

JAINA ETHICS

In the *Prophet*¹ of Khalil Gibran Almustafa, the chosen and the beloved was to leave the city of Orphales. People came to meet him. One of the elders said, 'Speak to us of good and evil'. And he said unto them : "In your longing for your giant self lies your goodness : and that longing is in all of you. But in some of you that longing is a torrent rushing with might to the sea and in others it is a flat stream."

"But let not him who longs much say to him who longs little 'Wherefore are you slow and halting?' For the truly good ask not the naked, 'Where is your garment?'"

Yet we are asking others to be good without knowing what is good. We are living in an age where fundamental values of life and spirit have been thrown to the winds. In this age of science and technology, we have lost the wood for the trees. The emphasis on spiritual values have been misinterpreted as a waste of time. Fullness of life is measured by material prosperity. This has resulted in the mechanization of life and has brought a decadence of culture. We are so much engrossed in the pursuit of power and pelf that we have forgotten the higher values of life. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the deeper meaning of the values of life that have been pursued in the past and to reassess man's place in society, his duties and obligations. And if we look at the Jaina attitude towards the problems of our life, we find that there is a synoptic view of the values of life. It gives a synthetic picture of man's relation to his fellow beings and to all sentient creation. The Jaina weltanschauung is melioivistic. Schweitzer said that Indian thought is "world and life negating" and it regards existence as meaningless and sorrowful. And Jainism seeks to give ethical significance to world and life negation.² Ethics has no place in such negative philosophies. Even the principle of non-violence, which is the fundamental principle of Jaina ethics, is non-ethical in origin and was not first motivated by compassion.³ Mrs. Stevenson was struck with pathos at the empty heart of the Jainas. The Jainas see before them an austere path of righteousness, 'but no guide to encourage and help them

along that difficult path⁴. The Jaina view of life has been considered by many as merely negative, emphasising the life of asceticism and the denial of the robust view of this life. Its cardinal principle, they say, is renunciation which is the only end of life. But, suffice it to say that, for a Jaina, life in this world is as much important as the eternal life of perfection. Renunciation is to be accepted as the final stage of the pursuit of perfection. When the responsibilities of the home and society have been fulfilled one has to accept, as a general rule, the course of renunciation. Life in this world has to be lived fully and well, but that is not all. The Jainas also assert that the end of life is perfection of self and this can be achieved through self-realisation in this world. Efforts for self-realisation will have meaning only when the world becomes a vale of soul-making. Life is to be considered as a struggle for perfection and not merely as an amusing pantomime of infallible marionettes. The Jainas did not advocate renunciation as the only way for self-realisation. Life in this world lived fully and well is more important than negation of the pleasures of life. Pravṛtti mārga should lead to the fuller realisation of Nivṛitti. The Jaina moral structure of society, therefore, distinguishes the two levels of moral life as (1) the life of the ascetic, and (2) the life of the house-holder. This distinction is based on the moral and spiritual values of life. *Ādipurāṇa* gives a description of Ṛṣabha, the first Tīrthankara, giving training to his subjects in the art of agriculture and warfare.⁵ The Jaina Ācāryas took interest in the establishment of benevolent political authority for the good of the people. For example, Jainism played an important part in the social and political life of the people of Karnataka. It influenced the lives of the people and the princes from 2nd century A.D. to the 13th century A.D. The earliest political influence of Jainism in Karnataka is to be found in the establishment of a Jaina Kingdom some time in the 3rd century A.D. Ācārya Sinhanandi helped the establishment of the Ganga Dynasty. Jainism gained the royal benevolence of the Kadamba and Rāṣṭrakūta Kingdoms. In the *Yaśaṣṭilaka* of Somadeva there is a description of the social and political life of the people at the time of the king. The king was exercising authority over the subjects in accordance with the Jaina codes of conduct prevalent in society. However, in some cases, persons, like the Buddha and the Tīrthankara, there may be 'premature revulsion'

