

JAINA ETHICAL THEORY

It cannot be denied that human nature is essentially end-oriented. This end-orientation of man implies that human life is a striving towards certain ends. In other words, "it is so thoroughly teleological that it can not be understood apart from what it is seeking to become."¹ The discipline which deals with the process of seeking and striving in terms of good and bad, and consequently in terms of right and wrong is termed Normative Ethics and judgments like 'A was a good man', 'to harm some one is wrong' are known as normative judgements of value and obligation respectively. Again, the discipline which aims at philosophical analysis of ethical terms or concepts like 'right', 'good' etc., which asks the meaning and definition of such terms, seeks justification of normative judgements, discusses their nature, and is concerned with the analysis of freedom and responsibility is termed Meta-ethics. Besides, there is descriptive historical inquiry to explain the phenomena of morality in the various periods of history. Thus, normative ethics, meta-ethics and descriptive ethics constitute three kinds of ethical inquiry. In the present paper, I propose to look at Jaina ethics from the normative and meta-ethical perspectives, to the exclusion of its descriptive historical inquiry. In other words, I shall not be describing the Acara of the Householder and that of the Muni in the various periods of history, but shall be dealing with some of the questions regarding value and obligation and meta-ethics, from the point of view of Jaina ethics in order to bring out the contributions of the Jainas to the above ethical questions.

Let us start with the Jaina theory of value, and then go on to the Jaina theory of obligation and finally to the Jaina theory of meaning and justification of the judgements of value and obligation (Meta-ethics). The question that confronts us is : what is intrinsically desirable, good or worthwhile in life according to the Jaina ? What intrinsic values are to be pursued according to him ? The answer that may be given is this : What is intrinsically good or valuable or what ought to be chosen for its own sake is the achievement of Ahimsa of all living beings, the attainment of

knowledge, the realisation of happiness, the leading of a virtuous life, and the experiencing of freedom and good emotions. Thus the criterion of intrinsic goodness or the good-making characteristic shall be the fulfilment of ends like Ahimsa, knowledge, virtues etc. and the satisfaction that attends the their fulfilment. We may say here that goodness is a matter of degree and this depends on the degree of fulfilment of ends and the resulting satisfaction therefrom. An altogether good shall be wholly fulfilling the ends and wholly satisfying the seeker. The Jaina texts speak of the partial realisation of Ahimsa and the complete realisation of Ahimsa and of other ends. This theory of intrinsic goodness may be called Ahimsa-Utilitarianism. This means that this theory considers Ahimsa and other ends to be the general good. But it may be noted here that this general good shall not be possible without one's own good. Thus by this theory of Ahimsa-Utilitarianism narrow egoism is abandoned. This Ahimsa-Utilitarianism is to be distinguished from Hedonistic Utilitarianism of Mill, but it has some resemblance with the Ideal Utilitarianism of Moore and Rashdall.² The point to be noted here is that Moore distinguishes between good as a means and good as an end (good in itself). When we say that an action or a thing is good as a means, we say that it is liable to produce something which is good in itself (Intrinsically good). The Jaina recognises that Ahimsa can be both good as a means and good as an end. This means that both means and ends are to be tested by the criterion of Ahimsa. I may say in passing, that the principle that "the end justifies the means" need not be rejected as immoral if the above criterion of means and ends is conceded. It may look paradoxical that Ahimsa is an end. But it is not so. Perhaps in order to avoid this misunderstanding that Ahimsa cannot be an end, the Sutrakrtanga has pronounced that Ahimsa is the highest good. In a similar vein, Samantabhadra has also said that Ahimsa of all living beings is equivalent to the realisation of the highest good. This shows that there is no inconsistency in saying that Ahimsa is both an end and a means. Thus, the expression Ahimsa-Utilitarianism seems to me to be the most apt one to represent the Jaina theory of intrinsic goodness.

Let us now proceed to the Jaina theory of obligation. The ultimate concern of the normative theory of obligation is to guide

us in the making of decisions and judgements about actions in particular situations. Here the question that confronts us is this : How to determine what is morally right for a certain agent in a certain situation ? Or, what is the criterion of the rightness of action ? The interrelated question is : what we ought to do in a certain situation ? Or, how duty is to be determined ? The answer of the Jaina is that right, ought and duty can not be separated from the good. The criterion of what is right etc. is the greater balance of good over bad that is brought into being than any alternative. Thus, the view that regards goodness of the consequences of actions as the right-making characteristic is termed the teleological theory of obligation as distinguished from the deontological theory of obligation which regards an action as right or obligatory simply because of its own nature regardless of the consequences it may bring into being. The Jaina ethics holds the teleological theory of obligation (Maximum balance of Ahimsa over Himsa as the right-making characteristic).

