

# Cosmology

According to the Jaina-doctrine the world is eternal and ephemeral. It listens only to its own laws and remains unchanged in its basic nature although its parts change. No god has created it, rules it and can destroy it. In contrast to most other religions, from Jainas deny most definitely the existence of an imperishable, all-mighty highest "Lord"(Isvara) who creates the universe, rules it, and when he likes, destroys it. The acceptance of a creator and destroyer (Karta-Harta) appears to them to be unjustified and self-contradictory and has to be rejected both from the point of view of logic and morality.

The views on the nature of god are very different among the individual Indian and non-Indian systems which Jainas have disputed and do so even now. Above all, Hinduism has produced an abundance of various doctrines on god and his relationship with the world, doctrines which appear to have exhausted all the possibilities of thinking, started with the extreme monotheism which makes the sharpest distinction between god, matter and souls, up to the most perfect theophany for which the world is an empty appearance and god is everything. Three types of belief in god can be mainly distinguished. The first view: God is an absolutely perfect, omniscient, all-powerful, omnipresent, kind and blessed entity which creates and destroys the world which is *toto genere* different from it and controls autonomously the souls and substances in it. This view which is indeed close to the one of Christianity and of Islam, has been advocated particularly by the Nyaya-Vaisesika-philosophers and the theologians of different Vaisnavite and Saivite sects.

A second group of systems teaches: matter and souls are no doubt different from god at the time of the origin of the world and are ruled by him. But they have emerged originally from god; god has developed himself into them and takes them back again into himself. These theories have been proposed by the Vaisnavite and Saivite schools in the most different ways.

The third view finally looks at god, Brahma, as the only true *sat*, the absolute. The plurality of the phenomena in the world is only a Maya, an illusion, which is "built up" from the Supreme Being by the ignorant; in reality, every soul is identical with god, and all difference is only an illusionary appearance, as unreal as a dream or a Fata Morgana. An acosmic theophany of this sort experienced its consequential development in Sarikara's Advaita-philosophy; but it is also found among Vaisnavas, Saivas, Saktas and in other Indian systems.

Jaina-philosophers considered in depth all these doctrines and tried to refute them in the most acuminous manner. Let us give briefly in the following their most important arguments.<sup>127</sup>

The assumption that the world must have a *creator* originates from the conception that it is a product, like a pot; and exactly so, like the products having a cause, the world as a whole must also have one. As an evidence for this that the world is to be equated with earthly-products, it is said that it is subject to change like those. If this were to be correct, then god must also be a product, because certain changes *must also* take place in him on account of the activity of creating, destroying, etc. practised by him. Thus we *are* forced on our part to look again for the cause of *god*, which leads to *regressus ad-infinitum*.

If it is supposed that the world had a cause, then it would not mean that this cause has to be a thinking being. If we concede this and apply to it the analogy of the potter and the pot, then we do not get a perfect being, for the producer of a product in the world is nowhere perfect in any respect. Then one would have further to presume that god has a body, because it is never observed on the earth that a material thing is created without a body existing *as a* material basis of the activity of its thinking and volition for its mind and will which it wants to produce. Thus if it is presumed that there is a 'world-creator, then it has also to be pre-sup-posed that this creator has *a* whatever may be its nature, material body. But everything which consists of matter is alterable and therefore must suffer. Thus god could be neither unalterable *nor* blissful. But if one believes, on the other hand, that god has created the world without the assistance of a body, to some extent merely by his abstract existence, then one cannot rely at all on the analogies from the world of experience, for no one has ever seen that a potter has produced a pot without body and organs.

A further question is: *from* what has god produced the world? If he has produced it from nothing, then it would be contradicted by the saying nihil fit. If the world has arisen suddenly out of nothing and has again sunken into nothing, then god must have also emerged From nothing and would perish again later. If *sat* and *asat* are absolute opposites, then the one cannot emerge from the other; if they are not this, then virtue and vice, truth and lie, etc. also do not exist; then all philosophy is vain and the question remains unresolved.

