

## Indian Philosophy in 21<sup>st</sup> Century- Jaina View

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According to Úramaða tradition, liberation is the highest goal to be pursued. Since it the highest goal, the individual ought but to work towards the highest goal. Since this goal supersedes artha and kâma and even dharma as a purusârtha; this life becomes burden and even presupposed always as bondage. But one need not forget that, it is only in the human form that liberation is possible. Human beings are not isolated and that they are the part of this life-world. Hence there is a interrelatedness and interaction amongst the individual on one hand and nature (animals and vegetal world) on the other. It becomes therefore very crucial to substitute transcendental for the empirical world.

The empirical world comprises of various dichotomies on social, economic and political levels. For eg rich and poor, intelligent and non-intelligent, democracy and dictatorship etc. These problems cannot be overcome by putting in fore front the karma theories. One has to work towards societal cause by taking proper responsibility and constantly struggling towards removing the various dichotomies.

Coming to Jainism one finds such trends since 20<sup>th</sup> century. One such reformer Sant Bala (Key word) himself a monk of non- idol worshipping sect saw firstly the socio-political problems in the complex on Indian society and secondly the need for religious harmony.

His demand was that the monks and nuns instead of working for self-liberation in isolation should actively engage themselves in the eradication of social problems and work for religious harmony. This on the contrary demanded more sensitivity, self-awareness and non-attachment.

Because of these views he was ostracized from samgha as jaina ceramanas are not supposed to perform any worldly actions but only work for own liberation. He therefore took the task of revisiting the jaina principles and experimented in the socially and economically backward masses in Gujarat.

He combined the loka dharma with atma dharma, which is the need of the hour.

### Introduction

The general Jaina tendency is in favor of Nivritti. The idea that every activity involves some violence has been prevalent in Jainism. Activity leads to karmic bondage and hence the goal of the Jaina monk is to get rid of all kinds of karmas and to get liberation. All sorts of worldly activities are forbidden for the Jaina Sramanas and they are asked to follow the Mahavrata and engage themselves in performing religious activities like giving the traditional religious discourses, serving the gurus, going for Bhiksha etc. According to Santa Bala such a fear of committing violence in every act does not allow monks to participate in social service. He, therefore, suggested that a person, who takes diksa leaving his family, becomes the part of a larger family,

that is, the world. He therefore should work for the improvement of society, for the upliftment of moral well being of the individuals. This is only possible when there is a total social transformation. Sant Bala has written an exhaustive commentary on Acaranga Sutra. His whole thought is summarized by T. U. Mehta in his book "Sant Bala: A Saint With A difference". The following elongated quotation from the book gives a preview and core of Sant Bala's stand for his reform:

"Acaranga Sutra is the most ancient and important Scripture which prescribes in great details how a Jaina Sramanas should function in life. It nowhere prohibits a Saint from acting for the amelioration of the Society he lives in. Jaina philosophy has always given prominence to "Bhava", i.e. "intention" or "motive" in

the performance of Karma. So long as body persists, some sort of Karma is inevitable, and since the whole universe is full of Jivas (sentient objects) even the acts of breathing, drinking, moving, and eating result in violation of different types of "Jivas". If they result in violation (Himsa) and if every violent act results in akarma no soul (Jiva) can ever hope to be free. But that is not so, because, binding nature of Karma depends upon the motivation, intention and the measure of attachment with which it is done. If you once accept this position, it follows that if Sramanas takes active interest in social amelioration being guided by the disinterested and universal love for all souls of the universe, all his actions are "non-actions", actions without any expectation or attachment, and binding nature of such non-actions is practically nil. This is the simple logic of Jaina philosophy which the critics of Sant-bal either did not understand or intentionally avoided its understanding. This is also what Gita preaches. If the work of social amelioration was foreign to Jaina monk why it was that even after obtaining "Kaivalya" (last stage of pure knowledge) Lord Mahavira, and all other Tirthankars who preceded him, moved from place to place to educate people in spiritual values, why they tried to prevent violence, untruth, stealing, accumulation of possession, sex indulgence and various other social evils? Why the first Tirthankara Shri Risabhdev taught people how to build moulds, houses and cities, how to establish and organize social institutions including marriages, how to dispose of your dead, and how to settle as an organized society. He is also said to have taught the methods of agriculture and invented an alphabet called "Brahmi". All these activities of various Tirthankars were the activities for social amelioration.

