

The Solution of World Problems : A Jaina Perspective

We all are human beings first hence the problems, humanity is facing today, are our own. In fact, we, ourselves are solely responsible for their creation and naturally have to bear their consequences also. Become our earnest duty to ponder over their roots and causes, to suggest their solutions and to make honest efforts for their eradication.

Problem of Mental Tension and its Solution

The growth of scientific knowledge and outlook has reverly jolted our superstitions and false dogmas. But unfortunately, it has shaken our faith in spritual and human values also. Today, we have more knowledge of and faith in the atom and atomic power than the values needed for meaningful and peaceful life. We rely more on atomic weapons as our true rescuer than on our fellow-beings. The advancement in science and technology has provided us amenities for a pleasant living. Today the life on earth has become pleasant and luxurious as it was never before. Yet because of the selfish and materialistic outlook, nobody is happy and satisfied. This advancement, in all walks of life and knowledge, could not sublimate our animal and selfish nature. The animal instinct lying within us is still dominating

our individual and social behaviour. What, unfortunately has happened is that the intoxication of ambition and success made us more greedy and egoistic. Our ambitions and desires have no limits. They always remain unfulfilled and the create frustration. Frustration and resentments give birth to mental tensions. These days, the people and nations, more affluent materially having all the amenities of life, are more in the grip of tensions. Medical as well as psychological reports of advanced nations confirm this fact. This shows that the cause of our tensions is not scarcity of the object of necessities, but the endless desires and the lust for worldly enjoyment. Among the most burning problems, the world facing today, that once of mental tension is the prime one. We are living in tension all the time and even a pleasant sound sleep has become a dream. The single and most salient feature by which our age may be characterised is that of tensions.

As a matter of fact, all the problems, we are facing today are created by us hence, their consequences are also to be borne by us.

The main object of Jainism is to emancipate man from his sufferings i.e. mental tensions and thus to attain

equanimity or tranquility. First of all, we must know the causes of these mental tensions. To Jainism, the basic human sufferings are not physical but mental. These mental sufferings or tensions are due to our attachment towards worldly objects. It is the attachment, fully responsible for them. The famous Jaina text *Uttarādhyayana-sūtra* mentions: "The root of all sufferings : physical as well as mental, of every body including gods, is attachment which is the root cause of mental tension¹. Only a detached attitude towards the objects of worldly enjoyment can free mankind from mental tension. According to Lord Mahāvīra, to remain attached to sensuous objects is to remain in the whirl. Says he : "Misery is gone in the case of a man who has no delusion, while delusion is gone in the case of a man who has no desire; desire is gone in the case of a man who has no greed while greed is gone in the case of a man who has no attachment."² The efforts, made to satisfy the human desires through material objects, may be likened to the chopping off the branches while watering the roots. He further remarks that uncountable mountains of gold and silver like Kailāsa can not satisfy the desires of human beings because desires are endless like sky³. Thus, the lust for and the attachment towards the objects of worldly pleasure is the sole cause of human tensions.

If mankind is to be freed from mental tensions, it is necessary to grow a detached outlook in life. Jainism believes that the lesser the attachment, the greater will be the mental peace. It is only when attachment vanishes, the human mind becomes free from mental tensions and emotional disorders and attains equanimity, the ultimate goal of all our religious practices and pursuits⁴.

The Problem of Survival of Human Race and Disarmament

The second important problem, the world is facing today, is the problem of the survival of human race itself. Due to the tremendous advancement in war technology and nuclear weapons, the whole human race is standing on the verge of annihilation. Now it is not the question of survival of any one religion, culture or nation, but of the whole humanity. Today, we have guided missiles but unfortunately, unguided men. The madness, of one nation or even an individual, may lead to the destruction of the whole humanity. Because of the advancement in scientific knowledge and outlook our faculty of faith has been destroyed. When mutual faith and faith in higher values of co-operation and co-existence is destroyed, doubts take

place. Doubts cause fear, fear produces the sense of insecurity which results in accumulation of weapons. This mad race for accumulation of weapons, is likely to lead to the total annihilation of human race from this planet.