The question now arises whether Jaina ethics subscribes to act-approach or rule approach in deciding the rightness or wrongness of actions. The former is called act-utilitarianism, while the latter, rule-utilitarianism. It seems to me that though the Jaina Acaryas have given us moral rules, yet in principle they have followed act-utilitarianism, according to which every action is to be judged on the goodness of the consequences expected to be produced. Since to calculate the consequences of each and every action is not practically possible, Jaina Acaryas have given us guiding moral principles in the form of Anuvratas and Mahavratas, Gunavratas and Siksavratas and so on. This means that Jaina ethics accepts the possibility that sometimes these general moral principles may be inadequate to the complexities of the situation and in this case, a direct consideration of the particular action without reference to general principles is necessary. May be, keeping this in view, Samantabhadra argues that truth is not to be spoken when by so doing the other is entangled in miseries;⁵ Svami Kumar in the Karttikeyanupreska disallows the purchase of things at low price in order to maintain the vow of non-stealing.⁶ According to rule-utilitarianism exceptions can not be allowed. This implies that Jaina ethics does not allow superstitious rule-worship but at the same time, prescribed that utmost caution is to be taken in

breaking the rule, which has been built up and tested by the experience of generations. Thus according to Jaina ethics, acts are logically prior to rules and the rightness of the action is situational.

It is of capital importance to note here that according to Jaina ethics, there is no such thing as a moral obligation which is not an obligation to bring about the greatest good. To call an act a duty, is dependent on the fact of producing a greater balance of good over evil in the universe than any other alternative. Duty is not self-justifying; it is not an end in itself. "The very nature of duty is to aim beyond itself. There can no more be a duty to act, if there is no good to attain by it, than to think if there is no truth to be won by thinking".⁷ Thus, duty is an extrinsic good, good as a means; this does not deprive duty of its importance in ethical life, just as health does not become unimportant by its being extrinsic good. The pursuance of Anuvaratas for the householder and the Mahavratas for the Muni may be regarded as dutiful actions.

In view of the above, it seems that Jaina ethics will look with a critical eye at the deontologism of Prichard and Ross. According to Ross, there are self-evidently binding *prima facie* duties such as duties of gratitude, duties of self-improvement, duties of Justice etc. The conviction of the Jaina is that all these duties are conducive to good as an end. Hence they should be followed because of the conduciveness to good, and not because they are independent of good consequences.

We have so far considered the criterion by which we are to determine what we morally ought to do in a given situation, how the rightness or wrongness of action is to be decided. But the question that remains to be discussed is: How the moral worth of an action is to be evaluated? How does, in Jaina terminology, an action become *punya* and *papa*-engendering? In other words, how does an act become virtuous or vicious, praiseworthy or blameworthy, morally good or bad? (1) It is likely that an act by the criterion of rightness may be externally right but internally immorally motivated. A man may seem to be doing things according to a moral rule, but it may be with a bad motive. (2) Again, an act by the standard of rightness may be externally wrong, but it may be done with a good motive. For example, one may kill the rich in order to serve the poor. (3) An act may be externally

right and done with good motive. (4) An act may be externally wrong and done with a bad motive. Thus there are four possibilities : (1) Right act and bad motive, (2) Wrong act and good motive, (3) Right act and good motive and (4) Wrong act and bad motive. The third and fourth category of acts which according to Jaina ethics may be called Subha (Auspicious) and asubha (inauspicious) *lesyas* are respectively called virtuous and vicious, are acts having moral merit and demerit. The concept of *Lesyas* in Jainism also invites our attention to the fact that the degree of praiseworthiness and blameworthiness of actions will depend on the degree of intensity of good and bad motives. The first category of acts (Right act and bad motive) may look proper externally but its moral significance is zero. All deceptions are of this nature. The moral worth of the second category of acts (wrong act and good motive) is complicated and can be decided only on the nature of the case. Though in Jaina ethical works, importance of good motive is recognised as contributing towards the moral merit of an action yet the Jaina Acaryas have clearly stated that he who exclusively emphasized the internal at the expense of the external forgets the significance of outward behaviour.⁸ In consequence, both the internal and external aspects should occupy their due places. Ewing rightly observes that "they (good motives) lead us into evil courses on occasion if there is not at the back of our minds a moral consciousness which prevents this, so the strictly moral motive should always in a sense be present potentially".⁹

Let us now try to find out the answer of the Jaina to certain meta-ethical questions. The fundamental questions to be taken into account are : (1) What is the nature of ethical judgments (obligatory and value) according to the Jaina ? and (2) What is their justification ? These two are the main questions of ethics in our times. Contemporary moral philosophy has concerned itself with this almost excluding normative ethics; it is not interested so much in practical guidance even of a very general kind as in theoretical understanding and conceptual clarification of ethical judgments.