One argument is that one can do all these things of social importance before renouncing the world, but not after renouncing the same. Any such argument is liable to be rejected summarily as totally devoid of merits. If a Sravakas who remains active in the society can take active interest, of course without any attachment, and still obtain Moksa (freedom from Karmic bondage), it is difficult to understand why a saint cannot do so. "Renouncement" of worldly affairs only means renouncement of attachment to the worldly

affairs. Affairs themselves do not bind you; what binds you is the attachment".<sup>1</sup>

The moksa marga as expressed in TATTVARTHA SUTRA

"samyag darsana jnana caritra moksa marga".<sup>2</sup>

"How can you know that you are developing you Charitra" (character), which is considered in Jaina philosophy as a third jewel in our life, unless you are constantly testing your mental reactions to the problems of life? If you renounce worldly currents of life and go to a lonely place for life, you are separated from the life's vicissitudes. The blessed segregation in a lonely place cannot prepare your mind to keep proper balance in times of distress and difficulties because these are absent in your isolation. Thus if you are isolated from the society your mind does not get any training. But the human mind always remains active and hence in absence of proper training it gets distorted. It is only when you are associated with worldly currents that you can test and know how far you have been able to keep it detached from hate, anger, avarice and attachment of all sorts. If you are honest and sincere in achieving not only "Dharma Dhyana" but also are the process of "Sukla Dhyana". Thus for a saint, to remain alive to world he lives in, is a good training ground for the achievement of spiritual progress. Such training is very much necessary even for those who enter the order simply because you have taken Diksa, it does not mean that you have conquered or even trained your mind."<sup>3</sup>

Here Mahavira asks you only to remain "aware" of what ever you are doing because awareness brings discrimination and once you are able to discriminate between right and wrong you have little or no chance to fall in trap of binding Karmas. This pragmatism of Mahavira is not followed by orthodoxy because fanaticism and pragmatism are strange bedfellows. If you bring this type of awareness in your social actions, and can behave like the "Sthitapragna" (one whose mind and intellect are steady) of Gita, you are on right lines whether you are the man of the world or of the saintly order.

<sup>1</sup> T.U. Mehta, Sant Bala, A saint with a difference, p. 30

<sup>2</sup> Tattvartha Sutra 1.1

<sup>3</sup> T. U. Mehta, Op.Cit.,

## Socio- political Issues

The main work and responsibility is to work for welfare of all living beings. Due to science, the world has become nearer on the material level. But bringing near by hearts is the work of these sadhus. Nationally and internationally there are linguistic problems, caste problem, color/social, fanatic nationalism, individual worship etc. and because of these there is jealousy, hatred, divisions in castes, sect etc. In such a disastrous and disorderly situation, the sadhus can be like bridge to solve such problems by experimenting on the basis of tapa, tyaga and ahimsa and also to win the hearts of the people of different countries by peace, equanimity. To spread Maitri (friendship) should be the aim. This is the Bhavana of the Ahimsa vrata.

Human beings are a part of this universe; hence life should be such that the whole universe grows along with the development of human being. Hence the members of the samgha must continuously work for the welfare of society by taking some training. Society should be established on the basis of moral foundation should not be influenced by power and money. Therefore, all the auspicious tattvas should come together. It is very essential to make people aware of their potentialities in all the aspects of life.

For this Sant Bala suggests that people must oppose injustice. There are many things, surrounding the life of an individual such as politics, government, law and order, social conditions, economic conditions etc. which need to cohere with one another. It is seen that people get their work done by all sorts of illegal means. For this Sant Bala suggests that Politics should be cleaned to overcome stagnation, which has crept in the society. India is a country of still there are villages. So the initial requirement is the development of villages. There should be upbringing of people who live below poverty line; those who are socially, financially and morally degraded independent in all these aspects.