Thus, the problem of survival of mankind is related to the question of disarmament. To meet this aim first of all we will have to develop mutual faith or trust and thus remove the sense of fear and insecurity, the sole cause of armament-race, and then to check the mad race for weapons. Let us think what means have been suggested by the Jainas to solve the problem of human survival and to check the mad race for weapons. For Jainas, it is the sense of insecurity which causes fear and *vice a versa*. Insecurity results in the accumulation of weapons. So it is our prime duty to develop the sense of security among fellow beings. In *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, it is clearly mentioned that there is nothing higher than the sense of security which a human being can give to others⁵. The virtue of fearlessness is supreme. It is two-fold (1) one should not fear from others and (2) one should not cause fear to others. A real Jaina saint is one who is free from fear and enmity⁶. When the fear vanishes and enmity dissolves there is no need for armaments. Thus, the sense of security and accumulation of arm and weapons are related to each other. Though, arms and weapons are considered as means of security yet these, instead of giving security, generate fear and a sense of insecurity in the opposite party hence a mad race for accumulation of superior weapons starts. Lord Mahāvīra had seen this truth centuries before that there is no end to this mad race for weapons. In *Ācārāṅga* (C. 4th B.C.) he proclaimed "*atthi sattham pareṇaparam natthi asattham pareṇaparam*" i.e. there are weapons superior to each other, but nothing is superior to *aśastra* i.e. disarmament or non-violence⁷. It is the selfish and aggressive outlook of an individual or a society that gives birth to war and violence. They are the expressions and outcome of our sick mentality. It is through firm faith in mutual credibility and non-violence that humanity can get rid of this mad race for nuclear weapons and thus can solve the problem of its survival.

The Problem of War and Violence

At the root of all types of wars and violences there lies the feeling of discontentment as well as the will for power and possession. According to *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, the root of violence is attachment or will for possession. A book namely "*Tension that causes war*" tells us that economic inequalities, insecurities and frustrations create group

conflicts. It is true that in the old days the cause of war was only will for power and possession, whether it was the possession of women or land or money. But now-a-days economic inequality, over population, sense of insecurity and unequal treatment on the basis of caste, creed and colour may be added to the causes of wars. Jaina thinkers have all the time condemned war and violence. In *Uttarādhyayana*, it is said "If you want to fight, fight against your passions. It is much better to fight with one's own passionate self than to fight with others. If some one is to be conquered, it is no other than your own self. One who has got victory over one's own self is greater than the one who conquers thousand and thousand of warriors".

Jainas aim at complete eradication of war and violence from the earth, it is not possible as long as we are attached to and have possession for any thing-living or non-living, small or great. There are persons and nations who believe in the dictum 'might is right'. Though aggressive and unjust, war and violence is not acceptable to Jainas, they agree to the point that all those, attached to physical world and having a social obligation to protect others life and property, are unable to dispense with defensive war and violence. Jainas accept that perfect non-violence is possible only on spiritual plane by a spiritual being, completely free from attachment and aversion and having full faith in the immortality of soul and thus remaining undisturbed by the fear of death and sense of insecurity. The problem of war and violence is mainly concerned with worldly beings. They cannot dispense with defensive and occupational violence. But what is expected of them is to minimize the violence at its lowest. Ignorant and innocent persons should not be killed in wars at any cost. Jaina thinkers have suggested various methods and means for non-violent wars and for reducing violence even in just and defensive wars. They suggested two measures. First the war should be fought without weapons and in the refereeship of some one. The war, fought between Bharat and Bāhubali, is an example of such a non-violent war. In our times Gāndhījī also planned a non-violent method of opposition and applied it successfully. But it is not possible for all to oppose non-violently. Only a man, detached even to his body and his heart free from malice, can protect his right non-violently. In addition to this, such efforts can bear fruits only when raised against one with human heart. Its success becomes dubitable when it has to deal with some one without faith in human values and wants to serve his selfish motives. Jainism permits only a house-holder and not a monk to

protect his rights through violent means in exceptional cases. But the fact remains that violence for Jainas is an evil and it cannot be justified as a virtue in any case.¹⁰