If it is presumed that matter and sovil are eternal entities which get certain qualities from their nature, and god's creative activity is limited to classifying and guarding the substances

and intelligences which are effective on their own and which condition the happening in the world, then one cannot understand why one should take the assistance of god to explain the world; souls and matter could create the whole world-process themselves with the help of the powers that are inherent in them.

If one justifies the theory that the souls are completely heteronom and need efficacy of god to pursue their activity, then it becomes unclear how god could be the last, autonomous entity responsible for this. Then by the same logic one could presume that he is also kept at his activity again by a superior master standing behind him and above him and so in *infinitum*.

Supposing that god is the only autonomous doer in the world, then he must be the cause behind all evils, because much evil happens doubtlessly in the world. If this is the case, then god is not good. But if god were to be good, but lets the evil rule freely then he is not all-powerful. If it is said that god has created the souls, then one must ask oneself: Why did he not make them good, because he punishes them afterwards for the sins they commit! But if god had called the souls into the world and left it to himself to see whether they act well or otherwise, then he is not omniscient, for if he had been this, he should have foreseen it.

If one opines (like Madhva and other followers of the theory of pre-destination) that god works as a doer of everything without enjoying the fruits of his doing, lets, on the other hand, reward and punishment be given to the beings who act under his will, then it appears to be contradictory that god acts and the beings which are dependent upon him and not having their own will, have to bear the consequences. But above all, it is not worthy of a noble and kind Lord to let the beings fall into hell and suffer there horrible punishments for actions in which they have only an indirect part.

If god has created the world, then one would have to ask for his motive. If he has done it as a result of his desire, then it follows that he was in the state of dissatisfaction before the creation of the world, then he cannot be regarded as eternally blissful and perfect. If god created the world on account of his whim, then one cannot understand how everything happens in it according to law. If he created it to let the souls partake of the reward or punishment for their deeds in a past world-period, then he acted under compulsion, and i.e. he is not all-powerful. If it is presumed that he created the world out of *love*, i.e. on account of the sympathy with the eternal, unredeemed souls to lead them to salvation, then it is not

understood why only so few souls reach salvation and why did god conjure up the whole torments of the Samsara, for he could have reached his goal he strived for in a different way because he is all-powerful. If it is believed on the other hand that god let the world be created to let the souls chosen by him partake of the rewards, and others, rejected by him, be condemned, then one would have to charge him of partiality and question his sense of justice. If creation, governance and destruction of the world is a play for god, which he does for his entertainment without any purpose and goal, then he must be a horrible master who finds pleasure in the sufferings of the innumerable living beings.

Even the different attributes which the theists have ascribed to god cannot withstand any criticism. If god were to be omnipresent, then he must be present in the hells and the other places of suffering. If he were to be omniscient, then he would not have produced evil beings, and above all the people, like Jainas, who deny him his existence.

God's existence cannot be proved by usual means of knowledge, perception and inference. But even the revelation does not prove his existence. "Revelation is done either by him or by someone else. If he has done it, then it proves his omniscience; then his majesty ends up in smoke, because it is not proper for majesties to proclaim their own advantages. Further he could not have made a textbook (Sastra, i.e. the holy scripture). For, a textbook consists of the sounds which could be articulated with the help of the palate, etc. Articulation is possible, only if a body exists. The reasons against the assumption of the body of god have already been mentioned (p. 242). But if the revelation comes from someone else, then it is to be asked whether he is omniscient or not omniscient. If he is omniscient, then they have to be two, and this would, therefore, exclude his uniqueness which was claimed before; then also a *regressus ad infinitum* follows, when one ponders over the evidence of his omniscience. But if he is not omniscient, who would trust his words?"-

The doctrine that matter and souls emerge from god, that they are to some extent a transformation (Parinama) of god, is not better substantiated than the one of the pure theists. Not only much of the criticism made against the theists given above is valid, but it must also be asked: how is it possible that the accomplished god provided with all advantages could be developed into this world which is so defective? And it must remain completely incomprehensible how the spiritual god could be transformed into unspiritual matter.

