, Sadhvi Pramukha. 1995. *Terāpāth: itihās aur darśan* (Terā-pāth: History and Philosophy). Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati (in Hindi), pp. 7–8.

10 The feminine form of the term, "samaṇī", will in the following be used to acknowledge the overwhelmingly feminine character of the Order.

The spread of Jains across India since the 1960s

Since the early modern period, Jainism has gradually disappeared from southern India, the sole exception being Karnataka.[11] A similar process was observed in the east of the country. As Jash notes, [by the 20th century] "Jainism gradually lost its followers and it became ultimately the religion of a few mercantile families of western and southern India".[12] Statistically this claim finds strong support in the 1941 census that shows over 90 per cent (out of 14.5 million) of Jains living in Bombay Presidency, North and Central Provinces.[13] According to the 1971 census, conducted in a year that still saw initial phase of migration, Delhi, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh accounted for more than 90 per cent of a Jain population of 26 million, with Mysore having 8.5 per cent.[14]

Although the concentration pattern over these six territories generally remained unshaken by the end of the century, Prakash Jain demonstrates that in the 1960–70s this trend started changing[15] with Jain populations increasing in other parts of India,[16] which become especially apparent in the 1991 census. In particular, since the establishment in the mid-18th century of Terāpāth, the sect with which this study is concerned, it never enjoyed any substantial following outside its main traditional area of Rajputana. As Dundas puts it, Terāpāth "remained particularly Rajasthani, and indeed Marwari in ethos and most of its adherents are members of the Bisa Oswal merchant caste".[17] Charitra Prajñā, Vice Chancellor of the most important Terāpāth centre – Jain Vishva Bharati – in Ladnun, Rajasthan, also links the changes in the community to the migration of Jains from their traditional places of living: "now people are spreading all over the world for their business, for their jobs… everywhere where they feel there are opportunities. So many Jains appeared to be in many different parts of India, in any corner from South to North, from East to West".[18]

Interestingly, among the six above-mentioned Jain core states the decrease in the percentage of Jain population (but not the absolute figures) occurred only in two: Gujarat and Rajasthan. In Gujarat a plunge, particularly from 1961 to 1971, can be observed, from 20.2 to 17.3 per cent, which presumably happened due to large migration to Maharashtra after Bombay was made its capital in the aftermath of the Gujarat-Maharashtra division in 1960, whereas Rajasthan demonstrated a gradual but constant decrease since 1961, from 20.2 per cent down to 19.7 (1971), 19.5 (1981), 16.9 (1991) and 15.4 (2001).[19]

This migration of Jains from Rajasthan looking for better economic opportunities can be traced though oral history accounts of the migrants in the late 1950 and early 1960s. The stories of Terāpāth Jains leaving their native places and departing to the east and south of the country are mostly similar to each other. Tan Sikhlal Baid, 72, remembers how at the age of 22 he left the town of his birth, Sujangarh, which is about 14 km from Ladnun in Naggor zila (district), and eventually arrived in Patna, the capital of Bihar, to open his electronics business, dealing with the distribution of refrigerators, air

11 Chatterjee Asim. 2000. *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*. Vol. 1,2. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, p. 147.

12 Jash, Pranabananda. 1989. *Some Aspects of Jainism in Eastern India*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, p. 95.

13 Sangave. 1959. *Jain Community*, p. 4.

14 Sangave. 1980. *Jain Community: A Social Survey*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, pp. 1–7.

15 Jain, Prakash. 2011. *Jains in India and Abroad: A Sociological Introduction*. Delhi: International School for Jain Studies, p. 53.

16 Although this increase is attributed by some to the growth of the community's size (from slightly over two million in 1961 to almost 3.2 million in 1991, and 4.2 million in 2001) we see that, in fact, the peak of migration processes in the 1980s saw the population growth rates plummeting to 4.42 per cent (with a 23.05 per cent average among other communities) compared to 23.17 per cent for the previous decade (Jain. *Exploring the Global Jain Diaspora*, p. 155).

17 Dundas, Paul. 2002. *The Jains*. London: Routledge, p. 255.

18 Interview with Charitra Prajñā, 23 November 2012.

19 Jain, *Jains in India and Abroad*, p. 55.

conditioners and other home appliances. "At the time I came to Patna for the first time [1962] there were only five Terāpāth families there, but slowly the number started growing. There were around 25 homes by 1980 and now, there are about 90 together in Patna (78 as per Jain Śvetāmbar Terāpāth Mahāsabhā data[20])".[21]

Mangal Chand Chopra, aged 78, from Cuttack (Katak), Orissa, also recalls how, just 16 years old, he left his native village Chhoti Khatu, also in Naggor zila, and after four years settled in Cuttack in 1955, working in the private sector at a jute mill, establishing his own import and export business shortly after. At that time, he recollects, the coastal part of Orissa had just one or two Terāpāth families, with the number increasing to about 150 in 1980 and reaching around 350 homes in 2013,[22] with 183 families residing in Cuttack alone.[23]

