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Divine sound or monotone?
Divyadhvani between Jaina, Buddhist and Brahmanical epistemology

The Digambara Jainas have a special idea of the way in which a Jina teaches.[1] Jaini (1979: 4) describes as follows:

> Upon attainment of Jinahood, he enters the state of *kevalajñāna*, from which there can be no falling away. At this point all normal bodily activities — eating, sleeping, talking, and so on — come to an end; the Jina sits, absolutely unmoving, in his omniscient state. And yet, as he sits there, a miraculous sound (*divyadhvani*) will be heard emanating from his body. Several *gaṇadhara*s (supporters of the order) will then appear. Each will possess the ability to interpret the *divyadhvani* and thus to convey the Jina's teachings to others, answering accurately all questions pertaining to his path and doctrine.

Elsewhere in his book (p. 42), Jaini states:

> Whereas Digambaras imagine the *divyadhvani* as a monotone — like the sound *oṃ* — which only the *gaṇadhara*s are able to comprehend, Śvetāmbaras suggest that the Jina speaks in a human language that is divine in the sense that men of all regions, and animals, can benefit from hearing it.[2]

Paul Dundas's handbook *The Jains* does not say much about the divine sound. All I found is this (Dundas 2002: 37):

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[1] Not all liberated saints. Jaini (1979: 259-260) observes: "there is no textual evidence that the Jainas ever tried to set the Tīrthaṅkaras apart [from other arhats]. Indeed, absolute omniscience is in their tradition the fundamental criterion for liberation; thus it would have made no sense for the ācāryas to have spoken of an arhat who was 'not omniscient' or who was somehow 'less omniscient' than the teacher-Jina. The only differences between arhats and Tīrthaṅkaras, therefore, were of a worldly (hence not ultimately significant) nature; although the teacher possessed certain miraculous powers, especially the *divyadhvani*, the quality of his enlightenment was in no way superior."

[2] In a footnote Jaini explains (p. 42-43, n. 3): "The Śvetāmbara scriptures maintain that Mahāvīra spoke Ardhamāgadhī, a Prakrit dialect of Magadha: *bhagavā ca ṇaṃ Addhamāgahīe bhāsāe āikkhai, sā vi ya ṇaṃ Addhamāgahī bhāsijjamāṇī tesiṃ savvesiṃ āriyamaṇāriyāṇaṃ appaṇo hiyasivasuhayabhāsattāe pariṇamai ...* [*Samavāya-sūtra* (Suttāgame edition)] § 111. The Digambaras seem to have similar views on the nature of this "language": "*yojanāntaradūrasamīpasthāṣṭādaśabhāṣāsaptaśatakubhāṣā-yutatiryagdevamanuṣyabhāṣākāra ... vāgatiśayasampannaḥ ... Mahāvīro 'rthakartā*." [Jinendra, *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa*] II. 431 (quoted from *Dhavalā*)."

> The Digambara sect explains Mahāvīra's unwillingness to preach at [the first *samavasaraṇa*] not as the result of the absence of human beings but, more specifically, because of the lack of disciples (*gaṇadhara*), whose function is to interpret and mediate to other people the divine sound (*divyadhvani*) which the Digambaras claim emanates from Mahāvīra's body when he preaches and which would otherwise be unintelligible.

This much agrees with what we have learned from Jaini. However, Dundas says more about the divine sound in an article ("Jain attitudes towards the Sanskrit language") where he mentions it under the general heading "A Jain Root Language?" (Dundas 1996: 141). What he says here is different:

> The Digambara Jain approach is more complex [than the Śvetāmbara one]. There is agreement that a 'divine sound' (*divyadhvani*) flows from the body of the *tīrthaṅkara* when he is preaching, but a whole range of disparate views came into play in the course of Digambara history as to whether this emerges from his mouth or is constituted by syllables or not. The *divyadhvani* is also sometimes described as containing within itself all tongues, most specifically the 18 major and 170 minor languages of India. One source, the Mahāpurāṇa, states that it is naturally one language, while another, the Darśanaprābhṛta, claims that it half consists of Ardhamāgadhī and half of all other languages. A medieval commentator on the Darśanaprābhṛta goes so far as to claim that the gods receive the *divyadhvani* in the form of Sanskrit …

Dundas, like Jaini, gives no direct textual references, but refers on p. 141, again like Jaini, to the *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa* ([II] 429-432).

Clearly what Jaini and Dundas tell us about the *divyadhvani* of the Digambaras is not quite the same. For Jaini it is a monotone, for Dundas it takes many different forms, including linguistic forms. Yet both base themselves primarily on the same source, the encyclopedia called *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa*, and the texts it refers to.

Neither Jaini nor Dundas say much about the reason why the Digambara Jainas came to believe that a *tīrthaṅkara* does not preach in ordinary language, but rather through a divine sound that must subsequently be interpreted. Nor have I found much in terms of a discussion on this topic elsewhere in the secondary literature.[3] The closest to an explanation is no doubt the observation that "[an omniscient Jina] engages in no worldly activity and no bodily functions (eating meals, for example), since these are considered antithetical to omniscient cognition. He 'preaches' by means of a magical 'divine sound'." (Jaini 1979: 39).

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[3] McEvilley (2002: 202) makes a comparison with Orpheus: "It is interesting, perhaps mere coincidence but perhaps not, that in Jain tradition the Jina '"preaches" by means of a magical "divine sound"'." Kabay (2013) comes up with a philosophical interpretation, suggesting that "the *divyadhvani* is … the 'sound' of silence" (p. 188); this, according to him, agrees with the fact that Mahāvīra was a trivialist, "someone who believes every proposition to be true" (p. 189 n. 4).

In this paper I will try to understand what led different Digambara authors to adopt their at times peculiar views as to the ways the Jina preached, taking into consideration the intellectual context in which they lived and worked.

