

FUNDAMENTAL JAINA CONCEPTS AND MODERN SOCIETY

I. We are living today between two worlds, as Mathew Arnold said, the dead and the other powerless to be born. Old values have been lost and we are still groping for new values. We are pursuing the puruṣārthas of artha and kāma without reference to the dharma. Hunger and thirst for righteousness is no longer felt. We are only hungry and thirsty. We are giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. We are blind to the higher values while pursuing the social and political ends. Power and pelf are the ultimate ends for us. Half-educated immature political morones are corrupting the life in society and they do not feel moral compunction for their acts. On the one hand, conscience theory translated in political life has brought about a licentious society; on the other, we find a growing regimentation to ideologies thoughtlessly imposed on men to convert our society into a committed social order without reference to the larger good of social life. It is, therefore necessary if some of the fundamental concepts of Jaina darśana can lead, in the present chaotic situation, from darkness to light. The object of this paper is to see whether we can justify the ways of man to man in the light of some of the Jaina concepts.

II. Panoramic survey of Jaina darśana shows that some of the concepts that Mahāvīra taught and that Jainism incorporated in its theory were primarily meant to emphasise the need for the reconstruction of society on a solid foundation of right faith, non-violence and fundamental equality of men. The concepts of (i) anekānta (ii) Social ethics, (iii) ahimsā and their emphasis on equality of men without distinction of caste and creed have for centuries influenced the life course of the people to the realisation of higher values of life.

1. The anekānta emphasises the fundamental principle that Reality is complex and it can be looked at from different points of view. Each point of view presents a partial truth and it cannot be claimed as the whole and exclusive truth. The Jainas give the

example of the elephant and seven blind men to explain this principle. It teaches us to respect other views. The Syādvāda is the logical expression of anekānta attitude in propositional forms. We have to respect the views of others also. We should realise that we are not the only persons who are right and that we are alone. Intellectual tolerance is the foundation of this doctrine. It is the symbolisation of the fundamental non-violent attitude. This spirit of tolerance has been the principle of the Indian Weltanschauung. We find this expressed in the social and political life of the people of this country. We cite an instance of the remarkable catholic outlook of the Vijayanagar kings towards their subjects belonging to different faiths. There was a dispute between the Vaiṣṇavas and the Jainas on some injustice done to the Jainas. The king, Bukkarāya the First, took the hands of the Jainas and placing them in the hands of the Vaiṣṇavas said, 'As long as the sun and the moon last, the Vaiṣṇavas will protect the Jainas. The Vaiṣṇavas and the Jainas are one body.'¹ What we need today is the spirit of understanding and respect for each other in our social and political life. We are exploiting communal distinctions for political gains. We are made aware of our differences rather than our identity of views and interests. And anekānta attitude will facilitate understanding and sympathy for each other's points of view. Then will disappear the iron, the bamboo and the dollar curtains.

2. Jaina contribution to social ethics is immense and is relevant to the present day social problems. Man's perfection depends on the promotion of individual, and social values. For social betterment, the emphasis should be on good citizenship. Training in good citizenship would lead to self-realization. As Śrāvaka 'citizen' has to aim at the development of personality in and through society. A Jaina lay-follower has to practise five aṇu-vratas 'lesser vows' three guṇavratas and four śikṣā-vratas. Practice of the vratas leads him to righteousness. Aristotle made a distinction between practical and intellectual virtues. This classification of virtues, between the practical and the intellectual, comes nearer to the Jaina distinction between śrāvaka-dharma and Muni-dharma, although intellectual virtues do not possess the spiritual content. The four Puruṣārthas present a synthetic approach to the general view of life. Artha and Kāma are not

to be neglected. They are to be pursued through the value of Dharma. Dharma, in this sense, is both an instrumental and the intrinsic value—instrumental because it is a means to the realisation of the highest ideal of mokṣa, and intrinsic because it is to be pursued for its sake in the way of empirical life. It is not true to say that the Jaina view of life is non-ethical and pessimistic. Jainism was as enthusiastic about the good of life as of the value of mokṣa. Mokṣa is not to be pursued at the cost of the pursuit of righteousness in this life, it is to be realised in and through society. That is why we find that the Jaina Ācāryas were robustly positive in their out-look on life. Ācārya Sīmhanandi was an inspiration and a guide to the establishment of Gaṅga dynasty in Karnatak. Jaina Ācāryas were considered by the kings as their gurus in religious and social matters. The Jaina kings and generals were no less enthusiastic in establishing the rule of righteousness in society. Eminent Jaina women took active interest in social and even in political fields. The Jaina writers have contributed immensely to the enrichment of Sanskrit, Prākṛit and Kannada literature in the South. Therefore, righteousness is the cardinal principle of social life. Lord Mahāvīra said, “As the cartman, even being aware, takes the cart on the wrong road and gets involved in an accident and he suffers, so does the man who strays away from the path of righteousness.”² The Summun Bonum of Mokṣa is the divinisation of man, a consummation devoutly to be wished for. In this sense also, we can say that Jainism has given importance to self-development in society. They do not advocate dependence on the grace of any higher being. Hunger and thirst for righteousness would be a necessary step to self-realisation. Lord Mahāvīra said, “The life span is short; therefore, make haste and practise dharma.”³