For Terāpāth Jains keen on migrating eastwards, the main destination was cosmopolitan Calcutta, which offered better job and business opportunities than the deserted Rajasthan that in the 1960s was experiencing scarcity of water, food and jobs.[24] Bane Chand Maloo, now 74, moved to West Bengal's capital in 1959 to continue his studies and work as a chartered accountant, and to engage in commercial business. When he arrived, the Terāpāthis in the city numbered around 2,000; this figure later saw a dramatic growth to 5,265.[25]

The Terāpāth migration from Rajasthan has also spread to the south, for instance, to Tamil Nadu. Gautam Chand Daga, a second-generation member of that wave of Terāpāth Jain migration, was born in Santalia but was brought to Chennai in 1973 aged eight by his parents who launched a finance business in the city. According to the Tamil Nadu Jain Terāpāth Directory, in 1980 there were just 872 Terāpāth families in Chennai, but the number followed the same pattern of growth that we observe in the other states: 1,041 (1993), 1,240 (1998), 1,530 (2005), 1,640 (2010)[26] and 2,025 (2013).[27]

The increase in the Jain diaspora in the 1960–80s

The period of the 1960–70s saw a widening of the Jain diaspora not only in the east and south of the Subcontinent but also in such remote places as Great Britain, continental Europe, America and other places. Charitra Prajñā also claims that "the major migration [of Jains] abroad happened in the 60s and 70s. Many engineers and doctors went there for higher studies and then they settled over".[28]

Tinker writes that the estimated overall number of Hindus [Jains most probably included in that category] in the UK at the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century did not exceed 7,000.[29] Jains began consistently migrating to Britain in the early 1960s under the Commonwealth Immigrants Quotas. The biggest influx of Indians in Britain happened in the early 1970s, and was from East Africa. Among 307,000 Hindus (again Jains likely included) 70 per cent were of Gujarati origin,[30] the state from which the majority of Jains in India originate.[31] Banks, the author of probably the only

20 http://www.jstmahasabha.org/frmfmctctlist.aspx?prmst=BR (5.9.2019)

21 Telephone Interview with Tan Sikhlal Baid, 10 March 2013.

22 Telephone Interview with Mangal Chand Chopra, 10 March 2013.

23 Jain Śvetāmbar Terāpāth Mahāsabhā Directory, http://www.jstmahasabha.org/frmfmctctlist.aspx?prmst=OR (5.9.2019)

24 Interview with Deepak Singhi, 9 March 2013.

25 Telephone interview with Bane Chand Maloo, 10 March 2013.

26 Telephone interview with Gautam Chand Daga, 10 March 2013.

27 Jain Śvetāmbar Terāpāth Mahāsabhā Directory, http://www.jstmahasabha.org/frmfmctctlist.aspx?prmst=TN (5.9.2019)

28 Interview with Charitra Prajñā, 23 November, 2012.

29 Tinker, H. 1977. *The Banyan Tree: Overseas immigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*. Oxford: OUP, p. 167.

30 Burghart, Richard (ed.). 1987. *Hinduism in Great Britain: The Perpetuation of Religion in an Alien Cultural Milieu*. London: Tavistock, p. 8.

31 The hypothesis that the number of Gujaratis correlates with that of Jains finds indirect support in the later US data, where 40.4 per cent of the Jains listed in the Jain North American directory stated Gujarat as the place of their origin (*Jain Directory of North America*. 1992. Boston: Jain Center of Greater Boston, p. 9).

existing scholarly work on Jains in Britain, while conducting fieldwork in Leicester, where a Jain society formed in 1973 and erected its first temple in 1980, also states that the "vast majority [of the Jains] … came from East Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s".[32] At the time of the first *samaṇīs*' visit in 1983, Madhur Prajñā claims, there were around 1,000 Jain families.[33] By the 1990s the Jain population in the UK reached about 20,000.[34] Babb estimates the current Jain diaspora in Britain at 25,000[35] with the number of Terāpāth families, according to Rohit Prajñā, a *samaṇī* who worked in the London Terāpāth centre from 2008 to 2010, reaching 50.[36] Jugraj Pugalia, 72, a native of Shri Dungargarh who migrated from Rajasthan to London for business purposes around 1963, recalls that there were only about 100 Terāpāthis in the area at that time, whereas today, according to his assessments, the maximum figure has increased to 500.[37]

As for continental Europe, a particularly large number of Jains who belonged to the Palanpauri caste of Gujarat have moved to Belgium. They arrived in the early 1960s and became involved in the global diamond trade, for which the county is a global hub. The Antwerp-based Jain community managed to establish business links, which allowed them to increase their share in diamond revenues from two per cent in 1968 to 25 per cent in 1980 and 65 per cent in 2003, gaining control over two-fifths of the world diamond trade.[38] The Jain Cultural Center in Antwerp was founded in 1992. The number of Jain families in Belgium steadily grew and today is estimated by the Jains themselves at 600[39] (310 in Antwerp) with the Terāpāth community consisting of 15–20 families.[40] Shashi Bhansavi, a member of a younger generation of migrants to Belgium, says that the number of Terāpāth families in the city of Antwerp alone increased from three in 1993 to seven today.[41] Other European countries, including France, Switzerland, Germany and Russia, accommodate another 15 Terāpāth families, according to the same source.