Not only financially independent but also assurance and execution of political freedom should be there to solve the problems of governance. This would be a true democratic spirit according to Sant Bala. He says that internal problems solved mutually will give an environment to set up a proper ethical

base for spiritual development. Fights between two parties can be resolved without bureaucracy. Such quarrels, if solved amongst themselves will not lead to further aggrandizement. Then and then only a healthy living is possible. For this there must be education which purifies the environment and which will lead to a healthy living. Sant Bala suggests that financial independence, political freedom, social equality all guided by moral values will lead to personal development (vikasa puja) and further lead to spiritual development. As a muni Sant Bala undertook the responsibility of purification tasks, which a Jaina muni would never do. Undergoing all the difficulties, facing the ban from the Sramana samgha, he left Mumbai and went to Bhal Nala Kantha (Gujarat).

Sant Bala had, therefore, undertaken a task of purification. The area which he worked was Bhal Nala kantha(Gujarat) where there was scarcity of water, people were living below poverty line. They were alcoholics, drug- addicts, robbers engaged in kidnapping of women, their trading etc. Zamindari and problem of interest and consequent exploitation was also on vast scale.

He himself worked in those areas and it is seen by the fact that the wells were dug, lakes were made more deep etc. (1943-50) He says that 'the real reform should be in social, religious and political fields'. People should be inspired in all these aspects and also in the right way.

According to him, a restrained person is more superior to person who is hoarding things and then giving them in charity. The needs of a restrained person are very less. He only takes a little from the world because he takes only what is required. Due to self-control, inner development takes place, satisfaction is also there. This revolution of self-control when spread in the world will lead to destruction of selfishness.

He disagrees with the ways in which the external austerities are performed by the people. For him Tapascarya is not to remain hungry but to control those verities, which lead to destruction of ego, and only then there is inner development of the individual. His consciousness shines and this is real Tapa. He was against any type of external rituHe believed that the more the person is away from violence etc. and the

more follow self-control, compassion, and sacrifice, equanimity, the more the individual is religious in the real sense.

His main revolutionary idea or the view of reform was that sadhus/sadhavis could help in building up of the national character. They cannot live away from society meditating in forest. They have to help people in building up their character, which leads to inner development. Sadhus can stay in their limitations and take part in the problems of society by helping them.

### **Religious Harmony**

Having suggested the new responsibilities to the Sramanas Sant Bala further crosses the traditional limit of restricting oneself to one's own Samgha. Though Jainism believes in Anekantavada it falls short of imbibing good principles of other religion. Sant Bala therefore writes in his book "Sarva dharma upasana" the good principles from all the religions. They are as follows

Christian Religion has the following specific qualities: - Common Prayer, Service to human, Forgiveness, Love, Earn your livelihood.

Islam Religion has the following specific qualities: - Prayer, Compassion, Truthfulness, Donation, Give and Eat Islam means peace

Mohammad has emphasized Motherhood and

the Matrujati, and to forgive others and overlook the wrong in others.

The specific qualities of Parsi Religion:-Purity of Thought, speech and behaviour/conduct, to renounce Weapons give Donation and emphasized Humanity, Peace, Service. Wherever they went, they got mixed as sugar mixes in milk. They were always faithful to the kingdom where they settled.

The specific qualities of Vedic/eternal religion:- Vedic religion also known as Hindu religion from last 1000 years is an eternal religion. Any one person has not established this religion. It is hence known as Apauruseya.

Veda means knowledge (Jnana). Knowledge is eternal. This religion has following sub-sects- Vaisnava, saiva, sakta and smarta. Doing to its very long antiquity, at every period, there were number of Sastras written. Hence there is no one-religious text.

Therefore recognize the equality of all religion and put itself to scrutiny.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude one can say that it is necessary to combine loka dharma and atma dharma and that the above said problems cannot solve by the karma theory. Since the problems are empirical and not transcendental all the problems need to be solved empirically and not transcendentially.

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