

REFLECTION OF ETHICAL VALUES IN THE LIGHT OF *JAINA* PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

Jainism is intensely spiritual and ethical. It is a religion without God. The Jainas emphasized that knowledge could be perfected by right conduct. Knowledge without right conduct was mere futile and conduct without right knowledge was blind. *Jaina* philosophy cultivates the means to get *puruṣārtha* through *tree ratna* or three kinds of jewels; *samyak darśana*, *samyak jñāna*, *samyak caritra*. *Tree ratnas* are the foundations of Jainism. Jainism also emphasizes on the principle of *ahimsā*. *Ahimsā* implies the universal love and sympathy towards all living beings etc are developed. The doctrine of *ahimsā* is not merely killing or taking away of life but also any mental or verbal injury to one's vitalities out of negligence. Jainism reflected abundant number of good acts for the welfare of the mankind. This paper is a modest attempt to highlight how human values are reflected in the *Jaina* philosophy.

Key Words : *Jaina*, *samyak darśana*, *samyak jñāna*, *samyak caritra*, *ahimsā* etc.

Introduction

Right from the dawn of human thinking humanism is treated as a philosophy of man and it occupies the paramount position in Indian Vedic and non Vedic thought as well as in Indian philosophical systems. All the streams of Indian Vedic and non Vedic thought are value oriented and emphasis on basic human values as fundamental principles of their system for the means of fulfillment of emancipation i.e., *parama puruṣārtha*. Indian schools of thought possess certain common ethical, spiritual, moral values etc

which are the basis of Indian culture and living. Human values find expression properly in the heterodox system of Indian philosophy also i.e., in the *Cārvāka*, *Bauddha* and *Jaina* philosophy. Jainism is intensely spiritual and ethical. It is a religion without God. For them there is no necessity of bringing of God to explain anything because nothing is created by God. The Jainas propagate religious messages for the all round welfare of the mankind.

Ethical Values Reflected in the *Jaina* Philosophy

Jainism is opposed to rituals. Jainism believed in the possibility of solving the riddle of the universe to attain perfection without the concept of God. Jainism believes that it is possible for any human being to realize absolute knowledge and attain absolute bliss through the intense human effort. The faith in self-reliance for achieving perfection is an integral part of Jainism. It is extremely spiritual and ethical. Jainism teaches us all kinds of ethical values viz., the concept of *samyak darśana*, *samyak jñāna*, *samyak caritra*, *ahimsā* equanimity, compassion, virtuous conducts, satisfaction etc.

Jaina philosophy cultivates the means to get *Puruṣārtha* through *tree ratna* or three kinds of jewels; *samyak darśana*, *samyak jñāna*, *samyak caritra*. Another important thing is that the various school of Indian philosophy hold any one of the *jñāna*, *karma* or *bhakti* as a final means to liberation but in this regard Jainism hold none of this can be pursued meaningfully and effectively in isolation from one another, for the spiritual principle to be realized in life is neither a pure theoretical abstraction nor a mere mechanical ritual which can be practiced just as an idea. The union of *tree ratna* brings real bliss to the soul. As is evident, the integrated nature of the ethical, spiritual disciplines leading to liberation has been fully appreciated by the *Jaina* philosophers in their concept of *tri ratna*.¹ We must have *viśvāsa*, *śraddhā*, that is something superior to the things of this world. We must have knowledge of *manana*. *Caritra* is the another principle that we must embody in our own life. It also inculcates

pañca mahābrata or five vows namely *Ahiṃsā*, *Satyā*, *Asteya*, *Brahmacārya*, *Aparigraha*. These are the principles of good conduct. Five vows create the good nature of men. The Jainas emphasized that knowledge could be perfected by right conduct. Knowledge without right conduct was mere futile and conduct without right knowledge was blind. The Jainas said that one could achieve complete mastery over oneself by subduing the passions. Emancipation was to be acquired not by observing rituals, prayers and sacrifices but by regulating moral and spiritual discipline. For this reason they attached great importance to the five vows – non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), truth (*satya*), non-stealing which implies not to take anything to which one was not entitled (*aṣṭeya*), celibacy or abstention from self-indulgence (*brahmacharya*) and non-possession or renunciation (*aparigraha*). Non-violence was accorded utmost importance among these principles. The doctrine of *tree ratna* is the foundations of Jainism.²