I will begin with Kundakunda, one of the earliest and most important Digambara thinkers (his precise date remains uncertain). His *Pravacanasāra* contains the following verse (in the translation of its editor, A. N. Upadhye):

> In the case of Arahantas, at the time of their Arhatship, (certain activities like) standing, sitting, moving about and religious discourse are natural (and necessary consequences of the Karmic fruition with no effort on their part), just as acting deceitfully is in the case of women.[4]

Clearly, in Kundakunda's opinion, a liberated saint is *not* "absolutely unmoving", as Jaini claimed. Moreover, there is no suggestion in this verse that religious teaching takes the form of a divine sound.[5]

The commentator Amṛtacandra (10th century CE) explains the verse as follows:

> Just as women, without any effort on their part, will engage in behavior that is characterized by deceit, because it is their nature since they have that kind of aptitude, so omniscient saints (*kevalin*), without any effort on their part, will engage in standing, sitting, walking about and religious teaching, because they have that kind of aptitude. And there is no contradiction here, as can be seen from the example of a cloud. Just as matter that has taken the form of a cloud is observed to engage in activities such as moving, being stationary, thundering and raining without any human effort, so omniscient saints are observed to engage in standing and so one *without any mental activity on their part*. For this reason, since they do not follow the arising of delusion, the standing etc. of omniscient saints, *even though they are specific activities*, do not bring about bondage, which is the normal effect of activity.[6]

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[4] Kundakunda, *Pravacanasāra* 1.44: *ṭhāṇaṇisejjavihārā dhammuvadeso ya ṇiyadayo tesiṃ/ arahaṃtāṇaṃ kāle māyācāro vva itthīṇaṃ.*

[5] Interestingly, the *Jaina Siddhānta Kośa* quotes a line from a commentary (*Tātparyavṛtti*) on another work (*Niyamasāra*) attributed to Kundakunda, which does mention the divine sound: *kevalimukhāravindavinirgato divyadhvaniḥ.*

[6] Amṛtacandra on *Pravacanasāra* 1.44; ed. Upadhye p. 51-52: *yathā hi mahilānāṃ prayatnam antareṇāpi tathāvidhayogyatāsadbhāvāt svabhāvabhūta eva māyopaguṇṭhanāguṇṭhito vyavahāraḥ pravartate, tathā hi kevalināṃ prayatnam antareṇāpi tathāvidhayogyatāsadbhāvāt sthānam āsanaṃ viharaṇaṃ dharmadeśanā ca svabhāvabhūtā eva pravartate/ api cāviruddham etad ambhodharadṛṣṭāntāt/ yathā khalv ambhodharākārapariṇatānāṃ pudgalānāṃ gamanam avasthānaṃ garjanam ambuvarṣaṃ ca puruṣaprayatnam antareṇāpi dṛśyante, tathā kevalināṃ sthānādayo 'buddhipūrvakā eva dṛśyante/ ato 'amī sthānādayo mohodayapūrvakatvābhāvāt kriyāviśeṣā api kevalināṃ kriyāphalabhūtabandhasādhanāni na bhavanti//*

Amṛtacandra states in so many words that religious teaching, also in the case of a liberated saint, is a specific *activity* (*kriyāviśeṣa*), be it one without karmic consequences.[7] What is more, he does not mention the divine sound.

Jayasena, another commentator on this text who may belong to the 12th century CE, does not deviate from Amṛtacandra in any essential respect. He follows his two predecessors in looking upon religious teaching as a form of activity, and does not mention the divine sound.[8]

What these commentaries *do* emphasize is that the religious teaching of a liberated saint is done without effort and without mental activity. This is a recurring theme in many texts, and one that makes sense if we situate Jaina thought in its intellectual context. Let us have a closer look at that context.

The ideological and religious movement that became most important in classical India, and with which Jainism had to come to terms, is Brahmanism. Brahmanism derived some of its claims to eminence from the fact that Brahmins knew and preserved the Veda and the language of the Veda, Sanskrit. From the point of view of the Brahmins, Sanskrit was not *a* language but rather *the only correct language*, all other languages being corruptions of Sanskrit. The relation between Sanskrit and reality was also close, a presumed fact that explained the efficacy of mantras (which are in Sanskrit). The reliability of the Veda, furthermore, is directly related to the fact that it is in Sanskrit. As a matter of fact, the Veda is a pure expression of the Sanskrit language, in the formation of which no authors played a role. The possession of this unique literary document gave Brahmanism the authority it claimed. From the Brahmanical point of view, the literary traditions of other currents of thought could not but be inferior, because they had nothing like the Veda.

This was the intellectual challenge with which Buddhism and Jainism were confronted, especially during the early centuries of the Common Era. Their sacred scriptures had *not* been composed in a language that could claim superior status and close correspondence to reality, and their sacred scriptures came, directly or indirectly, from the mouths of the founders of these religious movements. Let us first consider the languages of these sacred scriptures.

In a world in which Brahmanical ideology was gaining in importance, the temptation was great — both among Buddhists and Jainas — to make claims similar to those of Sanskrit about the languages of their own traditions. Both gave in to this temptation. Those Buddhists whose sacred scriptures were in what we call Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit claimed that Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit was a form of Vedic Sanskrit, governed by the Vedic rules of Pāṇini's grammar. Those whose sacred scriptures had been preserved in Pali came to claim that Pali is the

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[7] The same might be said about the only phrase from Akalaṅka's *Tattvārthavārttika* — also known as *Rājavārttika* — (I p. 132, l. 7-8) that is cited in this connection by the *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa*. It reads: "... he in whom absolute knowledge has arisen as a result of the destruction of all veils of knowledge and who has turned into a speaker only on account of the activation of his tongue teaches all things that are the objects of hearing ..." (... *sakalajñānāvaraṇasaṃkṣayāvirbhūtātīndriyakevalajñānaḥ rasanopaṣṭambhamātrād eva vaktṛtvena pariṇataḥ sakalān śrutaviṣayān arthān upadiśati* ...). This passage clearly states that an omniscient saint uses his tongue in order to teach, not that a divine sound emanates from him.