Problem of Disintegration of Human Society

The disintegration of human race is also one of the basic problems, humanity is facing today, Really, the human race is one and it is us who have erected the barriers of caste, creed, colour nationalities etc. and thus disintegrated the human race. We must be aware of the fact that our unity is natural while these divisions are artificial and man made. Due to these artificial man made divisions, we all are standing in opposition to one another. Instead of establishing harmony and mutual love, we are spreading hatred and hostility in the name of these man-made artificial divisions of caste, creed and colour. The pity is that we have become thirsty of the blood of our own fellow beings. It is a well known fact that countless wars have been fought on account of these man-made artificial divisions. Not only this, we are claiming the superiority of our own caste, creed and culture over others and thus throwing one class against the other. Now, not only in India but all over the world class-conflicts are becoming furious day by day and thus disturbing the peace and harmony of human society.

Jainism, from its inception, accepts the oneness of human race and oppose these man made divisions of caste and creed. Lord Mahāvīra declared that 'human race is one'¹¹. He further says that there is nothing like inferiority and superiority among them. All men are equal in their potentiality. None is superior and inferior as such. It is not the class but the purification of self or a good conduct that makes one superior¹². It is only through the concept of equality and unity of mankind, which Jainism preached from the very beginning, that we can eradicate the problem of disintegration and class-conflict. It is mutual faith and co-operation which can help us in this regard. Jaina ācāryas hold that it is not the mutual conflict but mutual co-operation which is the law of living. In his work *Tattvārtha sūtra*, Umāsvāti maintains that mutual co-operation is the essential nature of human being¹³. It is only through mutual faith, co-operation and unity that we can pave the way to prosperity and peace of mankind. Jainas believe in the unity of mankind, but unity, for them doesn't mean absolute unity. By unity they mean an organic-whole, in which every organ has its individual existence but works for a common goal. i.e. human good. For them unity means, 'unity in diversity'. They maintain that every race, every

religion and every culture has full right to exist, with all its peculiarities, but at the same time, it is its pious duty to work for the welfare of the whole humanity and be prepared to sacrifice its own interest in the larger interest of the humanity. In the Jaina text *Sthānāṅgasūtra* we have the mention of *Grāmadharma*, *Nagaradhama*, *Rāstradhama* etc.¹⁴ referring to one's duty towards one's village, city and nation that has to be fulfilled.

Problem of Economic inequality and Consumer Culture

Economic inequality and vast differences in the mode of consumption are the two curses of our age. These disturb our social harmony and cause class-conflicts and wars. Among the causes of economic inequality, the will for possession, occupation or hoarding are the prime. Accumulation of wealth on the one side and the lust, for worldly enjoyment on the other, are jointly responsible for the emergence of present-day materialistic consumer culture. A tremendous advancement of the means of worldly enjoyment and the amenities of life has made us crazy for them. Even at the cost of health and wealth we are madly chasing them. The vast differences in material possession as well as in the modes of consumption have divided the human race into two categories of 'Haves' and 'Have nots'. At the dawn of human history also, undoubtedly, these classes were existent but never before the vices of jealousy and hatred were as alarming as these are today. In the past, generally these classes were co-operative to each other while at present they are in conflicting mood. Not only disproportionate distribution of wealth, but luxurious life led by affluent people these days, is the main cause for jealousy and hatred in the hearts of the poor.

Though wealth plays an important role in our life and considered as one of the four *puruṣārthas* i.e. the pursuits of life yet it cannot be maintained as the sole end of life. Jainas, all the time, consider wealth as a means to lead a life and not a destination, *Uttarādhyayanāsūtra* rightly observed, "that no one who is unaware of treasure of one's own protect one-self by wealth¹⁵. But it does not mean that Jaina *ācāryas* do not realise the importance of wealth in life. *Ācārya Amṛtacandra* maintains that the property or wealth commits violence. Jainas accept the utility of wealth; the only thing they want to say that wealth is always a means and it should not be considered as an end. Not doubt wealth is considered as a means by materialist and spiritualist as well, the only difference is that for materialist it is a means to lead a luxurious life while for spiritualist, as well as