The schematic presentation of social ethics mentions the detailed list of the violations of aṇuvratas. They are the aticāras. To mention a few of the aticāras of the vratas, (i) bandha ‘tying up animals’, vadha ‘mercilessly beating of animals’ and (iii) atibhārāopaṇa ‘heavy loading of animals of burden’ are some of the aticāras of ahimsā vrata. Satya vrata is violated in the daily activities of (i) sahasābhyākhyāna, ‘casual and loose talk against others’, as in the case of friends of Othello when they questioned the chastity of Desdemona, (ii) Mṛṣopadeśa ‘wrong

advice leading to bad consequences' and (iii) Kūṭalekha karaṇa 'preparing false documents'. Asteya vrata forbids us from (i) accepting stolen articles, (ii) instigating others to steal, (iii) acquiring property in a foreign country hostile to us and (iv) using false weights and measures. The practice of Brahmacharya vrata enjoins us to be satisfied with one's own wife. One should not read sex literature and see sex films. One should not take interest in such talk of others and not even brood over sex life. Aparigraha vrata has great social significance. It is parimita-parigraha. We should not have external and internal possessions. Internal possession is expressed in the expression of greed and attachment. 'Greed for material possessions will lead a son to ignore his father and countless evil consequences will follow.'⁴ In recent years, Acārya Tulsijī is popularising the practice of anuvratas in his Anuvrata movement. It is very much relevant for the solution of the present day ills of society.

The cardinal ethical principles of the Jainas is the principle of Ahimsā. The Anekānta and Ahimsā permeate the texture of Jaina view of life. Lord Mahāvīra exhorted us to abstain from injury to any living being and treat every one with friendliness and equanimity.⁵ But one should realise that the Jainas did not take the practice of ahimsā to the point absurdity.⁶ Certain forms of injury which are unavoidable are to be condoned in the case of citizens performing their social duties. Such are the Ārambha himsā and virodha himsā.

The Jaina theory of ahimsā is a very important principle specially in the present day society. Gandhiji's Satyāgraha has been built upon the Jaina concept of ahimsā. Gandhiji himself said that he derived benefit from the Jaina religious works as from the scriptures of other faiths⁷. However, in the present uncertain state of society where violence freely prevails over other saner ways of approach to the problems, it is necessary to realise that the weapon of Satyāgraha has to be carefully used, lest it would harm society. We have today very few of men of the greatness of Gandhiji who can wield influence. Short of such leadership, in a democratic set up 'Satyāgraha may grow to be dangerously common' and 'would produce as much dislocation of normal work as violent war'.

Jainism was against caste system. Lord Mahāvīra decried the tendencies that brought about the inequality and misery among men. He asked us to realise that one cannot be considered a Kṣatriya or a Brahmin by virtue of his birth. One is a Brāhmin, Kṣatriya or Śūdra by action⁸. One cannot become a Śramaṇa by pulling one's hair, nor a Brahmin by repeating Omkāra Mantra, a muni by residing in a forest, nor an ascetic by wearing the bark of trees as clothes. Similar protests were made in the Upaniṣads also. The story of Satyakāma Jābāla is an instance this attitude⁹.

Today religious and communal distinctions are being politically exploited. Widespread regional feelings, corruption and nepotism have degenerated the very fabric of our society. We have become helpless spectators in the fierce drama of hatred, avarice and violence. Under the garb of ideologies of doubtful suitability to our society and the concept of committed social order, we are destroying the very foundations of social order built with arduous and painful efforts of great men for centuries. It is possible to reconstruct society and resurrect the higher values of life if we but remember that our values and social order stand on the shoulders of great men like the Buddha, Jesus, Mahāvīra, Basava and Gandhi. The Jaina Weltanschauung expressed in the principles of anekānta, aṇuvrata and ahimsā should be the solid foundation of society today. "We should seek forgiveness of all creatures and we offer friendliness for all. We should have no enmity against any."

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1. Kuppattūr Inscription.
2. "Jahā Sāgaḍḍio Jāṇam, samam hiccā Māhapaham Visamam māggamoṇṇo, akkhe bhaggammi soyai Evam dhammam viukkamma, ahammam padivajjiā Bāle maccumuham patte, akkhe bhaggeva soyai
3. "Jarā jāvanana pidey, vahī jāva na vaḍḍhai Jāvindiyā na hāyanti, tāva dhammam samāyare
4. *Tattvārtha Sūtra* : Comm. Siddhasena-vii.22.
5. "Samayā savvabhūssu, sattu-mittesu vā jage Panaivāavirī, jāvajjivae dukkaram

6. In this please refer to Zimmer : *Philosophies of India* (Kegan-Paul, 1951), pp. 270.
7. *Young India* : August, 1920.
8. "Kammuṇā bhambhaṇo hōi , kammuṇā hovi khattio
Vaisso kammuṇā hoi, suddo havai kanimuṇā
9. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* : iv.4.i.4.
10. "Khāmemi savva jīve savve jīvā khamantu me
mittī me savvabhūesu veram majjham na keṇai

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1. The term 'Kammuṇā' is derived from the root 'kmu' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
2. The term 'bhambhaṇo' is derived from the root 'bham' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
3. The term 'hōi' is derived from the root 'hō' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
4. The term 'kattu' is derived from the root 'kat' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
5. The term 'havi' is derived from the root 'hav' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
6. The term 'kanimuṇā' is derived from the root 'kan' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
7. The term 'jīve' is derived from the root 'jī' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
8. The term 'savve' is derived from the root 'sav' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
9. The term 'jīvā' is derived from the root 'jī' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
10. The term 'khamantu' is derived from the root 'kham' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
11. The term 'me' is derived from the root 'm' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
12. The term 'mittī' is derived from the root 'mit' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
13. The term 'me' is derived from the root 'm' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
14. The term 'savvabhūesu' is derived from the root 'sav' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
15. The term 'veram' is derived from the root 'ver' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
16. The term 'majjham' is derived from the root 'maj' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
17. The term 'na' is derived from the root 'n' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.
18. The term 'keṇai' is derived from the root 'ke' which means to be angry or to be in a state of anger. It is used in the sense of 'anger' or 'wrath'.