[8] Jayasena on *Pravacanasāra* 1.44; ed. Upadhye p. 51-52.

root language of all living beings, the natural form of expression. The Śvetāmbara Jainas, for their part, made similar claims about Ardha-Māgadhī, the language in which Mahāvīra had preached. In other words, all these movements claimed that the language of their sacred scriptures was as good as, if not better than, Sanskrit.[9] This solved the problem of language.

It did not solve all problems. There were further difficulties, and it would seem that the Digambara Jainas took these very much to heart. Consider the following. The classical school of Vedic interpretation, Mīmāṃsā, emphasized the special character of the language of the Veda, i.e. Sanskrit, but not only that. It also laid much stress on the fact that the Veda is pure because no mental activity, whether thought or desire, interferes with it. The rules of interpretation it developed were all based on one simple principle: *that* interpretation of a particular statement or word is correct which is closest to the text, and therefore least affected by the thoughts and ideas of the interpreter. The role of the mind must be reduced to the extent possible, preferably to zero. This principle applies to the interpretation of the Veda, but also to its composition. The purity of the Veda is guaranteed by the fact that no mental activity was involved in its composition. This in its turn was possible because the Veda had not been composed: it is eternal and has no author. Clearly the Buddhists and the Jainas could not claim that their sacred scriptures had not been composed. Their sacred scriptures were or represented the words uttered by their respective founders, i.e. the Buddha and Mahāvīra. Mental activity therefore *did* appear to play a role in their composition.

We have already seen that the texts we have considered do not agree with this conclusion. Both Amṛtacandra and Jayasena state in so many words that no mental activity is involved in Mahāvīra's teaching, and also Kundakunda's remarks seem to imply this. This teaching is therefore not polluted by the interference of a mind, just like the Veda, which owed its purity to this fact.

Omniscient saints have perfect knowledge, which affects the soul directly, without the interference of a mind, and also without the interference of the sense organs. This last fact is emphasized in the following passage from Siddhasena Mahāmati's *Nyāyāvatāra* with Siddharṣi's *Nyāyāvatāra-vivṛti* thereon:[10]

> Wishing to explain the characteristics of omniscience, and with the purpose of eradicating the opinions of those who do not accept a highest form of knowledge, omniscience, that covers all things and is obtained through the destruction of all veils of karma, he states:

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[9] See Bronkhorst 2011: 142-153 (§ 3.4).

[10] *Nyāyāvatāra-vivṛti* p. 420-421 (§ 27.0-1), ed. Balcerowicz: *yaiḥ pāramārthikaṃ samastāvaraṇavicchedalabhyam aśeṣārthagocaraṃ kevalajñānaṃ nābhyupagamyate, tanmatoddalanārthaṃ tallakṣaṇam abhidhitsur āha:*
sakalāvaraṇamuktātma kevalaṃ yat prakāśate/
pratyakṣaṃ sakalārthātmasatatapratibhāsanam//
...
asya ca pāramārthikatvaṃ, nirupacaritaśabdārthopapatteḥ/ tathā hy akṣaśabdo jīvaparyāyas, tataś cākṣaṃ prati vartate iti pratyakṣaṃ, yatrātmanaḥ sākṣād vyāpāraḥ/ vyāvahārikaṃ punar indriyavyavahitātmavyāpārasampādyatvāt paramārthataḥ parokṣam eva, dhūmād agnijñānavat tirodhānāviśeṣāt/

> That which shines forth as something perfect, freed from all veils, that is the highest perception, the uninterrupted presentation of the essence of all things. (27)
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> ...
>
> This highest perception is ultimate, because the word 'perception' (*pratyakṣa*) can be taken literally, as follows: the word *akṣa* is a synonym of 'soul'; that which acts on the soul is *prati-akṣa* (> *pratyakṣa*). Here *the soul is directly active*. Everyday perception, on the other hand, is ultimately indirect, because it is produced by the activity of the soul that is separated from external reality by the sense organs, just like knowledge of fire that is derived from smoke, because in both cases the object of knowledge is hidden.

Passages like the above show that the religious instruction provided by Mahāvīra is as pure and impersonal as the Veda. It is free from the interference of any mind, and was formulated in the original language, the one that is closest to reality. So far the perfect nature of the teaching of Jainism is guaranteed without the need for a divine sound.

So far, so good. However, another difficulty made its appearance. The reflection on language in India underwent certain developments that moved it away from earlier positions. The Buddhists were perhaps the first to maintain that language plays a role in hiding the true nature of the world from us, and in providing us with a world of appearances only. This began with the dharma-theory initially elaborated in northwestern India during the final centuries preceding the Common Era. This theory admitted the existence of ultimate constituents of reality called dharmas, but not of the commonsense objects that are composed of these and that fill our daily lives. These commonsense objects, it was stated, are nothing but words: King Milinda — in the *Milindapañha* — is told in clear terms that his chariot is no more than a word, that in reality there is no chariot. Later Buddhists developed this vision, some of them coming to the conclusion that not even the dharmas exist: the world is empty (*śūnya*) and contains nothing that really exists. The reason we believe in the existence of our commonsense world is that we are misled by language.

The idea that language represents a world that is not ultimately real did not initially have much appeal to Brahmanical thinkers. That, however, changed. Bhartṛhari borrowed the idea of a phenomenal world that corresponds to language from the Buddhists, but developed a different vision as to the ultimate reality that hides behind words. To cite one of his verses:[11]

> What the seers see and what is established in [the highest] reality, is not expressed in language, it is not based on words.