From the metaphysical point of view, the *Jaina* philosophy is a realistic one. The idea of non-absolutism has led to the reconciliatory and balanced view of reality in Jainism and it is technically known as *anekāntavāda*. This theory is based on the many-sidedness of reality. According to it, all judgment is double-edged in character, since reality is multiform and ever changing, hence nothing can be existent everywhere, at all times and in all ways and places. That is why, non-absolutism is the basic foundation for non-violence. *Anekāntavāda* provides the sound basis of neutrality in the field of thought while *ahiṃsā* is an expression of that thought in conduct. Among all ethical value *ahiṃsā* is the most pervasive concept of Indian thought and it is the most universal foundation of morality in Hinduism, Jainism as well as Buddhism.

Jainism is a religion of self help. It's messages of *ahiṃsā*, tolerance, appreciation of others point of view, self control etc always help a man to find his inward dignity. Radhakrishnan says "the necessity for self control, the practice of ahimsa and also can acquire from the great life of Mahāvira"³

Again the doctrine of *Ahiṃsā*, is found its perfect expression in *Jaina* philosophy although it is found in earlier sources also. In the period of *Atharva Veda* there were already people who looked with condemnation upon meat as an article of food as because it involved killing of animals.⁴ *Mahābhārata* asserts *ahiṃsā* as the greatest *dharma*.⁵ All of the Indian schools, Jainism laid more attention on *ahiṃsā*. In the observance of non violence, the house holder gave some concession. The basic idea of co ordination between the mind and the body is hold necessary for the practice of *ahiṃsā* for both of them. In Jainism, nonviolence is not also limited to refraining from mental, verbal and physical injury to human beings but also it encompasses abstaining from injury to all living beings, all animals and plants. There is clear evidence in *Jaina* text that Lord Ariṣtanemi had laid more stress on non-violence and even he refused to get married due to slaughter of animals for his marriage feast.⁶ The definition of *Ahiṃsā* is found in *Jaina* philosophy. It states that the hand with a wheel on the palm symbolizes the Jain Vow of *ahiṃsā*. The wheel represents the *dharmacakra* which stands for the resolve to stop the cycle of reincarnation through relentless pursuit of truth and non-violence.⁷ In Jainism *ahiṃsā* is lack of abstention from *hiṃsā*.⁸ One of the Jain texts ascribes *ahiṃsā* as having positive attitude and it is the best medicine for the suffering arising from the disease of the world-whirling. *Ahiṃsā* has has compassion as its positive side.⁹ Motivation and the consequences of an action for others *ahiṃsā* involve certain positive aspects.

The principle of *ahiṃsā* naturally implies the thought, word and deed. Through this principle the universal love and sympathy towards all living beings etc are developed. The doctrine of *ahiṃsā* is not merely killing or taking away of life but also any mental or verbal injury to one's vitalities out of negligence. It is very wide and deep. *Ahiṃsā* pervades all ethical values in Jainism and it is a collection all moral virtues. Jainism thought teaches people to have compassion for animals, and to refrain from killing or harming

them. These kinds of thinking promote mercy, compassion and nonviolence. The Jainas suggest ten dharmas as safeguard against karmas entering the soul forgiveness, sweetness, simplicity, cleanliness, truth, self control penance, sacrifice, indifference etc. The *Jaina* prescribes nine ways of obtaining *punya*; these are giving food to the deserving, water to the thirsty, clothes to the poor, shelter to monks. *Jaina* remarks *himsā* or infliction of suffering is the great sin. Again, *Jaina* mentioned other sins such as untruthfulness, dishonesty, covetousness, hatred, quarrelsomeness, slander, defamation, abuse of others, lack of self control, hypocrisy, and false faith. Anger, conceit, deceit, avarice, keeps man down to the world and their opposites of patience, humility, simplicity, and contentment further the growth of spiritual instincts.