Starting from 1960s onwards "a considerable number of professionals, academics, and students began to settle in North America" with the Jain population rising to a (questionable) figure of 20,000 by the end of the decade.[42] However, being among first sadhus who travelled to the USA (starting many controversies by crossing the "black sea" and losing much authority in India) Śvetāmbar Ācārya Sushil Kumar states that upon his arrival in 1975 "the Jain community was not at all organised There were no Jain temples as opposed to the early 1990s when there were more than thirty temples in North America". In fact, the first Jain centres in New York, Chicago and Boston were established in 1966, 1969 and 1973 respectively.[43] The construction of the centres increased with opening of ten new

32 Banks, Marcus. 1992. *Organising Jainism in India and England*. Oxford: Clarendon, p. viii.

33 Interview with Madhur Prajñā, 24 November 2012. At that time, however, she and Smit Prajñā only visited 16 Terāpāth families.

34 Jain. *Exploring the Global Jain Diaspora*, p. 163.

35 Babb, Lawrence. 2006. The Jain community, in M. Juergensmeyer (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Global Religions*, Oxford: OUP. Community publications' own estimates are much higher, reaching 60,000 (Jain. *Exploring the Global Jain Diaspora*, p. 163).

36 Interview with Rohit Prajñā, 23 November 2012.

37 Telephone interview, 22 March 2013.

38 Kapur, Devesh. 2010. *Diaspora, Development, and Democracy. The Domestic Impact of International Migration from India*. New Delhi: OUP, pp. 99–100.

39 Interview with Charitra Prajñā, 23 November 2012. Other estimates are lower, around 400 families (Jain. *Exploring the Global Jain Diaspora*, p. 165).

40 Interview with Rohit Prajñā, 23 November 2012.

41 Telephone interview, 21 March 2013.

42 Jain. *Exploring the Global Jain Diaspora*, p. 166. See later figures from the Jain Directory.

43 Mehta, J. V. *History of Jains in North America: Evolution*, http://www.jainheritagecentres.com/Jainism/Articles/History_Of_Jains_In_North_America.htm.

ones between 1976 and 1980, also demonstrating the rapid growth of the US Jain diaspora. The next decade (1983–93) saw the establishment of another 38 centres in various parts of the country.[44]

The 1992 Jain Directory of North America (published for the first time in 1979; second edition, 1987) lists about 3,567 Jain families in the USA and 241 in Canada (1,410 persons according to the 1991 state census and 2,455 as per the same source in 2001[45]) with 68 Jain centres. The overall estimated figure however is about 5,000 families or around 25,000 persons. In 1987, there were 1,900 families with nine centres in the USA and 3,000 families with 34 centres in Canada. Currently, the Federation of Jain Associations in North America, founded in 1981, claims to represent over 100,000 Jains across the country.[46] According to the head of the New Jersey Terāpāth centre, *Samaṇī* Sanmati Prajñā, who has almost continuously worked outside of India since 1993, the number of Terāpāth families in the USA is now estimated at about 50–70.[47]

The individual accounts of Terāpāthis who moved to the USA resemble those we saw across India. Suparas Nahata, aged 70, a native of Bhadra (Churu zila), moved to New York in 1969 (and then to New Jersey in 1981) to continue his education and find a job in industrial management. Nahata, belonging to Oswal caste, claims there was only a "handful of Terāpāthi" at that time (another interviewee, Sukh Sampat, recalls knowing only two Terāpāthis in New York in 1971[48]), whereas today he is aware of 150–200 families in the area. To the best of his knowledge, the 1980s saw the coming of about 20 Terāpāth families, a number that increased to 80–100 by 2000.[49] On the West Coast of the USA, where Sukh Sampat settled in 1977, the first Jain centre of Southern California was established in 1980, and was functioning through occasional visits by Sushil Kumar, however "Terāpāth was introduced there [in California] only when… *Samaṇī*jis started coming around 1990".[50]

Other places that witnessed a wave of Jain migration during the 1960s and 70s include West and Southeast Asia.[51] In Singapore, for example, 95 per cent of the community are of Gujarati and Rajasthani origin. Jains started arriving in this region even earlier (in the late 1950s) and formed the Singapore Jain Religious Society in 1972. The Jain population in Singapore eventually grew to 700 in 1995 and presently is estimated at 1,000.[52] A considerable number of Jains also reside in Oceania and East Africa, where "being mostly traders and professionals… [they] formed a 'middleman minority'"[53] with the community's strength estimated at 32,000 in 1963,[54] plunging in the 70s due to the mentioned flight to the UK and currently estimated for Kenya at around 13,000.[55]

Jain monks' code of conduct

The Jain religious community is traditionally managed by its ascetic class. This is particularly the case for the Terāpāth sect, which separated from Sthānakvāsī Śvetāmbars in 1760 under the leadership of Ācārya Bhikshu, who established the undivided authority of one ācārya among his followers. The 10th ācārya Mahāprajñā explains it in this way: "Ācārya Bhikshukrit introduced a new tradition in the set of essential principles…, which had a number of historical reasons behind it. [First of all], our