Also the early Advaita-Vedāntins, among them prominently Śaṅkara, adopted the view that language hides rather than reveals the true nature of reality. Indeed, a number of thinkers both Buddhist and Brahmanical drew attention to the fact that

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[11] Vkp 2.139: *ṛṣīṇāṃ darśanaṃ yac ca tattve kiṃcid avasthitam/ na tena vyavahāro 'sti na tac chabdanibandhanam//*

many correct statements are self-contradictory. The Buddhist Nāgārjuna may have been the first to do so, but many Brahmanical thinkers followed.[12]

     Jainism did not share these views. It did however distinguish, as we have seen, between two kinds of knowledge, direct (*pratyakṣa*) and indirect (*parokṣa*). Interestingly, they did not accept that sense-perception gives rise to direct knowledge. Direct knowledge is only available to liberated souls, and arises as a matter of fact directly in the soul, without the intermediary of sense organs or anything else. This direct knowledge, which is omniscience, is the *kevala-jñāna* that characterizes Mahāvīra and other liberated souls.

     For those who are not liberated, there are only standpoints (*naya*), various incomplete ways to arrive at imperfect knowledge. Some of these *naya*s are linked to words, and like the other *naya*s, they do not provide perfect knowledge. The following passage from Siddharṣi's *Nyāyāvatāra-vivṛti* first presents a defence of the word-related standpoints as satisfactory means of knowledge, before rejecting them:[13]

> Now the standpoints that are capable of considering words will be described. All three — called 'word' etc. — have a common intention, namely, that the word is the highest thing, not the meaning, because the latter is not different from the former.
> If you raise the question how the two can be non-different, given that it is established that there separateness is reall, we answer: their identity is based on a means of valid cognition (viz. inference), as follows: (i) The meaning is not different from the word, (ii) because the meaning is cognized when the word has been cognized. (iii) Something that is cognized when something else has been cognized is not different from that something else, as for example the own form of a word, that is cognized when the word is being cognized, its own form is cognized. (iv) When a

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[12] See Bronkhorst 2011a.

[13] *Nyāyāvatāra-vivṛti* p. 449-450 (§ 29.18), ed. Balcerowicz: *adhunā śabdavicāracaturāṇām [matam] upavarṇyate/ tatra trayāṇām api śabdādīnām idaṃ sādhāraṇam ākūtaṃ, yad uta śabda eva paramārtho nārthas, tasya tadavyatiriktatvāt/ pārthakyena vastutvasiddheḥ katham avyatireka iti cet, pramāṇād iti brūmaḥ/ tathā hi: na vyatirikto 'rthaḥ śabdāt, tatpratītau tasya pratīyamānatvād, iha yatpratītau yat pratīyate tat tato 'vyatiriktaṃ bhavati, tad yathā: śabde pratīyamāne tasyaiva svarūpaṃ, pratīyate ca śabde pratīyamāne 'rtho, 'to 'sau tato 'vyatirikta iti/ agṛhītasaṅketasya ghaṭaśabdaśravaṇe 'pi ghaṭapratīter abhāvād vyatirikta iti ced, evaṃ tarhi viṣasya māraṇātmakatvaṃ tadajñasya na pratibhātīti tat tato vyatiriktam āpadyeta, na caitad asti, tadvyatirekāviśeṣeṇa guḍakhaṇḍavad viṣasyāpy amārakatvāpatteḥ ..., tan nābuddhapramātṛdoṣeṇa vastuno 'nyathātvam, anyathāndho rūpaṃ nekṣata iti tadabhāvo 'pi pratipattavya iti/ ye nirabhidhānā vartante 'rthās teṣāṃ śabdāt pārthakyena vastutvasiddhir iti cen, na, nirabhidhānārthābhāvāt, kevalaṃ kecid viśeṣaśabdaiḥ saṅkīrtyante, kecit sāmānyadhvanibhir ity etāvān viśeṣaḥ syāt/ yadi vā sakalārthavācakā viśeṣadhvanayo na santīti nāsty atra pramāṇam/ tataś ca sarve 'rthā vidyamānasvavācakā arthatvād, ghaṭārthavad iti pramāṇāt sarveṣāṃ svavācakatvena ... śabdād apārthakyasiddhiḥ/ tasmān na paramārthato 'rthaḥ śabdātirikto 'sty, upacārataḥ punar laukikair aparyālocitaparamārthair vyavahriyate/ asāv aupacārikaḥ śabdātmako vārthaḥ pratikṣaṇabhaṅguraḥ svīkartavyo, varṇānāṃ kṣaṇadhvaṃsitāpratīte[ḥ].*

word is being cognized, its meaning is cognized. (v) It follows that the latter is not different from the former.[14]

If you object that the meaning is different from its word, because someone who has not learned the convention (that links a pot to the word 'pot') does not cognize a pot even when he hears the word 'pot', we respond: Since an ignorant person is not aware of the killing power of poison, poison and its killing power would be different. This is not however the case, for it would follow that poison does not kill, like a piece of molasses which is also different from killing power ... A thing does not become different through the shortcoming of a knower who is not properly informed. If it were otherwise, one would have to accept the absence of color because a blind person cannot see it.

If you object that the reality of things without designations, quite apart from words that might refer to them, has been established, this cannot be accepted, because there are not things without designations. The only distinction is that some are named by means of specific words, and others by means of general sounds. Alternatively, there is no proof that there are no specific sounds that are expressive of all meanings. All meanings have words that refer to them, because they are meanings, just like the meaning 'pot'.[15] On the basis of this means of valid cognition it is established that meaning is not different from the word, because all meanings refer to themselves ... It follows that meaning is ultimately not different from the word, but it is metaphorically spoken about in this manner by common people who do not reflect upon highest reality. This object, whether it be metaphorical or constituted of words, must be accepted as being momentary, because speech sounds are cognized as disappearing in a moment ...

