

A PANORAMIC VIEW OF JAINISM

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRELIMINARY

Man is endowed with the faculty of thinking. On gaining self-consciousness, he tries to understand the meaning of life and the nature of the universe around him. He gropes in various directions. Such speculation culminates in systematic reasoning. His quest produces some results. He forms certain concepts and adopts a course of action for advancement. Man has been involved in these exercises since the beginning of time. Such an endeavor of human intellect gives rise to philosophy - a theory of life and the nature of the universe, and religion - a code of conduct for spiritual advancement.

1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The dawn of the "Historical Period" sometime between the tenth and seventh centuries before Christ, is remarkable in the

history of mankind. The period witnessed an upsurge of human spirit and endeavor. Intense waves of activity of the human intellect swept many lands where man had emerged from the Bronze Age. Zoroaster gave a new creed to Iran; Confucius and Laotse taught wisdom to China; Jews in their Babylonian captivity developed unflinching faith in Jehovah; Greece emerged as the pioneer of European culture, and her philosophers tackled the problems of life and existence; Rome was founded.

At this time, the situation in India was quite different. A highly complex civilization and a noble culture had been flourishing in the country for centuries (1)¹. There had been a continuous upheaval of mind and spirit, and an all-pervasive effervescence was weaving the fabric of Indian culture. The centuries old dream of universal conquerors (chakravartis), both in political as well as in religious fields, was in the process of being realized. It is evident from the philosophy of the Upanishads that human intelligence and metaphysical concepts had sufficiently developed in India before the emergence of the so-called dawn of the "Historical Period". The foundations had been laid down on which the six systems of Indian philosophy were later built. The ideas developed by the sages of the Upanishads led to expectations which were fulfilled in later periods. They provide us with the evidence that different points of view had begun to emerge. The considerable intellectual activity going on in different directions was awaiting its full philosophical maturity.

The sixth century B.C. marked the beginnings of philosophical speculations in many lands, particularly in Greece. However, in India, it was the age of considerable philosophical progress. Elsewhere philosophy and religion pursued quite different and independent paths. Although the two had, at times, crossed paths and one had influenced the other, philosophy and religion never merged into one. In India on the other hand, it was and still is not possible to differentiate between the two. Unlike the Greek, the Indian philosophy was not confined to the academies. It became the religion of the masses. While the Indian sages and intellectual thinkers found solutions for the problems of life and existence that were basically philosophical, their teachings created and shaped components of a religious system. In course of time, these thinkers became prophets and saints for their religious followers.

1.3 PARALLEL DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIAN CULTURE

There have been two parallel developments of thought in the main stream of Indian philosophy; one emphasizing the principle of self-discipline and nonviolence (ahimsa), and the other, the sacrificial duties, for the salvation of human beings. There is evidence to suggest that the religious and philosophical ideas were present in the consciousness of the people even before the arrival of Aryan races in India.

In the sixth century B.C., there was an upsurge of ideas leading to new philosophical tenets and religious systems, often of a revolutionary character. The growth of the new religious

systems and philosophical doctrines modified the outlook of the future. These systems had very little in common with the Vedic rituals. Freedom of thoughts was their common feature. The Brahminical scriptures have formulated four life stages (ashrams); The student, the householder, the hermit and the

11. The Story of Civilization: Part I. Our Oriental Heritage by Will Durant, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1935, pp.394-396.

ascetic. In this scheme, the last two stages developed a class of wandering ascetics, who freed themselves from the obligations of prevailing religious ideas and practices, and thought out a new the fundamental problems of life and existence. Their number increased and their constant movements brought them into frequent association with one another. The result was a vigorous reorientation of the religious life and a twofold reaction ensued.

First, the thinking mind was in search of higher knowledge (para vidya) which was indestructible (aksharam). The philosophical mind of the Upanishads turned to VEDANTA(2)2

while revolting against the sacrifices. This introduced a new element of enlightenment (Jnana marg) through meditation (Dhyana) instead of the traditional approach of sacrificial work (karma marg). Meditation was assigned a higher value in the new scheme of philosophical development. As a result, more intrepid thinkers arose, some who wanted to disregard the Vedas completely and who openly rebelled against them. Jainism and Buddhism, among others, reflected a powerful systematic and philosophical departure from the massive and elaborate Vedic sacrifices and ceremonies.

Second, there grew a monotheistic movement which denied the necessity, if not also the reality, of the Vedic gods together with the preeminence of the Brahmins in spiritual matters, and accepted devotion (bhakti marg) as the way of pleasing Gods such as Vishnu or Shiva.

The intellectuals, while rejecting the Vedas as a source of knowledge and devotion, emphasized a vigorous system of discipline based on a code of moral and spiritual behavior. They were also averse to the inequities of the caste system, particularly to the high pretensions of the Brahmins. They were termed by the defenders of tradition and orthodoxy as "heterodox" thinkers. They believed that life was full of ills, and escape could be effected only through meditation on devotion to the highest truth.

With the rise of the heterodox movement, the mass of sacrifices and ceremonies which were inculcated and supported by the authority of the Vedas began to fade away. A new and powerful religious current of the quest of the Absolute originated. This idea progressively acquired a predominant character of the Indian culture in future generations.