Jainas, it is a means for welfare of human society and not for one's own enjoyment. The accumulation of wealth in itself is not an evil but it is the attachment towards its hoarding and lust for its enjoyment which makes it an evil. If we want to save the humanity from class-conflicts, we will have to accept self-imposed limitation on our possessions and modes of consumption. That is why Lord Mahāvira has propounded the vow of complete non-possession for monks and nuns and vow of limitation of possession for laities. Secondly, to have a check on our luxurious life and modes of consumption he prescribed the vow of limitation in consumption. The property and wealth should be used for the welfare of humanity and to serve the needy, so he prescribed the vow of charity. In Jainism the vow of charity is named as *Atithi saṁvibhāga*. It shows that charity is not an obligation towards the monks and weaker sections of society but through charity we give them what is their right. In Jainism it is the pious duty of a house-holder to fix a limit to his possessions as well as for his consumption and to use his extra money for the service of mankind. It is through the observation of these vows that we can restore peace and harmony in human society and eradicate economic inequality and class conflicts.

Problem of Conflicts in Ideologies and Faiths

Jainism holds that reality is complex. It can be looked at and understood from various view-points or angles. For example, we can have hundreds of photographs of tree from different angles. Though all of them give a true picture of it from a certain angle yet they differ from each other. Not only this but neither each of them, nor the whole of them can give us a complete picture of that tree. They individually as well as jointly will give only a partial picture of the tree. So is the case with human knowledge and understanding also, we can have only a partial and relative picture of reality. We can know and describe the reality only from a certain angle or view-point. Though every angle or view-point can claim that it gives a true picture of reality yet it gives only a partial and relative picture of reality. In fact, we cannot challenge its validity or truth-value, but at the same time we must not forget that it is only a partial truth or one-sided view. One who knows only partial truth or has a one-sided picture of reality, has no right to discard the views of his opponents as totally false. We must accept that the views of our opponents also may be true from some other angles. The Jaina theory of

Anekāntavāda emphasises that all the approaches to understand the reality give partial but true picture of reality, and due to their truth-value from a certain angle, we should have regard for other's ideologies and faiths. The *Anekāntavāda* forbids to be dogmatic and one-sided in our approach. It preaches us a broader outlook and open mindedness more essential to solve the conflicts taking place due to the differences in ideologies and faiths. Prof. T.G. Kalghatgi rightly observes, "The spirit of *Anekānta* is very much necessary in society, specially in the present days, when conflicting ideologies are trying to assert supremacy aggressively. *Anekānta* bring the spirit of intellectual and social tolerance".

For the present-day society what is awfully needed is the virtue of tolerance. This virtue of tolerance i.e. regard for others ideologies and faiths has been maintained in Jainism from the very beginning. Mahāvīra mentions in the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, those who praise their own faiths and ideologies and blame those of their opponents and thus distort the truth will remain confined to the cycle of birth and death¹⁷. Jaina philosophers have maintained that all the judgments are true by their own view-points, but they are false so far as they refute other's view-points totally. Here I would like to quote verses from works of Haribhadra (C.8th A.D.) and Hemcandra (C. 12th A.D.), which are the best examples of religious tolerance in Jainism. In *Lokatattvanirṇaya* Haribhadra says: "I bear no bias towards Lord Mahāvīra and no disregard to the Kapila and other saints and thinkers, whatsoever is rational and logical ought to be accepted¹⁸. Hemacandra in his *Mahādeostotra* says "I bow to all those who have overcome attachment and hatred, which are the cause of worldly existence, be they Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva or Jina¹⁹. Thus, Jaina saints have tried all the times to maintain harmony in different religious-faiths and tried to avoid religious conflicts.

The basic problems of present society are mental tensions, violence and conflicts of ideologies and faiths. Jainism had tried to solve these problems of mankind through the three basic tenets of non-attachment or non-possessiveness (*aprigraha*), non-violence (*ahimsā*) and non-absolutism (*Anekānta*). If mankind observes these three principles, peace and harmony can certainly be established in the world.