44 Ibid.
45 Jain. *Exploring the Global Jain Diaspora*, p. 167.
46 http://www.jaina.org/?page=AboutJAINA
47 Personal correspondence, 6 December 2012.
48 Personal correspondence through Sanmati Prajñā, 19 March 2013.
49 Personal correspondence, 20 March 2013.
50 Personal correspondence through Sanmati Prajñā, 19 March 2013.
51 Other South Asian countries, most importantly Nepal, are not included in this paper due to its limited scope.
52 Singapore Jain Religious Society.
53 Jain. *Exploring the Global Jain Diaspora*, pp. 157–61.
54 Shah, Sneh. 1979. Who Are the Jains? *New Community* 7(3): p. 372 quoted in Jain, *Jains in India and Abroad*, p. 89.
55 Shah, Vina. 2003. Nairobi Revival, *Jain Spirit* 14: p. 4 quoted in Jain, *Jains in India and Abroad*, p. 89.

age is the age of discipline, and in this age of discipline if there is no single leadership, the ascetic class will be unable to organize itself properly".[56]

The ascetics' importance does not merely lie in their role as spiritual leaders. Vallely writes: "power in the monastic order translates into power in lay society, and ascetics are 'utilized' for both spiritual and material gain … [they] may initially be in demand to give blessings or advice, but with time they are sought after because their popularity itself makes them important 'brokers' in the community. They become 'spiritual' conduits, legitimating individuals, families and businesses".[57]

Thus, as Folkert notes, Jain ascetics are not only spiritual self-seekers but are "community builders".[58] Jain further develops this idea, emphasizing in particular that the ascetics: "are in regular interaction with the laity… their authority and influence over laity is extra-ordinary. Apart from the personality factor, much of their institutionalized legitimacy and authority is derived from their spiritual attainment along the path of salvation",[59] guaranteed, in its turn, by their strict observance of the code of conduct and auspicious behaviour.

The Terāpāth sect, like other Jain denominations, acknowledges five *samitis* or rules of conduct to be observed by its ascetic community. They include *iryā samiti* or careful walking, which practically excludes the possibility to use any means of transport; *eṣṇā samiti*, a strict prohibition of receiving any food or water that was prepared or poured specially for them; *parithawania samiti* or taking care to dispose of unused water or urine and other excretions. This is an impediment for travelling, as it makes it impossible to use toilet facilities during train or plane journeys.[60]

The Terāpāth Constitution, adopted in 1859, emphasized the highly centralized character of the sect with the entire community being under the control of one ācārya, responsible for organizing *cāturmās*, initiating of new monks and nuns, appointing his successor and basically controlling all social activities within the community.[61] Compared to other Jain sects, the authority of only one ācārya helped discipline the community, hierarchically organizing it. However, when in the 1960s the community began spreading around India (especially to the south and east) the Terāpātha's main principles limited the opportunities for contact between the teacher and his disciples. The data on Ācārya Tulsi's *parikramā* from 1961 to 1996 shows that he was mainly active in North India (primarily Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi), visiting only once in his 45-year ācāryaship such states as Bengal, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.[62] He made a serious attempt to reach out to his followers in the south by visiting Bangalore in November–December 1969 and establishing the Oriental Research Centre.[63] It was there that Ācārya Tulsi for the first time expressed the idea of a new order: "…there should be a middle stratum in society that should do the work while standing between the house owners and sadhus".[64]

The emerging new business and professional class of Jains that spread its activities in various parts of India, as well as abroad, was well noted by the leadership of Jain communities and particularly by the Terāpāth ācārya. By the 1990s a Terāpāth author referred to "thousands of lakhs [a "lakh" is a hundred thousand] of Indian Jains who reside overseas" and the sadhus and sandvis who "ac-

56 Mahaprajñā, Ācārya. 2001. *Terāpāth.* Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati (in Hindi), p. 13–4.

57 Vallely, Anne. 2003. *Guardians of the Transcendent. An Ethnography of a Jain Ascetic Community*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, p. 148.

58 Folkert, Kendal. 1993. *Scripture and Community: Collected Essays on the Jains.* Atlanta: Scholars Press, pp. 67–74.

59 Jain. *Jains in India and Abroad*, p. 36.

60 Choprh, Chhogmal. 1946. *A Short History of the Terapanthi Sect of the Swetamber Jains and its Tenets*. Calcutta: Sri Jain Swetambar Terāpāthi Sabha.

61 Mahaprajñā, Ācārya (ed.). 1983. *Terāpāth: Regulations and Organization* (Terāpāth: Maryadaaur Vyavastha). Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati (in Hindi), p. 10.

62 Mahāprajñā, Ācārya. 2012. *Implementation of the Duty Circle* (Dharma cakra kā pravartan). Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati Prakashan (in Hindi), p. 68.

63 Rao, Ramachandra. 2009. *Jainism in South India.* Bangalore: Surama Prakashna, p. xii.

64 Kusum, Prajñā. *Samaṇ Order*, p. 5.

knowledging the limits of their regulations cannot go abroad".[65] This testifies to the Terāpāth leadership's familiarity with the situation and understanding of the problem for which Ācārya Tulsi sought a solution.

The Jain code of conduct imposed a number of prohibitions on monks and nuns of all sects that made them unable provide religious, spiritual and social guidance to the community members. The ascetics, as Banks puts it, living under the need "to maintain the core of belief, which the laity might be tempted to abandon if totally deserted by the ascetics",[66] faced exactly this kind of threat. This situation triggered the need to introduce certain changes in the community that would make it possible to reinstate the system of personal communication between sadhus/sadhvis and common Jains.