Dr. K. M. Munshi has described its development in the following words:

Long before the dawn of the "Historical Period" a central idea was already becoming clear from a mass of incoherent urges which went under the generic name of dharma. Man was not a struggling worm but a 'self', of an essence with a supraphysical destiny which can only be attained by a mastery over the misery which was man's lot on earth; this mastery in its turn can only be achieved by integrating personality by self-discipline so as to raise the 'self' above the flux of passing sense experience. The discipline implied a double process, the relinquishment of the greed for life and the broadening of the personal self into a universal self. The end of this discipline was variously named:

self-realization (siddhi)

emancipation (mukti, moksha)

freedom (nirvana)

enlightenment (jnana)

bliss (ananda)

In substance it was absolute integration of human personality (kaivalya) freed from the limitations of attachment and fear. (3)3

It was this experience of different philosophical theories and interpretations that Mahavir inherited. A stage was reached when the problems of life and mysteries of the universe could be unraveled without presupposing the existence of God or the revelation of His will. Vardhamana Mahavir and Gautama Buddha provided the strong base for this intellectual make up of the country. Bhagwan Mahavir

22. The essence of the Vedas, which is the last portion of the Vedic literature.

33. The History and Culture of the Indian People: The Age of Imperial Unity, Vol, II. R. C. Majumdar, General Editor; Bharatiya Vidya Bhayan, Bombay, 1968.

attempted to build a logical system of intellectual pursuit and religious organization based on individual experience, by individual effort and for individual salvation.

1.4 ANTIQUITY OF JAINISM

Jainism contains the traces of the earliest developments of philosophical thinking in the history of mankind. It has been generally recognized that Jain philosophy was sufficiently advanced before the tenth century B.C. Earlier glimpses of Jainism have, however, been lost in the antiquity, and the available sources of information do not provide hope of recovering them. According to the traditional Jain literature, there have been twenty-four Tirthankaras who reinstated the religious order at various times. The historical details of the first twenty-two Tirthankars are not known, although traditional account of them found in Jain literature is not altogether insufficient to understand the line of Jain thought. According to traditional information, Jainism was propagated by the kshatriya (of warrior class) princes. It repudiated, explicitly or implicitly, the Brahminical claim that the Vedas were infallible sources of spiritual truth and the rituals prescribed therein, the means of salvation.

The lives and teachings of the last two Tirthankars, Bhagwan Parshvanath and Bhagwan Mahavir, are historical facts. From their times onwards, we get an accurate outline of the growth of Jain religion and philosophy. Historically, it is recognized that long before the Christian Era, Jain metaphysical thought had crystallized into a definite school of philosophy. It marked a considerable departure from the Vedic system and was, therefore, looked upon as a heterodox system. It was not merely a reform of the orthodox religion, but an altogether separate religious system.

2.0 MAHAVIR - THE TWENTY-FOURTH TIRTHANKAR

2.1 LIFE SKETCH OF BHAGWAN MAHAVIR

Jain tradition speaks of twenty-four Tirthankars (ford-makers across the stream of existence), each of whom preached the doctrine to his own age. Of these, the first was Bhagwan Rishabhadev who preached the religion of nonviolence (ahimsa dharma) prior to the advent of the Aryans in India. The last of these was Bhagwan Mahavir, who lived from 599 B.C. to 527 B.C. He revealed the doctrine of nonviolence as preached by Bhagwan Rishabhadev. Gosala Makkhaliputta, the head of the Ajivika sect, and Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, were Mahavir's contemporaries.

The parents of Mahavir belonged to the lay following of Bhagwan Parshvanath, the twenty-third Tirthankar, who was the son of King Ashvasen and Queen Vama of Varanasi. Parshvanath lived as a householder for thirty years, then became an ascetic, and after performing penance for eighty-four days, attained enlightenment (omniscience). He lived for a full hundred years and attained nirvana on Mount Sammedashikhar, some 250 years before Mahavir.

Mahavir was born on the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra, the first month of the Indian calendar, corresponding to March 30, 599 B.C., in a suburb of Vaishali called Kundgram, now known as Basukund. His parents were Siddhartha, a wealthy nobleman, and Trishala, a sister of Chetak, an eminent Lichchhavi prince of Vaishali. Mahavir's original name was Vardhamana. His more popular name Mahavir was bestowed on him later. He is frequently referred to as "the venerable ascetic Mahavir".

Mahavir became a monk at the age of thirty. He practiced severe asceticism (tapaschariya) throughout his life, abandoning his clothing and wandering as a sky-clad (Digambar) monk. His ways of meditation, days of austerities, and mode of behavior

furnish a beautiful example for monks in religious life. His spiritual pursuit lasted for twelve years. During the period of penance, Mahavir met several monks to enrich his spiritual experience.

In 557 B.C., after twelve years of austerities and meditation, on the tenth day of the bright half of Vaishakha, the second month of the Indian calendar, Mahavir attained omniscience (absolute knowledge). Henceforth, he began his career as a path-maker and a religious teacher.

For the next thirty years, Mahavir, the wandering ascetic, preached the doctrine of eternal truth. He wandered foreight months of the year and spent four months of the rainy season (Chaturmas) in some large town such as Champa, Vaishali, Rajagriha, Mithila and Shravasti. He attracted people from all walks of life, rich and poor, kings and commoners, men and women, princes and priests, touchables and untouchables. Many famous contemporary kings and nobles thronged to listen to his spiritual discourses and became his disciples.