Problem of the Preservation of Ecological Equilibrium

The world has been facing a number of problems such as mental tensions, war and violence, ideological conflicts,

economic inequality, political subjugation and class conflicts not only today but from its remote past. Though some of these have assumed an alarming proportion today, yet, no doubt, the most crucial problem of our age is, for coming generation would be, that of ecological disbalance. Only a half century back we could not even think of it. But today, every one is aware of the fact that ecological disbalance is directly related to the very survival of human race. It indicates lack of equilibrium or disbalance of nature and pollution of air, water, etc. It is concerned not only with human beings and their environment, but animal life and plant-life as well.

Jainism presents various solution of this ecological problem through its theory of non-violence. Jainas hold that not only human and animal being but earth, water, air fire and vegetable kingdom are also sentient and living beings. For Jainas to nollute, to disturb, to hurt and to destroy them means commit the violence against them which is a sinful act., It is their firm belief that earth, water, air, fire and vegetable pave the way for the protection of ecological balance. Their every religious activity starts with seeking forgiveness and repentance for disturbing or hurting earth, water, air and vegetation. Jainācāryas had made various restrictions of the use of water, air and green vegetables, not only for monks and nuns but for laities also. Jainas have laid more emphasis on the protection of wild-life and plants. According to them hunting is one of the seven serious offences or vices. It is prohibited for every Jaina, whether a monk or a laity. Prohibitions for hunting and meat-eating are the fundamental conditions for being a Jaina. The similarity between plant-life and human life is beautifully explained in *Ācārāṅgasūtra*. To hurt the plant life is as sinful act as to hurt human life. In Jainism monks are not allowed to eat raw-vegetables and to drink unboiled water. They cannot enter the river or tank for bathing. Not only this, there are restrictions for monks on crossing the river on their way of tours. These rules are invogue and observed even today. The Jaina monks and nuns are allowed to drink only boiled water or lifeless water. They can eat only ripe fruits, if their seeds are taken out. Not only monks, but in Jaina community some householders are also observing these rules. Monks and nuns of some of the Jaina sects place a piece of cloth on their mouths to check the air pollution. Jaina monks are not allowed to pluck even a leaf or a flower from a tree. Not only this, while walking they always remain conscious that no insect or greenery is trampled under their feet. They use

very soft brushes to avoid the violence of smallest living beings. In short, Jaina monks and nuns are over conscious about the pollution of air, water, etc.

So far as Jaina house-holders are concerned they take such vows as to use a limited and little quantity of water and vegetables for their daily use. For a Jaina water is more precious than *ghee* or butter. To cut forest or to dry the tanks or ponds are considered very serious offence for an house-holder. As per rule, Jaina house-holders are not permitted to run such type of large scale industries which pollute air and water and lead to the violence of plant-life and animal-kingdom. The industries which produce smoke in large quantity are also prohibited by Jainācāryas. These types of industries are termed as '*mahārambha*' or greatest sin and larger violence. It is considered as one of the causes

for hellish life. Thus, Jainas take into consideration not only the violence of small creatures but even earth, water, air, etc. also. The fifteen types of industries and bussiness prohibited for the house-holder are mainly concerned with, ecological disbalance, pollution of environment and violence of living beings. Jainācāryas permitted agriculture for house-holders, but the use of pesticides in the agriculture is not agreeable to them, because it not only kills the insects but pollutes the atmospheres as well as our food items also. To use pesticides in agriculture is against their theory of non-violence. Thus, we can conclude that Jainas were well aware of the problem of ecological disbalance and they made certain restrictions to avoid the same and to maintain ecological equilibrium, for it is based on their supreme principle of non-violence.

References

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3. *Ibid.*, 9/48.
4. *Ācārāṅga*, (Byavar) 1/8/4.
5. *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, (Byavar) 1/6/23.
6. *Uttarādhyayana*, 6/6.
7. *Ācārāṅga*, 1/3/4.
8. *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, 1/1/1/1.
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17. *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, 1/1/2/23.
18. *Lokatattvanirṇaya* (Haribhadra), 38.
19. *Mahādevastrotra* (Hemacandra), 44.