The establishment of the Samaṇ order and its mission

Ācārya Tulsi, the leader of the Terāpāth sect (1936–1995), clearly understood the need to change and adapt to the new circumstances: "The epoch is changeable. The epoch changes and with it certain people change and so certain changes should be introduced to the community… In the Jain order… an ācārya is given the right sometimes, while protecting the foundations, to make necessary changes".[67]

Ācārya Tulsi's writings give us the direction by which he wanted to implement the required changes, for he aimed to transform the social environment rather than to directly influence the individual. In his book dedicated to the *Anuvrat* movement he claims that: "I cannot blame the individuals exclusively. The milieu has an important role to play in the establishment of moral values".[68] This resembles Ācārya Tulsi's perception of the situation that he witnessed: Jains living outside their traditional hubs and especially those living in the diaspora are not to be blamed for departing from their religious traditions, but it is rather the surroundings in which they must live that make them do it and that thus should be changed. Rohit Prajñā confirms the ācārya's concern especially for the younger generation regarding which "the main thing was that our culture and tradition is maintained… because they are born in Western countries and even growing there… living in Western culture, so the intention [to establish the *Samaṇ order*] was how we can cultivate Jain values in them".[69] Ācārya Tulsi's idea to transform the environment, which materialized in the *aṇuvrat* movement, or taking vows and thus embracing a certain code of conduct, started on May 2, 1949, and aimed at making the Terāpāth order, in his own words, "more cosmopolitan".[70] "Our sandus and sadhvis walking on foot are spreading the sense of *aṇuvrat* village by village. In some years the wave of *aṇuvrat* will cover all the country".[71] Special attention was given to reactions to the movement abroad, notably the May 15, 1950 New York Times editorial on Ācārya Tulsi and the popularity of the movement in Japan.

Flügel, acknowledging the changes that the Terāpāth sect has undergone through Ācārya Tulsi's modernizing reforms, refers to "a series of controversial innovations…". He goes further, saying that

65 Sanmati. *Samaṇa Order*, p. 37.

66 Banks, Marcus. 1986. Defining Division: An Historical Overview of Jain Social Organization, *Modern Asian Studies* 20(3): p. 449.

67 Samati, Samaṇī Prajñā. 1996. *Samaṇa Ordination: An Introduction* (Samaṇ dīkṣā: ek paricāy). Delhi: Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati (in Hindi), preface.

68 Tulsi, Ācārya. 1993. *Anuvrat: gati-prāgti. (A History of the Origin and Progress of Aṇuvrat)*. Jaipur: Shreechand Bengani, pp. 20–1.

69 Interview with Rohit Prajñā, 23 November 2012.

70 Tulsi. *Aṇuvrat*, p. 145.

71 Mahaprajñā, Ācārya. 2012. *Implementation of the Duty Circle* (*Dharma Chakra ka Pravartan*). Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati Prakashan (in Hindi), p. 21.

"in order to secure the growing influence of the Terāpāth under the changed social conditions Tulsi gradually reverted back to a traditional Jain system of forming closer bounds with the laity".[72]

The most significant reform in this direction made by Ācārya Tulsi has been the establishment on November 9, 1980 of the *samaṇ order*. Tulsi's primary reason for creating the *samaṇ order* was the inability at that time to reach out to the Jain population that was spread all over India and abroad, beyond the contact capacities of Jain *sāndūs*. According to Charitra Prajñā "Ācārya Tulsi and Ācārya Mahaprajñā thought, that as there were certain limitations for Jain monks, as they walked barefoot and they could not use any transportation to travel around even in India, and obviously outside of India, so because of these limitations and the vows they have to keep it was difficult for them to reach far and wide, so [Ācārya Tulsi and Ācārya Mahāprajñā thought] 'why don't we create a middle category… that should be a bridge between the two classes [i.e. *sāndūs* and *śrāvakas*], that would have self-discipline… but at the same time enjoy the flexibility to travel around'".[73]

Kusum Prajñā describes the idea behind the order as follows: "He [Ācārya Tulsi] firmly decided to establish the class of ascetics who are free from the prohibitions imposed on muni *ācāryas*, but bound by spiritual code of conduct and abstinence".[74] She also states that the spread of the Jain community far beyond Rajasthan's borders was among the primary reasons for Tulsi's actions: "the public that used to travel on ox carts are now moving by aircraft, and having crossed Rajasthan's borders the laymen have started residing in Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Andhra, Tamil Nadu and other far distant areas. They are leaving joint families in Rajasthan… whereas due to weakened health and contemporary circumstances *sāndūs* and *sāndvīs* are not taking such long journeys so easily, and the development of modern technology gave the muni *ācāryas* food for thought".[75]

Notably, Ācārya Tulsi began actively promoting the idea of a new class in the 1960s, when Jain migration became more visible. During the *cāturmās* in 1962 Tulsi further defined his intentions in establishing the *samaṇ* order: "I want [to create] such a class as will stand between *sāndūs* and laymen. This class should possess knowledge of Sanskrit, Prakrit, Hindi, English and several other languages that can reach out with the Jain philosophy to a public in the country as well as abroad".[76] "There is a timely demand for this class. We offer this option as a response to the problems that society faces today".[77] Sanmati Prajñā states the main missions of the new order as being that "*Samaṇīs* can go to the foreign land to uphold the faith of Indian Jains, who live abroad, in accordance with the principles of Mahavir… the objective of the *samaṇ order…* is to spread Jain religion…".[78]