On the fifteenth day of the dark half of Kartik, the eighth month of the Indian calendar, in 527 B.C., at the age of seventy-two, Tirthankar Mahavir attained Nirvana at a place called Majjhima Pava, the present Pavapuri in the Patna district of the Indian state of Bihar. On the night of his salvation, the kings and heads of the two clans, the Mallas and the Lichchhavis, assembled and celebrated the Festival of Lights (Deepavali) in his honor.

2.2 SOME SIGNIFICANT POINTS

From what has been stated above, certain significant points emerge about the life and teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir.

- (1) Jainism existed before Mahavir and his teachings were based on those of his predecessors. Thus, unlike Buddha, Mahavir was more of a reformer and propagator of an existing religious order than the founder of a new faith. He followed the well established creed of his predecessor Tirthankar Parshvanath. However, Mahavir did reorganize the philosophical tenets of Jainism to correspond to his times.
- (2) Mahavir was a brilliant personality. He occupies a unique place among the greatest men of the world, He was an oasis in the arid desert of confusion about the ultimate goal of human life. He was a philosopher as well as a Tirthankar. As a philosopher, he made his enquiries in order to

solve the problem of life. As a Tirthankar, he gave a new revelation to the Dharma preached by his predecessors. Mahavir adopted two steps to unravel reality:

- a. One, he reconciled his realization of the innerworld with the realm of reason.
 - b. Two, he made enquiries into the nature of life and of existence through his own personal observations, knowledge and experience.
- (3) Mahavir was undoubtedly a product of the best of Aryan culture. Besides the inherited philosophy of his predecessors, he was also inspired by other Indian schools of thought. The contemporary ideals of freedom from worldly misery and the thought of transmigration profoundly affected his thinking. This led him to the goal of integrated personality through the conquest of human weaknesses. The kindred forces which were united against the Brahminical religious traditions, gave birth to the theory of renunciation and self-realization (Nivritti Marg). Mahavir was at the forefront of this ferment at the intellectual, spiritual and social levels. Further, he visualized relativism (Syadvada) which means that isolated and opposite objects are bound in one harmonious stream. Thus, scrupulous exhaustiveness became the main characteristic of his approach.
- The spiritual power and moral grandeur of Mahavir's teachings impressed the masses. He made religion simple and natural, free from elaborate ritual complexities. His teachings reflected the popular impulse towards internal beauty and harmony. Mahavir made Jainism the focal point for the students of other schools of thoughts as well.
- (4) Mahavir emphasized the need of a comprehensive outlook - the multiplicity of viewpoints (Anekantavada). For him, there was no question of exaltation or domination of anyone's spiritual or ideological contribution. In his view, a dissenting opinion was a natural human tendency. The wisdom, however, lies in harmonizing the dissensions.
- (5) Mahavir was quite successful in eradicating from human intellect the conception of God as creator or protector. He also denounced the worship of God (and of gods and goddesses) as a means of salvation. He taught the idea of supremacy of human life and stressed the importance of the positive. His message of nonviolence (ahimsa), truth (satya), non-stealing (acharya), celibacy (brahmacharya) and non-possessiveness (aparigraha) is full of universal compassion. He said that a living body is not merely an integration of limbs but it is the abode of soul which potentially has infinite perception (anant darshan), infinite knowledge (anant jnana), infinite power (anant virya) and infinite bliss (anant sukha). Mahavir's message reflects freedom and spiritual joy of soul.
- (6) In matters of spiritual enfranchisement, as envisioned by Mahavir, both men and women were on an equal footing. The lure of renunciation and liberation attracted women as well. Many women followed Mahavir's path and renounced the world in search of spiritual advancement.
- (7) Like Buddhism, Jainism also received royal patronage. The king of Magadh, Shrenik, and Mahavir's maternal uncle, Chetak, among others, were devoted to Mahavir. However, the acceptance of Mahavir's teachings by the masses was the most important factor.

In short, Mahavir contributed to the process of unifying India and developing its collective conscience by integrating Aryan and pre-Aryan elements into a composite culture and spirituality.

In a few centuries after Mahavir's nirvana, Jain religious order (Sangha) grew more and more complex. There were schisms on some minor points although they did not affect the original doctrines as preached by the Tirthankar. Later generations saw the introduction of ritualistic complexities which almost placed Mahavir and other Tirthankars on the throne of deities.

Mahavir's indifference to the worship of God was overshadowed by the role normally assigned to God in other religions.

3.0 JAIN PHILOSOPHY

During the period of his spiritual pursuit, Bhagwan Mahavir developed sympathy for suffering, the idea of sanctity of all life, liberality and compassion towards all, and toleration of all religious views. He organized his spiritual order based on his own inner experiences. His philosophical ideas have a refreshingly attractive message appealing to the common sense of man. Some tenets of his philosophy are outlined below.

3.1 MULTIPLICITY OF viewpoints (ANEKANTAVADA) AND RELATIVISM (SYADAVADA)

The spring point of the doctrine of multiplicity of viewpoints is that human knowledge cannot be painted in terms of religious colors. Knowledge knows no limitations and boundaries.