when renunciation becomes the primary course of life. Jesus Christ wanted a young man 'to sell all (he) hast and come follow (him).' However, for the vast majority of men, renunciation is not the only end of life. A full life of social benevolence is as much important as the pursuit of the ascetic life for the munis. The denial of life and the world is a means and, we may say, a stage at the higher level of self-relisation. The highest ideal is not freedom from life itself, but freedom from egoity. It is not inaction, but inward action. And for the attainment of the ideals, the Jainas emphasise that Samyag-cāritra is as much important as Samyag-darśana and Samyag-jñāna. Socrates said that virtue is knowledge. Moral life, therefore, is important as a path way to perfection. Morality is working in righteousness all the days of one's life. Samyag-cāritra is predominantly activistic. It refers to moral and spiritual excellence. To attain samyatva is not an easy task. Samyag-cāritra is possible for one who has attained samyag-darśana and samyag-jñāna. Psychologically, Samyag-cāritra has given a mental setting required for the development of character and personality needed for spiritual progress. The instinctive tendency and emotions have to be channelized and directed by transformation and sublimation with a view to attaining mental equipoise. Ethically considered, it presents a background and canvas for the illumination of one's self towards the goal of attaining perfect equanimity and spiritual strength.

II

For the Jainas, moral life has been distinguished into two levels (a) personal morality aimed at individual salvation and (b) social morality aimed at understanding the rights and duties of an individual to society for the sake of the development of the social good, thereby leading to self-perfection. The former is meant for those who have renounced the world, and it is called muni-dharma. The latter is meant for those who have family and social responsibility and it is called Śrāvaka dharma. It is social ethics. There are, thus, two levels of morality. The polarity of the house holder and the ascetic is one of the most characteristic features of the Jaina structure. For the monk, negation of compormise is the cardinal principle. For a citizen, moderation must be the key note of existence, as his life is rooted in compormise.⁶

(a) Muni-dharma aims at seeking salvation for the individual through the rigorous practice of strict moral rules of conduct called vratas. The five vratas; (i) ahimsā (non-violence), (ii) satya (truth speaking), (iii) asteya (non-stealing), (iv) Brahmacharya (celibacy), and (v) Aparigraha (non-possession) are important. The nature of this discipline is individualistic. In addition to the five vratas, the ascetic has to practise (1) five samities, (2) the control of the five senses, (3) six āvaśyakas and other practices like one meal a day and taking food by using one's palms. A muni is not to cover himself with clothes. Rigorous restrictions are imposed on the ascetic whose aim is to attain spiritual salvation. *Daśavaikālika-Sūtra* gives a description of the essential qualities required of an ascetic. We need not dwell more on the ethics of the munis, as it would be necessary to understand the ethical implications of social life. Most men are engaged in the pursuit of worldly ends. The ends like artha and kāma have to be surcharged with the spirit of righteousness. Dharma should permeate the moral and social life of the people.

All cannot renounce the world, nor is it desirable. Most men have to live in this world and work for their spiritual salvation by living their daily routine of life, with social obligations. They are house-holders, Śrāvakas. They are citizens. They have to practice the vows for self-culture and social development. The ethical code for the layman is twelvefold. Five vratas are common for both the ascetic and the layman. But the layman has to practise the vows with less rigour, without sacrificing the spirit of righteousness. These vows are called aṇuvratas (lesser vows). The three guṇavratas and four sikṣā vratas (vows of self-restriction) are also important. This may be called social ethics, as it emphasises the social life of the people.

We may, here, mention the implications of the five vratas with their social significance. Ahimsā is an important vrata for the Jainas. A person living in society has to see that he does not injure any living being intentionally and as far as possible. In the *Ratna Karaṇḍaka Śrāvakaśūva*, he is enjoined not to cause injury to a living being intentionally, and not to be an agent of such injuries. He should be free from Sthūta-himāsā.⁷

Even in the practice of non-violence, certain forms of injury are permitted in exceptional cases. It is the duty of a Kṣatriya

to defend the weak even with arms. However, he should not cause injury wantonly and on purpose. In *Yeṣaṣṭilaka*, Somadeva forbids the kṣatriya to indulge in indiscriminate killing even in battle. Similarly, a person engaged in agriculture may be aware that some minute creatures may be injured during ploughing. That does not bring him himsā. The former is called virodha himsā and the latter is ārambha himsā.

Some of the aticāras (infractions) of these vratas are worth studying in the light of their present application to society.

1. Aticāras of Ahimsā :

(i) Bandha (trying up, keeping in captivity men and beasts. However, we can restrain cattle by means of ropes and restrain our children for purpose of correction.⁸

(ii) Vadha :—This refers to merciless whipping of animals out of anger. Some exceptions like mild beating and slapping for correction are permissible.