The *Jain* concept of *ahimsā* is characterized by several aspects. It does not make any exception for ritual sacrifices and professional warrior-hunters. Killing of animals for food is absolutely ruled out. Jainism also makes considerable efforts not to injure plants in everyday life as far as possible. Though they admit that plants must be destroyed for the sake of food, they accept such violence only inasmuch as it is indispensable for human survival, and there are special instructions for preventing unnecessary violence against plants. Jainism goes out of their way so as not to hurt even small insects and other minuscule animals. For example, Jainas often do not go out at night, when they are more likely to step upon an insect. In their view, injury caused by carelessness is like injury caused by deliberate action. Eating honey is strictly banned, as it would amount to violence against the bees. Some Jainas abstain from farming because it inevitably entails unintentional killing or injuring of many small animals, such as worms and insects, but agriculture is not forbidden in general and there are Jain farmers. Additionally, because they consider cruel words to be a form of violence, they often keep a cloth to ritually cover their mouth, as a reminder not to allow violence in their speech. In contrast, Jainas agree with Hindus that violence in self-defense can be justified, and

they agree that a soldier who kills enemies in battle is performing a legitimate duty. Jainas are openly hostile in the matter of introducing the supernatural. Jainism believes that man is capable of controlling his own moral life. He can make ethical decisions and find ethical goals without non-human assistance of intervention. Ethical values require that the individual either to make or unmake himself in the world. The soul (individual soul) has a self identity which it preserves even in the ultimate condition¹⁰. Jainism and Buddhism attached great importance to character but not to one's birth. It believes in the inherent potentialities of all men and their abilities to realize them to become perfect. *Ahimsā* pervades all ethical values in Jainism and it is a collection all moral virtues. Tolerance, love for all human being, non-violence etc. are the messages of Jainism.

Nonviolence (*Ahimsā*) is the keystone of the Jain code of ethics, which is a natural effect of rationalism. Jainas are expected to study the scriptures and grasp the concepts of rational perception, rational knowledge and rational conduct. They should consider their own experiences and realize that passions such as anger, pride, deception and greed have a major adverse impact on their lives. It is observed that if an individual accepts success and failure, pleasure and pain, sickness and health, union and separation, victory and defeat as part of worldly existence, he/she has mild passions. This leads to contentment and peace of mind. Just as we wish to have good health and peace of mind, so do all other living beings. This is the basis of the virtue of nonviolence. Jainism believes that no overall good of individuals or society can arise from violence.

Conclusion :

In all stream of Indian thought we find the code of morality, manners, achievement of inner purity, social unity etc. Like all the philosophies of India *Jaina* school of Indian philosophy also

discovers and suggests various ways through which one can lead a life in the right path. Tolerance, love for all human being, non-violence etc. are the messages of *Jaina* philosophy. Thus *Jaina* philosophy reflects abundant number of good acts for the welfare of the mankind.

Notes :

1. *ataḥ samyakdarśanaṁ samyakjñānaṁ samyak cāritramityetatritayasya samuditam mokṣasya sāksānmārgo veditavyaḥ. Tattvārthasūtra 1.1.*
2. Damodaran, K., Indian Thought. A critical Survey, p. 128.
3. S. Radhakrishnan, My search for truth, p. 27
4. *Atharva veda* 2.70.1.
5. *Mahābhārata*, 13.116.25
6. *Uttaradhyāyanā*, 22.14-22
7. The Columbia Encyclopedia, sixth Edition, 2008.
8. Purusartha, Siddhyupaya 3. 48.
9. Jacobi H., Jaina Sutra, p.157.
10. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, p. 312.

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