Religion and philosophy are not limited to a particular country, period, or group. Different points of view are mere additions to the human knowledge. When viewed together, they present the picture of universal reality. Moreover, the knowledge of reality cannot be obtained through the senses. Whatever we perceive through the senses is merely the appearance, it is not the world of reality. If we want to reach reality, we must withdraw from the world of senses into that of inner experience. It is through the combination of proper perception (samyak darshan), proper knowledge (samyak jnana) and proper conduct (samyakcharitra) that we can attain self-realization and understand the nature of reality.

The fundamental philosophical base of Jainism is therefore the comprehensive view of reality. Jain philosophy points out that the ultimate reality is complex in character and in order to comprehend its nature, we must examine it from various points of view. Attending to a particular aspect of reality to the exclusion of other aspects may serve some specific purpose under certain circumstances, but it is only a partial vision of reality. Over emphasis on a particular aspect of reality not only distorts reality, but it also leads to dogmatic slavery, mutual misunderstanding and conflict of interests. To recognize the nature of reality in all its completeness, one has to review a variety of aspects before arriving at any conclusion.

The logical crux of the aforesaid process is that there is always the possibility of many standpoints in relation to the same object. The same object can have primarily two contradictory propositions, and, therefore, can be described from one standpoint that it exists (asti) and from another standpoint that it does not (nasti).

Every proposition is both "is" and "is not" at the same time, and it is certainly impossible to speak of the same from a single point of view. Two propositions, one affirmative (asti) and the other negative are always asserted with reference to four aspects of a thing:

Substance (dravya)

Place (kshetra)

Time (kaal)

Form (bhava)

A thing is or exists in respect of its own substance, but it does not exist in respect of other substances. Take the case of a piece of furniture. It may be made of ordinary jungle wood and it may be so painted as to appear as rosewood. Now, the furniture is (exists as) jungle wood, but is not (does not exist as) rosewood.

Similarly, a thing exists in its own place and it does not, at the same time, exist in any other place. While the cow is in her shed, she is not in the field.

Again, a thing is in its own time and is not in another time. Raja Rammohan Roy existed before Gandhiji, but did not exist after Gandhiji.

Likewise, a thing, while existing in its own form does not exist in another form. Water below freezing point exists as a solid, but does not exist then as a liquid.

These four aspects form the asti-nasti-vada. This represents a pragmatic view in which an object may be affirmatively described from one point of view of its own substance, place, time and form, and negatively described from the standpoint of the substance, place, time and form of another thing. It is, therefore, clear that both the propositions, the affirmative and the negative, are true with reference to the same object of reality.

In short, asti-nasti-vada implies the prediction of contradictory attributes of asti ("is") and nasti ("is not") to the same reality. It is interesting to compare this with Hegel's dialectic principle which says that an idea or event (thesis) generates its opposite (antithesis) which leads to a reconciliation of opposites (synthesis).

Jain thinkers have further developed the logic into the theory of seven aspects (saptabhangi) which postulates that as many as seven modes of prediction are possible in any given case.

Therefore, no definite or absolute statements can be made about any question. To the question "Is there soul?" the Jain logic would admit of seven answers. These are:

- (1) is
- (2) is not
- (3) is and is not
- (4) is inexpressible
- (5) is and is inexpressible
- (6) is not and is inexpressible
- (7) is, is not and is inexpressible

There is an aspect in which there is soul, there is also an aspect in which it is not possible to describe soul, and so on. This is equivalent to saying that knowledge is only probabilistic. The theory is also called relativism (syadavada, the doctrine of "may be").

The doctrines of multiplicity of viewpoints and relativism, as postulated by Jains, have a unique importance today. The present-day world is too circumscribed and interdependent as never before in the history of mankind. In order to achieve the objectives world peace, harmonious individuality and integrated personality of the individual, the contributions of different sages, faiths, philosophers and thinkers of different nations and periods must not only be fully recognized, but should also be given their proper place. This will bring out a common outlook based on justice and equality. The great philosopher statesman, late Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, has rightly observed that:

"Increasing control over the forces of nature has brought men of different regions nearer one another. Different cultures have, thus, been brought into close proximity. Closer brought into one common pool of human knowledge. They also facilitate the task of philosophy in affecting a reconciliation between the different principles underlying the outlook of different civilizations. The evolution of a world philosophy has become today a matter not only of theoretical interest, but of great practical urgency."⁽⁴⁾⁴

Obviously, the dogmatism emphasizing only the point of view of one religion, philosophy, nation, period or class of people will not satisfy modern, intelligent men. Multiplicity of viewpoints (anekantavada) is an approach to solve the problems of life from a truly integrated point of view. It provides a synoptic view to bring together in one compass the knowledge attained by different peoples at different times. Relativism (syadavada) is the first step towards human happiness, peaceful prosperity, world civility, coexistence and cooperative universality in this war-torn, fearful and tense situation of the world today.

3.2 THE CONCEPT OF ENTITY (DRAVYA)

Viewed in terms of the comprehensive character of reality, every object in nature has three aspects:

Origination (utpada)

44. History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western, Vol. I; pp 26-27; Edited by S. Radhakrishnan, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1952.

Destruction (vyaya)

Permanence (dhrauvya)

A faithful and natural description of reality takes into consideration the three aspects:

Permanence in the midst of change identity in the midst of diversity unity in the midst of multiplicity

For example, a plant begins its life, grows and then dies. However, the plant maintains its identity throughout its process of growth.