In addition to this major reason, the Terāpāth writers indicate that the creation of the *samaṇ order* furthered the pursuance of the goal of Jain philosophical and religious propaganda, based on the model of other spiritual schools originating in India. Kusum Prajñā describes a conversation between Tulsi and Gandhian philosopher Kaka Kalelkar who claimed that "today the Buddhist and Vedanta religions are spreading around the world, but the Jain ascetics do not go abroad to spread and propagate [the religion]. I request that, because of the law under which the *sāndhū* class cannot go abroad, you prepare such a class of executives that are in between the sadhus and the householders, who can bring the Jain tenets before the world".[79]

In addition to working among the *śrāvakas* in difficult-to-reach areas and abroad, and assisting with the spread of Jain ideology, one of the important missions of the *Samaṇa*s was their "possibility

72 Quoted by Vallely. *Guardians of the Transcendent*, p. 149.
73 Interview with Charitra Prajñā, 23 November 2012.
74 Kusum, Samaṇī Prajñā. *Samaṇ Order in Five Parts* (*Samaṇ Dīkṣā. Panch Khand*). Manuscript (in Hindi), p. 1.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., p. 3.
77 Ibid.
78 Sanmati. *Samaṇ Order*, p. 37.
79 Kusum Prajñā. *Samaṇ Order*, p. 4.

to represent Jainism… at important gatherings like the World Congress of Religions".[80] Sanmati Prajñā describes this mission in the following way: "There are national and international conferences, congresses, etc. that happen on several occasions and at which ascetics from different faiths are invited. Jain munis have so far been unable to reach them. Under these circumstances, the *samaṇ order* has become useful…".[81] This purpose is vividly demonstrated by the six *mumukṣu* sisters who were initiated into the *Samaṇ order* in 1981, whose first mission was to represent Terāpāth and Jainism at large at the World Hindu Congress (Vishva Hindu Sammelan) in Nepal.

The samaṇ order, its code of conduct and activities

The *samaṇ order*, as described by the *samaṇī* Sanmati Prajñā, does not differ in its spiritual nature from the one followed by the Terāpāth monks and nuns, in terms of both vows taken and general code of conduct. However, there are specific regulations that apply to *samaṇ order*: *samaṇīs* "in special circumstances are prescribed certain exemptions [from the sandhu code of conduct], such as [the ability to accept] food prepared for them, use of means of transport during journeys [at that time they also don't have to wear *mukhavastrika*], use of facilities built for disposal of excreta, etc."[82] *Samaṇī* Madhur Prajñā, one of the six young women first initiated into the new Order, also mentions that *samaṇīs* were not given *rajoharaṇ*.[83]

Charitra Prajñā explains that *samaṇīs* are exempt from traditional *gocārī*:[84] "…we also do a form of *gocārī*, but we can take food that was already prepared for us… For example, if I am going to the USA and staying at somebody's home, and we don't find that many homes are nearby, one is 10 miles, another is 15 miles, and it's not possible for me to walk barefoot there. So, we can take food at the same place where we are… and this is a [source of] flexibility for us".[85]

However, the exemptions made for *samaṇīs* are strictly regulated by the internal code of conduct. Whereas the use of transportation is allowed, "travelling at night from eight pm to five am by car is prohibited", and "any kind of bus cannot be used without central approval…".[86] During their travels, *samaṇīs* are only allowed to stay in Terāpāth centres and, in case there is no such centre, must get prior approval to stay anywhere else, and in case no Terāpāth or other centre, or a spare uninhabited house, is available, or an inhabited house has no separate entrance stairs, *samaṇīs* have to leave after staying for one–two days.[87]

Most curious are the rules for the conduct of behaviour during foreign trips. For example, *samaṇīs* are allowed to use gas, microwaves and ovens, whereas using a washing machine is generally restricted, except under "special circumstances". The use of telephones is normally allowed when necessary; however, it is prohibited for contacting, for example, other *samaṇīs* living in India.[88] *Samaṇīs* are allowed to take and keep a five-course meal with them during a night flight by plane, but are prohibited from consuming it.[89]

Interestingly, the new form of ordination, as opposed to the monkhood, was declared to have the possibility to be temporary: "The *samaṇ order*'s vow can be kept for the rest of life or for a certain

80 Kanakprabha. *Terāpāth*, p. 30.
81 Sanmati. *Samaṇ Order*, p. 37–8.
82 Tulsi. Ācārya. 1980. *Samaṇ Order (Samaṇ dīkṣā)*. Ladnun: Parmarthik Shiksha Sansthan (in Hindi), p. 3.
83 Interview with Madhur Prajñā, 24 November 2012.
84 Svetambar gochari is described in detail by Cort in Cort, John. 2001. *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India*. New Delhi: OUP, pp. 106–7.
85 Interview with Charitra Prajñā, 23 November 2012.
86 *The Codes of Conduct of Samaṇ Class* (*Anuśāsan sanhitā. Samaṇ śreni*). 2012. Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati, p. 17.
87 Ibid., pp. 17–8.
88 Ibid., p. 30.
89 Ibid., p. 31.