This position is rejected in the following passage:[16]

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[14] Points (i)-(v) follow the traditional pattern of a logical inference.

[15] Note that the word for 'meaning', *artha*, can also mean 'thing', and that the argument leans to some extent on this ambiguity.

[16] *Nyāyāvatāra-vivṛti* p. 470-471 (§ 29.27), ed. Balcerowicz: *tathā śabdādayo 'pi sarvathā śabdāvyatirekam arthasya samarthayanto durnayās, tatsamarthanārtham upanyastasya tatpratītau praīyamānatvalakṣaṇasya hetor anaikāntikatvāt/ tathā hi: nāyam ekānto yatpratītau yat pratīyate tat tato 'vyatiriktam eva, vyatiriktasyāpi pāvakāder anyathānupapannatvalakṣaṇasambandhabalād dhūmādipratītau pratīyamānatvāt/ evaṃ śabdo 'pi vyatiriktam apy arthaṃ vācakatvāt pratyāyayiṣyaty, avyatiriktasya pratyakṣādibādhitatvāc, chabdād vivekenaivānubhūyamānatvāt/ asmiṃś ca hetāv anaikāntike sthite sarvārthānāṃ sasvavācakatvasādhanadvāreṇa śabdāvyatirekasādhanam api dūrāpāstam eva/ na cātrāpi pratibandhagrāhi pramāṇaṃ — yo yo 'rthas tene tena sasvavācakena bhavitavyaṃ — ghaṭādidṛṣṭāntamātrāt tadasiddheḥ, kṣaṇikālakṣyadravyavivartānāṃ saṅketagrahaṇopāyābhāvenābhilapitum aśakyatayānabhilāpyatvasiddheś ca/ .../ tathā pratyekamatāpekṣayāpi svābhipretaṃ pratiṣṭhāpayantas tadviparītaṃ śabdārthaṃ tiraskurvāṇā durnayatām ātmasātkurvanti/ etāvad dhi pramāṇapratiṣṭhitaṃ, yad uta vidhimukhena śabdo 'rthasya vācaka iti; na punar ayaṃ niyamo yathāyam asaiva vācako nānyasya, deśakālapuruṣasaṅketādivicitratayā sarvaśabdānām aparāparārthapratipādakatvenopalabdher*

Also the standpoints of words etc., that support the complete non-difference of word and meaning, are defective standpoints, because the ground adduced to prove them — namely, that when that (i.e. the word) has been cognized, this (i.e. the meaning) is cognized — is inconclusive. Consider the following: There is no invariable rule of the form "the fact that when one thing has been cognized something else is cognized implies that the former is non-different from the latter"; for when smoke etc. have been cognized, fire etc., though different, are cognized by force of the fact that both are connected through not being otherwise explainable. In the same way also a word makes its meaning known, even though the latter is different from the former, this because the word is expressive of its meaning; for a meaning non-different from the word is in conflict with perception etc., because the meaning is experienced as being different from the word. And once this ground has been established as being inconclusive, also the proof of the non-difference of the meaning from the word on account of the proof that all meanings presumably have words that express them has been discarded. There is no means to establish the connection "every meaning must have a word that expresses it", because it cannot be established on the mere example of a pot etc., and because it is established that momentary and invisible modifications of substances cannot be expressed in words, because it is not possible to express them since there is no means to grasp the convention (that supposedly links those modifications to words). ... The standpoints of words etc., inasmuch as they posit what is intended by each speaker with reference to his own opinion and conceal word meanings that are opposed to that, are defective standpoints. For this much has been established by means of valid cognition, that a word is positively expressive of a meaning. There is no limitation of the form that this word is expressive of that meaning only, not of any other meaning, because we observe that all words can make known many different meanings on account of the variety of place, time, persons, conventions etc., and because they can denote many different meanings on account of having the aptitude to do so since they have endless characteristics; meanings, too, have endless characteristics, so that nothing opposes them being denoted by many different words. We do indeed see that words are used in this manner without discord. If one were not to accept this, the use of words would collapse. It follows that all sounds have the aptitude to express all meanings. However, they somehow produce cognition only with reference to certain meanings, depending on the partial annihilation and subsidence of karma, etc. ... These standpoints called "word" etc. are therefore real standpoints when they show the

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anantadharmatayāparāparayogyatādvāreṇāparāparārthābhidhāyakatvopapatter,
arthānām apy ananadharmatvād evāparāparaśabdavācyatāvirodhāt, tathaivāvigānena
vyavahāradarśanāt, tadaniṣṭau tallopaprasaṅgāt/ tasmāt sarvadhvanayo yogyatayā
*saravārthavācakā, deśakṣayopaśamādyapekṣayā tu kvacit kathañcit pratītiṃ janayanti/ .../ *
ato 'mī śabdādayo yadetaretarābhimataśabdārthopekṣayā svābhimataṃ śabdārthaṃ
darśayanti, tadā nayās, tasyāpi tatra bhāvāt/ parasparabādhayā pravartamānāḥ punar
durnayarūpatāṃ bhajanti, nirālambanatvād iti/

intended word meaning in disregard of all other intended word meanings, because also that intended meaning is present in the word. When they proceed to obstruct other standpoints, on the other hand, they are defective standpoints, without basis.

Showing that Mahāvīra had taught in the root language did not therefore solve all problems, and the Digambara Jainas appear to have been aware of this. Even if the language in which the *tīrthaṅkara* taught was the root language, the one closest to reality and the one from which all other languages are derived through a process of corruption, this does not change the fact that this teaching might be suspected of having been thought out and formulated in a mind, and had then inevitably been polluted in the process. What is more, by being couched in language, any language, it could not possibly convey the highest truth.