The complex nature of reality as a permanence in the midst of origination and destruction, has been described by Jain thinkers by the concept of entity (dravya). An entity is defined to have existence (sat), which in turn implies origination, destruction and permanence. An entity possesses its own characteristic qualities or attributes (gunas) and it assumes a variety of modes, modifications or forms (pariyayas). Attributes and modes are inseparable from an entity.

In other words, an entity apart from its attributes and attributes apart from their entity are mere abstractions.

The modifications that an entity undergoes refer to the various shapes and forms into which a substance is transformed either naturally or artificially. A living being, through the process of growth, undergoes various changes such as childhood, youth and old age. These changes are the natural modifications of the living being. Modifications can also be affected artificially. For example, clay is molded by the potter into various shapes, and gold is made by a goldsmith into various ornaments. While undergoing various modifications, either natural or artificial, the basic substance remains the same. The intrinsic attributes remain unchanged and are permanent, while the forms change and are transient.

An entity (substance) is permanent (nitya) considering its attributes, and it is transient (anitya) from the standpoint of its forms (modifications). The point of view of the attributes is known as substantial standpoint (dravyarthik naya) and the point of view of the modes (forms) is called modal standpoint (pariyarthik naya).

3.3 STRUCTURAL VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE

The world of reality consists of two classes of objects:

Conscious (chetan) objects and non-conscious (achetan) objects. These are otherwise called the living (jivas) and nonliving (ajivas).

(a) Nonliving:

The nonliving or non-conscious is the universe minus the living or conscious. It is not exactly equivalent to matter, for, besides matter, it includes such entities as space and time. There are five nonliving entities. The most important of these is matter (including energy) which, in Jainism, is called pudgala. Material objects are constituted of atoms (paramanus). The atoms of different elements make up physical objects which are called aggregates (skandhas in Jainism). The whole physical world is itself a super aggregate (mahaskandha). Material objects can be perceived by the senses (indriyas) and have the sensory qualities (touch, taste, smell and color) as their attributes.

The second nonliving entity is space (akash). It accommodates other entities of the universe. The portion of space that contains other substances is called physical space (Lokakash), and beyond it there is empty space (alokakash) which is just a void.

The third and fourth nonliving entities are medium of motion (dharma) and medium of rest (adharma)⁽⁵⁾. These two pervade the whole of lokakash. The medium of motion supports the motion of the living and nonliving objects while the medium of rest keeps them steady and in equilibrium.

Time (kaal) is the fifth entity of the universe. It is made up of atomic moments. Time is real and it cannot be dismissed as illusory. Time maintains the reality of change and motion in physical realm, and growth and development in the living world.

55. In this context, the Sanskrit words, dharma and adharma do not have their usual meanings.

The space, medium of motion, medium of rest, time and the souls (described below) do not possess sensory qualities. Thus they cannot be perceived by senses. They can only be postulated. They make the physical world what it is.

(b) Conscious or Living Beings:

A living being is a conscious entity. It is the most important aspect of reality. The conscious being (jiva) is also called soul. It knows and feels. It acts and is acted upon. It suffers by its association with matter and is born again and again, only to suffer. There is a plurality of souls in the universe. Each soul is subject to the same laws of karma and rebirth. The highest endeavor of the soul is to free itself from this bondage of karma and attain salvation.

Souls are divided into two major groups: Liberated (mukta) souls and worldly (samsari) souls. Worldly souls are in the bondage of karma and are subject to birth, growth, old age and death which are characteristic of this world.

The classification of the living beings (worldly souls) is based on the number of sense organs (indriyas) present in the living beings. The lowest of these are the one-sensed (ekendriya) living beings which are immobile (sthavar). They are endowed with only one sense, that of touch (sparsh). Plants and trees belong to this class of living beings. There are also other microscopic single-sensed organisms (sukshmaekendriya jivas) which are subtle and invisible to the naked eye. These microscopic organisms are found in earth, water, air, etc.

The next higher living beings are mobile (trasa). These are:

two-sensed (dwindriya) having the senses of touch and taste

three-sensed (trindriya) having the senses of touch, taste and smell

four-sensed (chaturindriya) possessing the senses of touch, taste, smell and sight

five-sensed (panchendriya), having the senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing

All higher animals belong to the class of five-sensed beings. Almost all five-sensed living beings are endowed with a mind (manas), the faculty of thinking. Man is a five-sensed living being with a mind. Besides human beings, according to Jainism, there are heavenly beings (devas) and beings living in hell (narak).

The five nonliving entities together with the living beings are aspects of reality in Jainism.

3.4 KARMA THEORY

Bhagwan Mahavir visualized that the world is full of misery and sorrows, and therefore, he concluded that the fundamental object of religion should be to help the worldly souls cross the river of sorrows and obtain deliverance from the cycles of births and deaths. The root cause of the soul's worldly career is its own actions which associate it with different types of external material particles (karma). There are the following eight types of karma:

1. The perception-obscuring (darshanavarni) karma
2. The knowledge-obscuring (jnanavarni) karma
3. The feeling-producing (vedaniya) karma
4. The deluding (mohaniya) karma
5. The life-span-determining (aayu) karma
6. The physique-determining (naam) karma
7. The status-determining (gorta) karma
8. The obstructing (antaraya) karma

All living beings, whether human or sub-human, are subject to the influence of these eight types of karma.