(iii) Chavi-cheda : In this we are forbidden to injure an animal with a sword or a sharp instrument. A surgeon is permitted to operate a patient.

(iv) Atibhāropana : We should not mercilessly overload a beast of burden. Certain types of occupations have been forbidden for a Jaina layman.

(v) Bhaktapāna vyavacheda : An animal should not be made to suffer from hunger and thirst without any reason or out of anger.

2. Aticaras of Satyavrata :

It has a wide connotation. We should not speak untruth out of passion; nor should we speak the truth if it leads to injury to a living being.⁹

(i) Sahasābhyākhyāna : It refers to casual or intentional false charges against a person. Friends of Othello committed this grievous crime against Desdemona in jest.

(ii) Mṛṣopadeśa : It refers to perverse teaching and advice leading to evil consequences and

(iii) Kūtalekha Karaṇa : It is preparing a false document like forgery etc.

3. Asteya vrata forbids us from committing theft or even taking others' articles not specifically meant for us. We should not (a) accept stolen articles at cheaper rates, (b) instigate others to steal (c) acquire property in a country which is hostile to our own. Even grass or wood obtained under such circumstances must be regarded as stolen.¹⁰ Kūta-tulā-kūta-māna : using false weights and measures and taking exorbitant interest on loans is an infraction of this vow. These aticāras have a greater relevance in the present day social habits prevailing in different levels of society. It includes corrupt practices of officials also.¹¹

The aticāras of brahma vrata have great significance from the point of view of personal development and social health. The vrata has negative and positive aspects. In its negative aspect, a house-holder has to abstain from sexual contact with women other than his own wife: and positively, he should be content with relations with his wife. He should avoid sex literature and sex brooding.

In the case of the violation of the vow of non-possession (aparigraha), five types aticararas have been mentioned by Samantabhadra.¹² Prominent among them are—(i) arti-vāhana : over loading of the beasts of burden out of greed; (ii) ati-samgraha : hoarding of grain or other commodities in the hope of making a very high profit; (iii) ati-vismaya : extreme disappointment at having sold something at a price which is lower than he expected; (iv) ati-lobha : excessive greed in wishing for a higher price than has been obtained. It is possible that a man may have taken a vow of non-possession for a restricted time. In the meanwhile, he may receive a gift. He may then transfer the gift to his wife or a relative on condition that it should be returned to him after the expiry of the period of the vow. In this case, the letter of the vrata may have been followed, but the spirit is destroyed.¹³ The jaina view of aparigraha may, thus, be presented in the context of modern society in the form of three cardinal principles—(i) desire less (ii) possess less and (iii) develop an attitude of non-attachment towards your possessions. An ascetic and a religious fanatic may desire less, but out of a sense of superiority and arrogance of virtue. These are not the ideals of society. We should develop a healthy attitude of renunciation and non-attachment

NOTES

1. *The Prophet* (William Heinemann Ltd. London.) Page 1951.
2. Schweitzer *Albert Indian thought and its development.* (Tr. Charles E. B. Russell.) Henry Holt N. Y. 1936. P. 76.
3. Ibid.
4. *Heart of Jainism* (Oxford Univ. Press 1914) p. 289.
5. *Ādipurāṇa.*
6. Subscribing to *Doctrines of the Jainas*; (from : Beurlin. Banaras 1962) 298-300.
7. *Cāritra-dhikāra* 53.
8. *Yogaśāstra* : Hemacandra . . . 20.
9. *Śrāvakācāra* : Vasunandin Edt. Hiralal Jain : 209.
10. *Tattvārthasūtra* : with commentry. Siddhasena. vii. 22.
11. *Śravakadharmā Pañcaśaka* with Commentary of Yasovijaya. (Lalbhai No. 102) 1952 : 14.
12. *Ratnakaraṇaka-śrāvakācāra* : iii, 16.
13. Abhayadeva's Commentary on the *Sravaka-dharma-pañcaśaka* 18.
14. *Puruṣārtha Siddhyupaya* : 116.
15. Prof. Maitra : *The Ethics of the Hindus.* p. 203.
16. Dr. Sogani K. G. *Ethical Doctrines of the Jainas* (Jivaraj Granthā Mala, 19-1967 p. 267. Dr. Sogani has worked out a classification of individual, social and spiritual virtues as presented in Jaina ethics. p. 266.
17. *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra.*
18. Kalghatgi T. G. *Jaina view of life.* Jivaraja Granthmala No. 120 1969. p. 163.
19. Kammuṇā bambhaṇ hoi, Kammuṇā hoi Khattiyo, 1, Baiso Kammuṇā hoi, Suddo hoi Kammuṇā 11.
20. Zimmer - *Philosophies of India* p. 251.
21. *The Prophet.* p. 63.

moral and spiritual urge can lead himself to the path of self-realisation, although it is true that the ultimate end of Mokṣa can be attained by denial of the lower self.