Let me now state the first question more clearly. There have been recognised three kinds of knowledge (1) Knowledge of fact, as, this flower is yellow; (2) knowledge of necessity, as $7 + 5 = 12$,

and (3) Knowledge of value, as A was good man or murder is wrong. The question under discussion reduces itself to this : Are ethical judgments expressive of any cognitive content in the sense that they may be asserted as true or false, or do they simply express emotions, feelings etc. The upholders of the former view are known as cognitivists, while those holding the latter view are known as non-cognitivists (emotivists). When we say that Himsa is wrong, are we making a true or false assertion or are we experiencing simply a feeling ? Or are we doing both ? According to the cognitivists, the ethical judgments, ' Himsa is wrong ' is capable of being objectively true and thus moral knowledge is objective, whereas the non-cognitivists deny both the objectivity of assertion and knowledge, in as much as according to them, ethical judgments are identified with feelings, emotions etc. Here, the position taken by the Jaina seems to me to be that though the statement, ' Himsa is wrong ' is objectively true, yet it can not be divested of the feeling-element involved in experiencing the truth of the statement. In moral life, knowledge and feeling cannot be separated. The Tattvarthasutra pronounces that the path of goodness can be traversed only by right knowledge (Darsana and Jnana) and feeling and activity (Caritra). Amrtacandra says that first of all knowledge of right, wrong and good is to be acquired, afterwards moral life is to be practised. Thus, the conviction of the Jaina is that the experience of value and obligation is bound up with our feelings and that in their absence, we are ethically blind. In fact, knowledge and feelings are so interwoven into a complex harmony that we have never a state of mind in which both are not present to some degree. So, the claims of cognitivists and non-cognitivists are onesided and are very much antagonistic to the verdict of experience. Blanshard rightly remarks, " Nature may spread before us the richest possible banquet of good things, but if we can look at them only with the eye of reason, we shall care for none of these things; they will be alike insipid. There would be no knowledge of good and evil in a world of mere knowers, for where there is no feeling, good and evil would be unrecognisable ". And a life that directs itself by feeling even of the most exalted kind will be a ship without a rudder. Thus the nature of ethical judgment according to the Jaina is cognitive-affective. The achievement of good is a joint product of our power to know and our power to feel.

The next question in meta-ethics is to ask how our ethical judgments (value and obligations) can be justified. That ethical judgments are objectively true, need not imply that their justification can be sought in the same manner as the justification of factual judgments of ordinary and scientific nature. The reason for this is that, facts can not be derived from values, is from ought. In factual judgments our expressions are value-neutral, but in ethical judgments we cannot be indifferent to their being sought by ourselves, or by others. That is why derivation of ought from is, fact from value is unjustifiable. The value judgments according to the Jaina are self-evident and can only be known by intuition; thus they are self-justifying. The conviction of the Jaina is that no argument can prove 'Himsa is evil' and 'Ahimsa is good'. What is intrinsically good or bad can be known only by intuition. The justification of right can be sought from the fact of its producing what is intrinsically good.

In this paper I have ventured to deal with the Jaina ethical theory very briefly in the light of the contemporary discussion of ethical theory. In my view, the future of Jaina ethics should move in this direction so as to keep pace with the modern discussions of the ethical and meta-ethical problems.

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NOTE

1. Blanshard, Reason and Goodness, P. 136
2. The view of ethics which combines the utilitarian principle that ethics must be teleological with a non-hedonistic view of the ethical end, I propose to call Ideal Utilitarianism. Rashdall, Theory of Good and Evil, Vol. I, P. 184.
3. Moore, Principia Ethics, PP. 21, 22.
4. Sutratatanga, 1, 11, 11.
5. Frankena, Ethics, P. 11.
6. Ratnakaranda Sravakacara, 55.
7. Karttikeyanupreksha, 335.
8. Blanshard, B. Reason and Goodness, P. 332.
9. Purasarthasiddhupayaya, 50.
10. Ewing, Ethics, P. 129.