Both these problems could be solved, and at least certain Digambara Jainas tried to do so. The pollution that accompanies all teaching that emanates from a mind could be undone by maintaining that Mahāvīra's teaching was not produced in or by a mind. And the incapacity for language to convey the highest truth could be avoided by maintaining that Mahāvīra had not used language. This, I propose, would be the reason why certain Digambaras opted for a divine sound that did not have the form of a language, but that could be turned into language by the *gaṇadhara*s, not without loosing its pristine perfection.

Are there texts that speak about this non-linguistic divine sound? Not all the texts referred to in the *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa* are accessible to me, and the quotes from those texts given in that encyclopedia are not always long enough, or clear enough, to determine the position of their authors. Let me therefore limit myself to some few passages.

An early text that mentions the *divyadhvani* (Prakrit *divvajhuṇī*) is the *Tiloyapaṇṇatti* (Skt. *Trilokaprajñapti*). This text was known to the author of the *Dhavalā*, which dates from around 800 CE;[17] the *Tiloyapaṇṇatti* must therefore be earlier than this.[18] We read here:[19]

> When infinite knowledge has arisen and veiled knowledge has been destroyed, a divine sound (*divvajhuṇī*) that concerns the ninefold objects expresses the meaning of the Sūtras.

And again:[20]

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[17] This text "was completed by Virasena on the 13th day of the bright fortnight of Karttika in the year 738 of the Saka era, when Jagattunga (i.e. Govinda III of the Rashtrakuta dynasty) had abandoned the throne and Boddana Raya (probably Amoghavarsha I) was ruling. … the date corresponds … to the 8th October 816 A.D., Wednesday morning." (Introduction to the edition, p. ii.)

[18] Premī 1942: 7; see further the Hindi introduction to the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*, p. 48.

[19] *Tiloyapaṇṇatti* 1.74 (Jīvarāja Granthamālā, Śolāpura, Vi. Saṃ. 1999), as quoted in the *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa* (II, p. 430-431): *jāde aṇaṃtaṇāṇe ṇaṭṭhe chadumaṭṭhidiyammi ṇāṇammi/ ṇavavihapadatthasārā divvajhuṇī kahai suttatthaṃ/*

[20] *Tiloyapaṇṇatti* 4.903-904 (as above): *… akkhalio saṃjhattidaya ṇavamuhuttāṇi/ ṇissaradi ṇiruvamāṇo divvajhuṇī jāva joyaṇayaṃ/ sesesuṃ samaesuṃ gaṇaharadeviṃdacakkavaṭṭīṇaṃ/ paṇhāṇuruvam atthaṃ divvajhuṇī …*

For nine moments (*muhūrta*)[21] an uninterrupted and incomparable divine sound comes forth reaching up to a *yojana* during the three *sandhyā*s (i.e., morning, noon, and evening). At other times the divine sound expresses meaning in accordance with questions of *gaṇadhara*s, the king of the gods, and of world rulers.

Also a passage from Nemicandra's *Gommaṭasāra*,[22] a work composed toward the end of the tenth century CE, states in essence the same as the last passage from the *Tiloyapaṇṇatti*.

These passages seem to indicate that at least certain early Digambara texts accept the notion of a divine sound as described by Jaini. But others, as we have seen, don't. It will be interesting to see what the Vīrasena's *Dhavalā*, a commentary on the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*, the oldest surviving canonical text of the Digambara Jainas, has to say about the matter. We have already seen that the *Dhavalā* dates from around 800 CE. As is clear from the following passage, the *Dhavalā* is concerned to show that an omniscient *kevalin*, even though in the possession of a mind, does not use it to acquire his omniscience:[23]

[Opponent:] Because they have a mind, also omniscient saints (*kevalin*) must be in the possession of conceptual awareness.
[Proponent:] No. Because the [omniscient saints], once their veils of ignorance have been destroyed, have no conceptual awareness since, by force of stopping the mind, they do not grasp external objects [in that manner].
[Opponent:] In that case omniscient saints must be without conceptual awareness.

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[21] It is hard to believe that a *muhūrta* here covers 48 minutes, since in that case three times nine *muhūrta*s would almost fill 24 hours.

[22] Cited in the *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa*. The name of this text is sometimes misprinted: the *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa* itself uses *Gommaṭasāra* and *Gomaṭṭasāra* in its *Saṃketa-Sūcī*; the volume on *Jain Philosophy, part I* of the *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies* has *Gomatasāra* and *Gommatasāra* (Malvania & Soni 2007: 604-605). On Gommaṭa as pet name of Cāmuṇḍarāya, see Jain 1981: 40-41.

[23] *Dhavalā* on sūtra 1.1.173, p. 411 l. 1-6: *samanaskatvāt sayogakevelino 'pi saṃjñina iti cen na, teṣāṃ kṣīṇāvaraṇānāṃ mano'vaṣṭambhabalena bāhyārthagrahaṇābhāvatas tadasattvāt/ tarhi bhavantu kevalino 'saṃjñina iti cen na, sākṣātkṛtāśeṣapadārthānām asaṃjñitvavirodhāt/ asaṃjñinaḥ kevalino mano 'napekṣya bāhyārthagrahaṇād vikalendriyavad iti ced bhavaty evaṃ yadi mano 'napekṣya saṃjñitvam ucyate/ kiṃ punar asaṃjñitvasya nibandhanam iti cet? manaso 'bhāvād buddhyatiśayābhāvaḥ/.* See also *Dhavalā* on sūtra 1.1.122, p. 369 l. 7-9: *atha syān nārhataḥ kevalajñānam asti tatra noindriyāvaraṇakṣayopaśamajanitamanasaḥ sattvāt, na, prakṣīṇasamastāvaraṇe bhagavaty arhati jñānāvaraṇakṣayopaśamābhāvāt tatkāryasya manaso 'sattvāt.* "[Opponent:] An arhat does not have perfect knowledge, because he has a mind that is produced by the annihilation and subsidence of the veil of the quasi-senses. [Proponent:] This is not correct, because there is no annihilation and subsidence of the veil of knowledge in a revered arhat all of whose veils have been destroyed, and its effect, the mind, is therefore not there."