tenure… The individual who is not prepared to dedicate his/her life can be initiated into the *samaṇ* order through *dikṣikis* (initiation for a certain period of time)".[90]

The difference between the new *vilakṣaṇ dīkṣā* and traditional *sāndū* one was emphasized by Ācārya Tulsi in their appearance: "the *samācārī* of *samaṇ* order members and *samācārī* of sadhus or sadhvis differ in their garments. This difference comes from wearing a *kavach* (a piece of cloth worn on top of the *uttriya*) on top of the draped clothes, or by wrapping oneself in a chador".[91] The initiation into the *Samaṇ order* was taken by six *mumukṣu* sisters: Sarita (Sthit Prajñā), Savita (Smit Prajñā), Mahima (Madhur Prajñā), Kusum (Kusum Prajñā), Saroj (Saral Prajñā) and Vibhavna (Vishudha Prajñā),[92] there are currently 94 *samaṇīs* and 2 *samaṇs*,[93] which makes this order predominantly female.

The idea of travelling outside India seemed very unusual to the newly initiated themselves. Madhur Prajñā recalls that after receiving the new *dīkṣā* she went to her native town of Bikaner "…and people were saying that… soon we [the first six *samaṇīs*] will go abroad. But we did not know what 'abroad' was, what a 'passport' was, what a 'visa' was".[94] The *samaṇīs*' first trip was to London in 1983. For the first decade of the Order's existence, foreign travel happened on average just once a year, covering the UK, USA, Southeast Asia and Russia. Starting already from 1989–90, the number of trips increased to 3–4 annually, reaching 5–6 by the late 1990s, and in the 2000s rising to 9–10.[95] On a domestic level, Terāpāth *samaṇīs* developed a travelling schedule to more than 22 Indian states, including Orissa, Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and others. According to this practice, a *samaṇī* should spend from six to ten month in a state interacting with the laymen in its towns and villages, and after this period on her return to Rajasthan present a report on the state of affairs in the region to the ācārya.[96]

Samaṇīs operate by getting in touch with Terāpāth in particular, but also with other Jain families. "When we understand that there is a Terāpāth family in that area we go there especially and stay with them. And whatever activities we are doing, *pratikrāmam* [sic], *gocārī*, whatever we are doing, the children can see us and understand that this is our lifestyle as *samaṇījis…*"[97] *Samaṇīs* encourage diaspora Terāpāth Jains to visit India and take the *darśan* of the present ācārya, "so the children can understand who is Ācārya Shri, how many monks and nuns are here in India".[98]

Conclusion

The late 1980s marked an increase of overseas activities of other Jain sects that also made efforts to engage with the new emerging class of overseas Jains. Digambars organized at least six yatras to the United States, Canada and Great Britain. Commenting on the outcome of the fifth *āmaṇas' yātrā* ("travel") to the USA and UK in June–July 1988, which visited Houston, Detroit, New York, Washington, Boston and other cities, and gave more than 50 seminars, a participant Hukamchand Bharill claims that through its work "we saw that we cast the seed of spirituality in your Jain brothers living in the Western world, which now needs to be watered".[99]

90 Tulsi. *Samaṇ Order*, p. 16.
91 Ibid., p. 15.
92 Tulsi. *Samaṇ Order*, p. 9.
93 Interview with Charitra Prajñā, 23 November 2012.
94 Interview with Madhur Prajñā, 24 November 2012.
95 Kusum. *Samaṇ Order*, pp. 343–4.
96 Sanmati. *Samaṇ Order*, p. 38.
97 Interview with Rohit Prajñā, 23 November 2012.
98 Ibid.
99 Bharill, Hukamchand. 1989. *Jainism Abroad: World Spiritual Inquiry* (Videśoṃ meṃ Jain dharm: adhyātmik jagati jīgyāsa). Jaipur: Pundir Todarmal Smarak Trust (in Hindi), p. 9.

However, it was the Terāpāth sect that, due to the *samaṇ order*, was represented abroad most vividly. In 1996 Sanmati Prajñā named 28 countries that by that time had been visited by *samaṇīs*, including the UK, USA, China, Russia, Japan, Hungary and Africa (sic).[100] Today it has four permanent community centres in the USA (Jersey City, Orlando, Houston and Miami) and one in the UK (London), each of which has two *samaṇīs*. Terāpāth centres which are regularly visited by *samaṇīs* but not maintained by them are located in Belgium, Australia and Italy. In 2012 Sanmati Prajñā mentions having visited 20 centres in the United States alone.[101]