It is not different with Sarikara's theory according to which god is the absolute and the plurality is only "Maya". Is Maya something real—what one has to presume from the effects emanating from it—then it would be something that exists beyond and beside god; thus god would not be the only true reality. If Maya, on the other hand, is something unreal—what the followers of Sarikara say—then it can impossibly work. What does not exist can as little produce something like the "sky-flower" or other things which do not exist. To claim of Maya that it could let something be produced, although it is unreal, is as absurd as speaking of an infecund woman that she is mother. How otherwise can one imagine the relationship between god and Maya? Is Maya something that is inherent in god, or something different from him which produces the world after uniting with him? If god were to be inherent in Maya, then ignorance, unblestness, etc., in short everything Maya produces, would belong to the nature of god. If, on the other hand, Maya is something different, which is united with god, then one has to ask for the reason and the cause of this union. Did it take place with or against the will of god? If it has happened with the will of god, then god could have acted only under the influence of blind desire, thus he would not be pure and without any desire. If this has, on the other hand, happened without or against the will of god, then god is not omnipotent. Thus in whatever way the theory is postulated, it is always unsatisfactory and full of contradictions.

The believers of god of all shades refer to the holy scriptures as an authority for their belief. These are said to have come down from god himself. But these scriptures contradict one another in many nuances. What is then right, what is wrong? The decision on this is quite subjective. If god is to be the creator of the universe, then he must have also created all textbooks, for otherwise he could not have created everything, but there would be things which have originated without his action. But if everything traces back to god, then the false textbooks also have to owe him their origin. How can then someone who shows the right as well as the wrong way, could be considered as a great authority and a great teacher from whom all wisdom emanates?

The order and harmony in the external world and the moral law ruling in it need not in any way force one to accept *one* highest being guiding all happening and distributing reward and punishment. With the same right, one can also look at the plurality of gods as the cause of the world and morality. The objection that several gods cannot work together in the right manner does not hold water; if ants, as it is seen, can bring forth something that is well-organized by their planned cooperation, how should not the beings which are better equipped

than the human beings?

There is no reason whatsoever at all to presume the existence of one or several eternal beings to which the order of the world traces back. The unshakable law of Karma is sufficient to explain the difference among the living beings, the multiplicity of their destinies and the harmony ruling over the whole cosmos. The believers of god themselves acknowledge that there is retribution of Karma and say that god acts in agreement with them. If thus god himself cannot change the eternal law and when it rules without any limitation, what is then the use of proposing the hypothesis of the existence of god, when, after all, everything can also be equally nicely explained without this hypothesis?

As it is seen, Jainas attack with sharp weapons the belief in god who is ruling over the world; they are quite sure that god has no place in their *Weltanschauung*. To that extent they are 'atheists'. But this does not mean that they are atheists in the sense we understand this word in the West. In the West—compared to India— there is no great diversity of views pertaining to religion. In the West acknowledgement of god is prerequisite of every religion, so that every "atheist" was considered from the start as an irreligious man and atheism and animosity have become synonyms for many. From ancient times, the situation in India was different. Belief in one or several world-ruling gods was never regarded as a precondition of a religion. Since the old times, we often come across a great number of teachers who negate the existence of a world-ruler (Isvara) and have completely a religious character in as much as religious concepts like those of moral sin and moral reward, of the transcendent rewards and punishments and of rebirth and salvation are alive in them and religious rites and ceremonies are prescribed by them. The orthodox Hindu systems of Mimamsa and Samkhya are also to be considered in this sense as atheistic, as also the original Buddhism. Like them, Jainism also teaches an atheism having a religious colouring.

It will be shown in the Section on Cult that the worship of eternally blissful supermundane beings can still be linked with its "god-free" system; we shall then also know, how Jainas are right from their point of view, when they don't want to be labelled as "atheists" in spite of their rejection of a god who has created the world and who rules over it.