[Proponent:] No. Because it would be a contradiction to say that beings that have immediate access to all things are without conceptual awareness.
[Opponent:] Omniscient saints are without conceptual awareness because they grasp external things independently of the mind, just like people whose sense organs are defective.
[Proponent:] It is like that if you use the expression "absence of conceptual awareness" based on the mere arising of knowledge independently of the mind.
[Opponent:] What then is the basis of absence of conceptual awareness?
[Proponent:] The absence of clear consciousness resulting from the absence of mind.

Speech has no need for a mind. It results directly from knowledge:[24]

[Opponent:] If there is no mind, then speech, its effect, is not there either.
[Proponent:] This is not correct, for speech is the effect of knowledge (rather than of mind).

Mahāvīra, the *Dhavalā* states elsewhere, possesses an exceedingly sweet, agreeable, deep and clear voice, having the form of the languages of animals, gods and humans, including the eighteen major languages and seven hundred bad languages, present far away and nearby within a distance of a *yojana*, and devoid of shortcomings and extras.[25]
  The *Dhavalā* also states the following:[26]

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[24] *Dhavalā* on sūtra 1.1.122, p. 370 l. 3-4: *tatra manaso 'bhāve tatkāryasya vacaso 'pi na sattvam iti cen na, tasya jñānakāryatvāt.*

[25] *Dhavalā* on 1.1.1, p. 62 l. 1-6: *yojanāntaradūrasamīpasthāṣṭādaśabhāṣā-saptahataśatakubhāṣāyuta-tiryagdevamanuṣyabhāṣākāra-nyūnādhikabhāvātītamadhuramanoharagambhīraviśadavāgatiśayasampannaḥ ... mahāvīro 'rthakartā.* See also *Dhavalā* on 4.1.8, vol. 9 p. 62 l. 3 (as quoted in the *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa*):
(a?)saṃkhejjaguṇabhāsāsaṃbhalidatitthayaravayaṇaviṇiggayajjhuṇi.

[26] *Dhavalā* on 1.1.50, p. 285 l. 7 – p. 287 l. 4: *kim iti kevalino vacanaṃ saṃśayānadhyavasāyajanakam iti cen na, svārthānantyāc chrotur āvaraṇakṣayopaśamātiśayābhāvāt/ tīrthakaravacanam anakṣaratvād dhvanirūpam, tata eva tad ekam/ ekatvān na tasya dvaividhyaṃ ghaṭata iti cen na, tatra syād ityādi asatyamoṣavacanasattvatas tasya dhvaner anakṣaratvāsiddheḥ/ sākṣaratve ca pratiniyataikabhāṣātmakam eva tadvacanam nāśeṣabhāṣārūpaṃ bhaved iti cen na, kramaviśiṣṭavarṇātmakabhūyaḥpaṅktikadambakasya pratiprāṇipravṛttasya dhvaner aśeṣabhāṣārūpatvāvirodhāt/ tathā ca kathaṃ tasya dhvanitvam iti cen na, etadbhāṣārūpam eveti nirdeṣṭum aśakyatvataḥ tasya dhvanitvasiddheḥ/ atīndriyajñāntvān na kevalino mana iti cen na, dravyamanasaḥ sattvāt/ bhavatu dravyamanasaḥ sattvaṃ na tatkāryam iti ced bhavatu tatkāryasya kṣāyopaśamikajñānasyābhāvaḥ, api tu tadutpādane prayatno 'sty eva, tasya pratibandhakatvābhāvāt/ tenātmano yogaḥ manoyogaḥ/ vidyamāno 'pi tadutpādane prayatnaḥ kim iti svakāryaṃ na vidadhyād iti cen na, tatsahakārikāraṇakṣayopaśamābhāvāt/ asato manasaḥ kathaṃ vacanadvitayasamutpattir iti cen na, upacāratas tayos tataḥ samutpattividhānāt/*

[Opponent:] Can the speech of an omniscient saint produce doubt and indeterminate cognition?

[Proponent:] This is not correct. The hearer [can be misled] because he has not completely destroyed and stopped his veils of ignorance, and the objects [of knowledge of the omniscient sage] are infinite in number. The speech of a *tīrthaṅkara* has the form of sound (*dhvani*), because it does not consist of syllables, and for this reason it is single.

[Opponent:] Because it is single, it could not be of two kinds (i.e. both true and neither true nor false). This cannot correct, because it has not been established that that sound has no syllables, because the [*tīrthaṅkara*] uses speech that is neither true nor false, as when he says "it can be (*syāt*) [this or that]" and so on. And if it has syllables, that speech would constitute just one single language and would not have the form of all languages.

[Proponent:] This you cannot say. For there is no contradiction in saying that sound — even if it is a collection of several phrases each consisting of sequential speech sounds, and used by different living beings — has the form of all languages.

[Opponent:] In that case, why is the *tīrthaṅkara*'s speech called 'sound' rather than language?

[Proponent:] Your opposition is misplaced, because it has been established that it is sound because it is impossible to show that it is only this or that particular language.

[Opponent:] The omniscient sage does not have a mind, because his knowledge is beyond the senses.

[Proponent:] That is not correct, because even a *tīrthaṅkara* has a physical mind.