According to another classification, karma are of two kinds:

- physical (dravya) karma which are material particles
- abstract (bhava) karma which are impure mental dispositions

The physical karmic particles constitute the karmic body associated with the soul. Around this subtle body, the gross material body is built through nutrition from the environment.

It is the abstract karma (the feelings and emotions) which is responsible for attracting material karmic particles to the soul. The physical karma in its turn influences the psychological disposition. Thus a psycho-physical cycle is maintained between the physical karma and abstract karma.

One causes changes in the other although there is no direct interaction between the two. Material changes must be attributed to material antecedent, and similarly, psychological changes must be attributed to antecedent psychological conditions. The attempt to get rid of the association with matter (karma) entails avoiding impure psychological disposition in its own consciousness. A course of regulating the combined activity of body, speech and mind (yoga) and penance (tapa) has been prescribed for the purpose.

Emancipation from this mundane existence can be effected only by the individual self. Salvation can be achieved through proper conduct and austerities rather than sacrifices, rituals and prayers to God. Although complete renunciation of the world and severe austerities which can be practiced only by a homeless monk, are necessary for elimination of the cycle of birth and death, the life of a layman (grishastha) is also regarded as an important preparatory stage in the process of deliverance. Thus varying degrees of moral and spiritual code of conduct have been prescribed for laymen (shravakas) and for monks (sadhus) as part of the disciplinary regulations. Asceticism and abstentions are essential for attaining freedom from the bondage of karma.

3.5 THEORY OF HUMAN EXCELLENCE

By practicing yoga and penance (tapa), every soul can climb, step by step, to different stages of perfection, becoming purer and purer at every stage until it reaches spiritual glory from which there is no return. Through the process of yoga and penance, the soul can get rid of the worldly environment and ultimately attain its pristine state. The spiritual salvation thus achieved shines forth with all its glory just like the sun when the obstructive clouds disperse and disappear.

The stage of spiritual perfection is, no doubt, isolated, but is associated with the infinite foursome (Anant Chatushtaya), namely, infinite perception, infinite knowledge, infinite power and infinite bliss, which are the intrinsic characteristics of the perfect soul. Each individual is the architect of his own spiritual destiny. Man's emancipation from suffering does not depend upon the mercy of any superhuman authority. By living an austere life of purity and virtue, one can escape the ills of worldly life and can ultimately achieve salvation.

It is clear from what has been stated above that man is placed on the highest pedestal among the souls in bondage because it is only man who is capable of attaining the ultimate spiritual goal. He is the only being in this world who is proximate to salvation. There is no Supreme being to liberate the worldly beings. Even the heavenly beings cannot directly attain liberation. They must be reborn as humans before they can hope to achieve salvation. This is because only man can perform yoga and penance necessary for breaking up all the shackles of bondage. Every soul possesses the potential of becoming emancipated and there is a whole galaxy of deified men who have attained greatness by their complete spiritual purification.

3.6 THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Jain thinkers have described the following five kinds of knowledge:

- Sensory cognition (mati jnana)
- Literal knowledge (shrut jnana)
- Clairvoyance (avadhi jnana)
- Telepathy (manahparyaya jnana)

Omniscience (keval jnana) or absolute knowledge

As distinguished from other systems which consider senseperception as direct knowledge, Jains define direct knowledge as the perception by the soul without any intermediary.

Accordingly, the first two kinds of knowledge are considered as indirect (paroksha) by Jain thinkers since they are acquired through sense organs or books.

The last three kinds of knowledge are immediate (pratyaksha) or direct knowledge.

Clairvoyance enables a person to have visions of objects and events in distant places or in distant times. This capacity may be acquired through psychological development.

Telepathy is the ability to know the ideas and thoughts of others. It is the insight to the psychological events taking place in others' minds. It is said to be acquired through rigorous discipline and concentration.

The absolute knowledge or omniscience is attained by complete self-realization and by getting rid of perception-obscuring, knowledge-obscuring, deluding and obstructing karmas.

Omniscience is coextensive with reality. There is no difference of time such as past, present and future in the case of omniscience since it is able to comprehend reality in its completeness.

According to Jain thinkers, the object of knowledge is not a creation of mind, rather the knowledge and the object of knowledge are distinct from each other. Jains maintain the view that the physical object in the external world is independent of knowledge and cannot be created or changed by the knowing mind. The object of knowledge may also be psychological facts.⁽⁶⁾⁶

3.7 JAIN ETHICS - PATH TO SALVATION (MOKSHA MARG)

The keynote of Jainism rings with religious tolerance, ethical purity, spiritual contentment, harmony between self and one's environment. Its central theme is not based on a theoretical science.

Rather, it considers religion as a science of ethical practice. It conceives the human body not as a toy-machine to play with, but as a chariot on which the soul rides towards salvation. In the scheme of Jain system, life on earth is not merely sorrowful. It is on probation to conduct itself to successively higher and higher forms of existence. The conduct of the present life should be aimed at the attainment of a permanent state of being from which there is no return. Every soul can attain godhood, i.e., supreme spiritual individuality by realizing its intrinsic purity and perfection.