There is good reason to believe that the establishment of the order revolutionized the traditional social system in the Jain community, which explains why it initially met with strong opposition from both sadhus and *śrāvakas*, some of whom even defected from the Terāpāth order causing a split.[102] However, by organizing *jnanshalas*, a form of seminars, samaṇīs had a serious linguistic and cultural impact, in particular regarding the upbringing of the younger generation of diaspora Jains, an impact that can hardly be measured in the limited scope of this short essay. Terāpāthis in the diaspora themselves acknowledge this process, claiming that the *samaṇīs* had "a huge impact on kids and now they have better understanding about Jains and lord Mahabir's message. Even adults did not know about Jain scriptures, but now *samaṇījis* are teaching Agams and holding regular classes and discussions…"[103] A similar opinion is expressed by Jugraj Pugalia, who recollects his first interaction with *samaṇīs* Smit and Madhus Prajñā, when they delivered a lecture in London during their 1983 visit: "When I was at the first meeting with *samaṇīs* in South London there were more than 500 persons, mostly Gujaratis, who gathered. When I asked one or two of them if they knew about Jainism they just said that we knew that we were Jain and that's it. Most of them came from East Africa. Since then there was much improvement".[104] According to Kusum Prajñā, "outside of India the opinion is spread that due to our class [*samaṇīs*] our culture was preserved".[105]

Interestingly, the almost four decades of the *samaṇīs*' work with this new class, and especially with the Jains in the diaspora, has brought change to the lives of the members of this class as well as to the *samaṇīs* themselves. When the order was newly established, it was meant to be in all ways similar to what "Ācārya Tulsi wanted to present before the community as the new form of *sanyasa*".[106] There were just a few major exemptions: the possibility to consume food prepared especially for *samaṇīs*, to use toilet facilities, and to use means of transport. Gradually *samaṇīs* have been allowed to use other modern conveniences like mobile phones and the Internet. These opportunities however come with certain restrictions: "The *samaṇī* group itself is a great change in Terāpāth; they can use these modern facilities to communicate with the modern world when it is required. Not every *samaṇī* possesses these gadgets. A *samaṇī* who has been given some specific responsibility by the Guru, and when the Guru allows her to use them, only then can one use them".[107] For example, *samaṇīs* can be allowed to use mobile phones because they need to be in touch with Jains in the diaspora. According to Madhur Prajñā, 6–7 years ago their use was restricted to talking with people outside India,[108] but nowadays their use for communication within India is allowed as well (most of the calls however are handled not by *samaṇīs* individually but by *samaṇī niyojik*[109]). The same process happened with the Internet ten year ago, the use of which was allowed "because *samaṇīs* go abroad…

100 Sanmati. *Samaṇ Order*, p. 39.
101 Personal correspondence, 6 December 2012.
102 Kusum, *Samaṇ Order*, p. 6 and Vallely. *Guardians of the Transcendent*, p. 149.
103 Personal correspondence with Suparas Nahata, 20 March 2012.
104 Telephone interview, 22 March 2013.
105 Interview with Kusum Prajñā, 24 November 2012.
106 Kusum. *Samaṇ Order*, p. 4.
107 Ibid.
108 Interview with Madhur Prajñā, 24 November 2012.
109 Interview with Kusum Prajñā, 24 November 2012.

[and need it] for connectivity".[110] Recently, a Singapore devotee Priyanka, supervised by Kusum Prajñā, was running a Facebook page under the name of Ācārya Tulsi.[111]

The latest code of conduct for *samaṇīs*, published under the present ācārya Mahashraman, contains a special chapter on the use of computers, which is permitted but carefully regulated. For example, "normally the Internet is not to be used, but if it is necessary, then by approval… it can be used by at least two *samaṇīs* together".[112] However, since male *samaṇs* are permitted to travel alone, especially in a diaspora setting, this regulation cannot be strictly observed. Thus, the *samaṇīs*' active engagement with the new business class of Jains, particularly in the diaspora, is causing change within the *samaṇ order* itself.

The emergence of a new socio-economic class of Jains, and particularly followers of the Terāpāth sect, and its spread due to, among other factors,[113] their professional and business activities all over India as well as abroad, put the leadership of Terāpāth before the issue of maintaining the link between the laity and spiritual Guru of the sect. The establishment of the *samaṇ order* by Ācārya Tulsi in 1980 thus offered a solution to this challenge of modernity.

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110 Interview with Madhur Prajñā, 24 November 2012.

111 Interview with Kusum Prajñā, 24 November 2012.

112 *The Codes of Conduct of the Samaṇ Class.*

113 According to Peter Flügel, it is the global vision of Ācārya Tulsi, caused inter alia by his childhood impression of the nuclear threat, that mainly contributed to the establishment of the *samaṇ śreṇi*.

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Jugraj Pugaliya, 22 March 2013

Correspondence

Sanmati Prajñā (USA, New Jersey)
Pratibha Prajñā (UK, London)
Suparas Nahata (USA, New Jersey)

Special terms

anuvrat – movement based on five "small vows"
caturmāsā – ascetics staying at one place during the rainy season
darśan – ritual meeting with ācārya
dīkṣā – initiation into the ascetic order
guṇavrat – restraints that reinforce anuvrats
gocārī – ascetics' food gathering ritual
gyānśālā – school run by ascetics for Jain children
niyojik – the current head of the Order, who is temporary appointed by ācārya
sanyās – asceticism
samācāri – right code of behaviour
śrāvakvrat – norms of conduct for laymen
śrāvakdharm – practice of conduct by laymen
parikramā – a duty of an ācārya to wander around certain areas between his caturmāsā
pratikram – a ritual by which a person negates the karmic effect of certain action, word and thoughts
rajoharaṇ – a broom used by Jain ascetics during their movement