(ii) The Jaina ethical theory does not altogether reject the life of pleasure. Pleasure is the means to the end. Pursuit of happiness for one-self and for society is not altogether rejected. It is to be accepted for the higher end of leading one to spiritual values. Bhoga and Tyāga have their places in life. Bhoga is a stepping stone for tyāga. But the hunger and thirst for righteousness must pervade the enjoyment of pleasure. Self denial has to be gradual.

(iii) The concept of aṇuvrata has a great significance in the social life of the community. Social health and social development are possible in the practice of aṇuvrata. The Jainas have worked out a methodical scheme of social injunctions and taboos for the promotion of social good. Aticāras are examples of this type. In the scheme of aṇuvrata, we are forbidden to indulge in the practice of forgery, corruption, false weights and measures, reading sex literature and even of bringing grass from other people's and other nations' lands. Ācārya Tulasi has recently launched the aṇuvrata movement throughout the country which will have far reaching influence on the promotion of a lasting social good.

Jainism aims at effecting a harmony between happiness and virtue. We may, therefore, say that the Jaina Weltanschauung is meleoristic. It aims at happiness through virtue. Dharma pervades the entire individual and social efforts for the highest ideal and for social perfection. Neither self-indulgence nor self-negation alone should be the ideal of life. The ethical ideal of a Jaina is not pleasure of the senses nor gratification of the body. Like two clods of clay, one wet and the other dry, flung at the wall, those who love pleasure get clung to the influx of karma. The passionless are free.¹⁷ Yet the Jaina ethics does not say that we should completely avoid the pleasures of the senses, specially for the house-holders. Mortification of the body is equally one sided. Self-realisation should be the aim and the self to be realised is a transcendental self. "The empirical self is to be cared for and its energy is to be channelised in the direction of the attainment of the highest ideal of mokṣa."¹⁸

Jainism does not recognize caste distinctions. Superiority of one caste over another has not been accepted. Casteism is based on passions of hatred and pride. Caste has nothing to do with the realisation of the spirit. *Uttarādhyana sūtra* cites an instance of Harikeśa who attained spiritual heights, although he was born an untouchable. Caste does not determine the capability of moral and spiritual progress of an individual. Mahāvīra, the last tīrthankara, said to his disciples that the distinctions between Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and Śūdra does not depend on birth but on action.¹⁹

The Jaina concept ahimsā in the context of the anekānta outlook leads to international understanding. It presents a humanitarian solution to the various social and international problems arising out of lack of proper understanding and sympathy. The possibilities of strife and war are reduced. And even if we have to fight with a foreign nation, we should do so, using the minimum of violence necessary without prejudice and hatred. In the *Yasast-ilaka*, Somadeva, forbids a kṣatriya, as was referred to earlier, to indulge in indiscriminate killing even in the battle. In our political life, the concept of pancaśīla expresses the spirit of anekānta as presented in the Jaina ethics. Gandhiji's satyāgraha has been built up on the analysis of non-violence by the Jainas. Gandhiji's programme of satyāgraha as an expression of ahimsa is a serious, yet, brave and powerful modern experiment in the ancient Hindu science.²⁰

What we need to-day is a synoptic outlook on life. We should aim at realisation of the highest by the channelising the energies of the lower self. The anekānta view on ethics leads us to the synoptic view of life by emphasising that we should transcend the lower self not by suppression but by sublimation.

And Almustafa, the chosen and the beloved, said to the people of Orphalese, "you are good when you walk to your goal firmly and with bold steps. "

You are not evil when you go thither limping. .

But you, who are strong and swift, see that you do not limp before the lame, deeming it kindness—Pity that the stags cannot teach swiftness to the turtles."²¹

Head of the Deptt. of Philosophy,
Karnatak University, Dharwar.

—Dr. T. G. Kalghatgi.

Date : 25th Jan., 1974.