In his conduct, an individual can be guided by the examples of five benevolent personalities (panchparameshthi). These are:

- Supreme human beings (arahantas)
- pure souls (siddhas)
- master teachers (acharyas)
- scholarly monks (upadhyayas)
- ascetics (sadhus)

Aranantas are persons who have destroyed four types of karmas, mentioned above, and have attained omniscience.

Siddhas are souls that are completely free from karmic bondage and have attained salvation.

66. The knowledge related to psychological facts is practically the relation between the thought process and physical events which are identical in nature with the process of knowing. Even here the facts in consciousness revealed by knowledge are considered independent of the process of knowing, otherwise the knowledge so obtained will become illusory and unreal. Knowledge is self-luminous in as much as it reveals itself just as it illuminates the external objects.

The first step in the process of self-realization is to discard superstitious beliefs and to adopt a rational and judicious attitude in life. Jainism lays down a definitive course of practical moral discipline, contemplation of the highest truth and reorientation of life in light of these for attaining ultimate reality.

In common with other Indian systems, it prescribes a path to salvation (moksha marg), which consists of the three jewels (ratnatraya) of Jainism:

proper perception (samyak darshan)

proper knowledge (samyak jnana)

proper conduct (samyakcharitya)

The three jewels are, obviously, necessary for a successful life. This threefold discipline helps us realize our own intrinsic purity. The three jewels must be cultivated collectively to ensure salvation. Individually, they are incomplete and insufficient because they are mutually dependent. In isolation, perception or knowledge or conduct causes conflicts or tensions and vitiates the environment.

Collectively, the three jewels produce harmony, contentment and blissfulness with the progressive march of the soul to the higher planes.

Proper perception creates awareness of reality, proper knowledge impels the person to action and proper conduct leads him to the attainment of the desired objective.

Proper conduct entails the following five vows:

Nonviolence (ahimsa)

Truth (satya)

Non-stealing (achaurya)

Abstention from sensuality (brahmacharya)

Nonpossessiveness (aparigraha)

Five Vows

Ahimsa is based on love and kindness for all living beings. It has been repeatedly pointed out in Jain scriptures that even the thought of evil is as bad as action resulting in injury.

Nonviolence of Jainism is not a negative virtue. It is based upon the positive quality of universal love which is the result of a recognition of kinship among all living beings. One who is actuated by this ideal cannot be indifferent to the suffering of others.

Satya implies being not only truthful but also pleasant and wholesome.

Achaurya consists in not taking others' property without his consent, or by unjust or immoral methods.

Brahmacharya means abstaining from sexual indulgence.

Aparigraha means nonpossessiveness of property and giving up greed.

The five vows are observed with voluntary limitations by the householders (anuvratīs) and absolutely by the homeless ascetics (mahavratīs).

Jain ethical code does not prescribe duties according to caste or other social inequalities. All men and women are equal in birth and everyone is entitled to be either a householder or an ascetic according to his or her choice. The observance of the ethical code by an individual does not only develop his spirituality, but also helps in contributing to social justice, economic equality, humanization of culture and civilization, human happiness, class harmony as against class conflict, and growth of an egalitarian society.

Jain religion lays special emphasis on nonviolence and truth. In fact, these two are the principal religious ideas. The spiritual value of Jain code of conduct has been upheld throughout Jain literature. Victory over suffering, calm attitude towards cruelty and persecution, patience towards opponents are some of the

main characteristics of Jain ascetics, The Jain code of conduct presupposes an extraordinary courage and peace of mind which originates only from spiritual integrity and strength.

"It is this strength of the spiritual power of the self that was recognized by Gandhiji in his political struggle against odds. Both in South Africa and in India he successfully made use of this spiritual weapon against the political opponents who were equipped with ordinary weapons of destruction and suppression. Thus Gandhiji raised ahimsa and satya to universal importance. His socio-political experiments proved beyond doubt the value of this spiritual power. Equipped with this weapon of ahimsa and satyagraha (7)7 one can overcome any amount of opposition depending upon brutal force. While he was alive Gandhi dreamed of offering this spiritual weapon to the world at large--a world disturbed by mutual suspicion, always ready for warfare. He thought that this spiritual ideal would be able to serve as a cure for the various ills that afflicted the world at large. Let us hope that this spirit will ultimately prevail and convert the world of warring classes and nations into a world of peace and harmony where all can live in happiness, without destruction of race, religion and nationality," (8)8

77. Satyagraha means peaceful non-cooperation.

88. A. Chakravarti, Jain Philosophy; History of Philosophy, op. cit. p. 151.

4.0 CERTAIN SPECIAL FEATURES OF JAINISM

4.1 THE ONTOLOGICAL VIEW

The ontological view of Jains is concerned primarily with the life and existence rather than the creation of the universe and the conception of God. Jainism, however, cannot be regarded as agnosticism or metaphysical nihilism. It is to the credit of Jain thinkers that they constructed a philosophy and theory of reality out of the negative approach of those who were protesting the dogmatism of the Vedas.

Jainism does not deny reality. Jain philosophers adopted a middle course by propounding a theory that the world consisted of two eternal, uncreated, coexisting but independent categories of substances: The conscious (jiva) and the unconscious (ajiva). They developed the logic that the world is not altogether unknowable; only one should not be absolutely certain about one's assertions. Jain philosophers said that moral and religious values must be brought out of dogmatic slavery.