[Opponent:] He may have a physical mind, but not its effect.

[Proponent:] It is true that he does not have its effect in the form of destructible and perishable knowledge. However, the effort to bring knowledge about is there, because that does not obstruct anything. The so-called mind-exertion is therefore an exertion of the self.

[Opponent:] Does this mean that the effort to bring that about, though present, would not effect its own effect?

[Proponent:] No, because its accompanying causes have not been destroyed and stopped.

[Opponent:] How do the two kinds of speech, true and neither true nor false, arise from a non-existent mind?

[Proponent:] This question is inappropriate, because these two are only metaphorically made to arise from it.

This passage remains rather obscure, but it does suggest that the utterances of a *tīrthaṅkara* have sequence. This is confirmed by the following passage, which immediately follows a statement considered above to the effect that speech, in the

case of an omniscient being, derives from knowledge without the intermediary of a mind:[27]

> [Opponent:] How can words that have sequence arise from knowledge that is without sequence?
> [Proponent:] It can, because we observe that a pot can sequentially come into being as a result of a potter who has non-sequential knowledge of the pot.

Whatever the correct interpretation of these passages, it seems clear that Vīrasena the author of the *Dhavalā* did not think of a monotone that resembled the syllable *oṃ*. The *Dhavalā* does not even use the term *divyadhvani* in any of these passages to describe the utterances of an omniscient being.[28]

The few texts we have considered suggest that different Digambara authors had different opinions about the way the Jina had communicated his message. They do not all use the expression "divine sound" (*divyadhvani*) in this connection. Indeed, the *divyadhvani* would appear to be but one of the possible options, the most extreme one. But all of these authors appear to have been driven by the conviction that the medium used by Mahāvīra had a direct effect on the credibility of his message.

If our reflections so far are correct, certain Jaina thinkers accepted a radical solution to a problem that had ultimately been introduced by Buddhists. Buddhists were the first to propose that language conceals rather than reveals reality. This being the case, why is the radical solution consisting of a divine sound that is a monotone a Jaina solution rather than a Buddhist one? The Buddhists, it would seem, were more in need of such a solution than the Jainas were.

It appears, as a matter of fact, that certain Buddhists had adopted a very similar solution. It is known by the name *ekasvara* and was adopted by some Śrāvakayāna and several Mahāyāna texts. Here is what Lamotte (1970: 1380 n.1) says about it:[29]

> Le Buddha a prêché la Loi de diverses manières ... et notamment par un son unique (*ekasvareṇa*) ou par une émission de voix d'un instant (*ekakṣaṇavāgudāhareṇa*). Ce son exprime la Loi dans son entier, parvient à tous les univers des dix régions, réjouit la pensée de tous les êtres et

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[27] *Dhavalā* on sūtra 1.1.122, p. 370 l. 4-5: *akramajñānāt kathaṃ kramavatāṃ vacanānām utpattir iti cen na, ghaṭaviṣayākramajñānasamavetakumbhakārād ghaṭasya krameṇotpattyupalambhāt.*

[28] Confusingly, the *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa* cites a phrase from the *Dhavalā* in which this word (or rather its Prakrit equivalent *divvajjhuṇī*) does appear to be used. The phrase supposedly occurs in the ninth volume of the Dhavalā (p. 120 l. 10, on Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama 4.1.44), a volume that is not accessible to me. It reads: *divvajjhuṇīe kimaṭṭhaṃ tatthāpaïtto* "Why does the divine sound not take place there?". The proposed Hindi translation (*gaṇadhara kā abhāva hone se ... divyadhvani kī pravṛtti nahīṃ (hotī hai)* "the divine sound does not take place because there are no *gaṇadhara*s present") presumably provides evidence regarding the context.

[29] See further Demiéville, 1937.

détruit les passions. Chaque auditeur, selon sa classe et ses capacités, en obtient l'intellection et croit que le Buddha a prêché pour lui seul.

La doctrine du son unique est déjà formulée dans certaines sectes du Petit Véhicule. Les Vibhajyavādin produisaient une Stance d'éloge du Buddha (*tsan fo song*) citée dans la Vibhāṣā (T 1545, k. 79, p. 410 a 16; T 1546, k. 41, p. 306 c 24; T 1547, k. 9, p. 482 c 16): "Le Buddha se sert d'un son unique pour énoncer la Loi, et les êtres alors, chacun selon sa catégorie, en obtiennent l'intelligence. Tous se disent: la Bhagavat parle la même langue que moi, c'est pour moi seul qu'il énonce tel ou tel sens". — Pour les Mahāsāṃghika également le Buddha énonce tous les dharma par un son unique (cf. Bareau, *Sectes*, p. 58, thèse 4).

Mais les Sarvāstivādin (Bareau, *ibidem*, p. 145, thèse 54) rejettent cette doctrine, et la Vibhāṣā (T 1545, k. 79, p. 410 b 25) fait remarquer que la stance précitée n'appartient pas au Tripiṭaka et en donne (p. 410 c 8-9) une interprétation édulcorée: "Bien que les sons du Buddha soient nombreux et divers, ils sont également utiles, c'est pourquoi on parle de son unique".

Les Mahāyānasūtra adoptèrent avec enthousiasme la doctrine du son unique. [References to Prajñāpāramitā, Avataṃsaka, Ratnakūṭa, Sukhāvatīvyūha, Grand Parinirvāṇa, *Vimalakīrti*, p. 108-110, 342.]

This is not the occasion to explore in further detail the role of the monotone and of the momentary sound in Buddhism. It seems however more than likely that this peculiar notion was accepted as a solution to the same problem that also occupied the Jainas and led some of the latter to accept a monotone: the belief that language conceals rather than reveals reality, so that the teachings of the Buddha and the Jina could not really be accepted to have been in words.

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