Wisdom must be proved by reason which, in turn, depends on the experiences of self and of others. The human experience based on reason constitutes the data for the discovery of reality.

4.2 CONCEPT OF GODHOOD

Professor Surendranath Dasgupta, the famous philosopher-historian, has described the concept of Godhood as follows:

"The true God is not the God as the architect of the universe, nor the God who tides over our economic difficulties or panders to our vanity by fulfilling our wishes, but it is the God who emerges within and through our value-sense, pulling us up and through the emergent ideals and with whom I may feel myself to be united in the deepest bonds of love. The dominance of value in all its forms presupposes love, for it is the love for the ideal that leads us to forget our biological encumbrances. Love is to be distinguished from passion by the fact that while the latter is initiated biologically, the former is initiated from a devotedness to the ideal. When a consummating love of this description is generated, man is raised to Godhood and God to man."
(9)

This corresponds to the Jain approach to Godhood. In Jainism, God is the supreme manifestation of human excellence.

4.3 PESSIMISM vs. OPTIMISM

Jainism is often considered to have a prevailing note of pessimism about life. This is not true. The tone of hopefulness pervades all aspects of Jain philosophy. "We hear much indeed of philosophy", observes Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "as a call to transcend the narrowness of egoism and identify ourselves with something greater than ourselves as the way of salvation, but this is not in order to escape from the ineradicable evil of existence but in order to find ourselves in things that give to existence its only true value." For "in the man who transcends his narrow self and merges it in the life of the whole philosophy as truth, religion as devotion and morality as goodness meet." This is similar to the Jain view of life described earlier.

4.4 THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN PEACE

We are all pilgrims of peace. So far, we have not succeeded in our quest. No doubt we have discovered science and science has given us new powers but it has not brought peace. The time has now come when philosophy and religion should turn their attention to the problem of peace on earth. Jainism, owing to its comprehensive and accommodative nature, is well-equipped to solve the problem of world peace. Jainism preaches multiplicity of viewpoints (anekantavada) which weans us from too exclusive occupations and dogmatic suppositions. The gigantic experiments going on throughout the world need a fuller understanding of the minds of the leaders of thought, irrespective of their, social outlook, political beliefs, religious creed or nationality. With the complexity and vastness of the subject matter, the attainment of unanimity remains only an ideal. Great thinkers have made varied attempts to reach this ideal. It is essential that people should look at things from as many viewpoints as possible and reach an acceptable solution to problems.

4.5 TRUTH AND NONVIOLENCE

Jain ethical code is based on two main concepts: Nonviolence (ahimsa) and truth (satya). These are important not only for individual uplift but also for social welfare and prosperity. All the twenty-four Tirthankars preached nonviolence and truth for spiritual advancement as against sacrificial rituals. Nonviolence is based on sanctity of life and love for all living beings. Truth purifies the mind. Speaking pleasant and wholesome truth is nobler than silence.

In modern times, Mahatma Gandhi has demonstrated the value of these ideals. "I am being led to my religion", he says "through truth and nonviolence, i.e., love in the broadest sense.... Denial of God we have known. Denial of truth we have not known. The most ignorant among mankind have some truth in them. We are all sparks of truth. The sum total of these sparks is indescribable, as-yet-unknown-truth which is God. I am being daily led nearer to it by constant prayer." ...He further says, "To be sure to such religion, one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all life. Realization of truth is impossible without a complete merging of oneself in, and in identification with, this limitless ocean of life.

Hence, for me, there is no escape from social service, there is no happiness on earth beyond or apart from it. Social service here must be taken to include every department of life. In this scheme, there is nothing low, nothing high, all is one, though we seem to be many." (10)

4.6 JAINISM AS APPLIED INTELLIGENCE

Jainism is neither the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity (nishchaya) nor the practical pragmatism (vyavhara) alone. It is a combination of both. Both are essential for an integrated growth of man. Intellect is significant as a means to better practical moral adjustment. However, truth cannot be attained by reason alone without practical moral discipline of the passions and prejudices which warp human judgement. In short, Jainism is applied intelligence rather than pure science. It is a training in modesty rather than twisting the facts for a supposed explanation. Jainism influences life with deepest insight, widest farsight, synthetic disinterestedness (vitaraga) and penetrating comprehensiveness in man's journey towards salvation--the state of soul having infinite perception, infinite knowledge, infinite bliss and infinite strength.

By developing insight, man acquires the quality of distinguishing between the real and the unreal, and of grasping of the ultimate nature of things. By developing farsight, man acquires the quality of distinguishing the eternal values from transitory ones and lives his own life for accomplishing the eternal values. The quality of disinterestedness relieves a person from one-sided dependence. A comprehensive view helps man penetrate beneath the superficial and limited sphere, and leads him to the nature of reality.

It is primarily because of these features that Jainism has maintained its identity and has remained less hostile and more accommodative to fellow religious communities than some other heterodox systems.

9. Philosophy of Dependent Emergence in Contemporary Indian Philosophy, edited by S. Radhakrishnan and J. H. Muirhead. p. 285. George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1958.

10. Contemporary Indian Philosophy; op. cit. p. 21.

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