

AHIMSĀ

The Science Of Peace



Grand entrance of the main Bhagwan Parshwanath Temple with the pair of life-size elephants.



The Divine Cultural Center of Thar Sri Nakoda Parshwanath Swetamber Jain Tirth

Location

The Jain Swetamber Nakoda Parswanath Tirth is situated at post: Mewanagar. The Tirth is 116 km. from Jodhpur & 12 km from Balotra (North Railway Station). Jodhpur is the second largest city in Rajasthan and is very well connected by train as well as bus routes from all corners of the country. This Tirth has drawn attention of not only the residents of India, but also of those residing in England, America and other foreign Countries.

Facilities

The Temple Trust provides facilities for Boarding & Lodging equipped with modern amenities. Besides this Library and Dispensary facilities are also available. Keeping in view that it attracts the largest number of Jain pilgrims in Rajasthan the Tirth has more than 500 rooms available. Blocks of air-conditioned rooms are also available. For convenience of pilgrims the room allotment system has been computerized with easy access in the reception area. The Tirth has a Double Storied Bhojansala (dining hall) where two thousand persons can have their meals at a time.

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Nakoda Parshwanath Tirth Mewanager

The historical names during different periods of this cultural center of Mallani division of Thar Area were Mahewanagar, Lavankhetak, and Virampur. It is presently known as Shri Swetamber Nakoda Parshwnath Tirth and is an eminent Jain Pilgrimage center of Western Rajasthan. It has three main Jain Temples. Lacs of people visit this Tirth every year.

1. SHRI PARSHWNATH

The history of installation of Parshwanath image is very mysterious. It was recovered in fifteenth century from an underground chamber called “Kalidraha” in Nakoda village 20 to 24 km. from this place. Relics of 8th Century as approved by the Archaeological department can also be seen at this place.

1a. MIRACULOUS SRI BHAIRAVADEV

Just outside the main Sanctum of Bhagavan Parshwanath on the left is the Miraculous Murti of Khetrapal Samkitdhari Bhairavadev, which attracts large number of pilgrims for blessings and boons of wealth and position. Sri Nakoda Bhairavadev is “ADHISHTAYAKDEV” (guardian deity) of Nakoda Tirth. With his blessings, persons gained worldly boons. This increased the popularity of the Tirth with every passing day both within and outside the country. There are many devotees of Nakoda Bhairava who keep

partnership of Sri Nakoda ji in their firm and the allotted share in profit is sincerely donated to the Tirth without exception. It is a firm belief that Sri Nakoda Bhairava Dev fulfills all desires of his true devotees.

2. ADINATH BHAGWAN

On a high platform behind the main Parshwanath temple is the Adinath Temple. Formerly, it was Vimalnath Temple. The outer walls of the Shrine are of sand stone with intricate carvings of heavenly figures, musicians singers and dancers. This is also called Sravika Lachhibai Temple. This temple is said to have been built up in 1524 AD that time the image of Bhagwan Vimal Nath was installed.

3. BHAGWAN MAHAVIR

This marvelous Pratima (Idol) is believed to be formerly seated in the present Parshwanath Temple. It is said to be one of the many Tirthankar images of the Samprati era. The famous Jain king Samprati was the grand son of Emperor Ashoka.

4. SHRI SHANTINATH BHAGWAN

Just after the main gate (Suraj Pole) of the center we come across the marble steps leading to the graceful “Toran”, which has expressive carving in sand stone. Famous Sravak Malla Shah constructed this temple in the fifteenth Century.

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The galleries of this temple embodies the renaissance of Marwar art at its Zenith and artistic skill of masons who chiseled 6" deep in Porbandar Stone the stories of past births of Shantinath and Parshwanath. It also has a newly constructed temple of Siddhachakra. On both sides of the temple are beautiful art galleries contain paintings (PATT) of past births of Bhagwan Shanti Nath & Parshwa Nath attract attention of all pilgrims.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Tirth has its own gaushala (cowshed) having more than 500 cows. The Tirth is also running an education center (Jnanashala) for religiously minded youngsters for last 12 years. Here 105 students are studying at present. All expenses are borne by Tirth. The Tirth is also involved in publication of Jain works through established organizations like Prakrit Bharati Academy and Jityashashri Foundation.



Prakrit Bharati Pushpa-43

AHIMSA

THE SCIENCE OF PEACE

(AS DEVELOPED BY JAIN THINKERS)



BY

SURENDRA BOTHARA



FOREWORD BY

D.R. MEHTA

PRAKRIT BHARATI ACADEMY, JAIPUR

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MEVANAGAR***

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Since the publication of the first edition of this book, almost two decades ago, a lot has changed in the world around us. Some call it progress and development and some others call it regression and decay. Both may be true from their respective perspectives but there is no denying the fact that violence, complexities, ailments, stress, disparity and discontent have increased in spite of advancements in many fields including technology, communication, health sciences and commerce.

It is not that there has been lack of efforts in trying to solve the problems. Well-minded people have been continually seeking solutions to each and every problem. But unfortunately the approach appears to be faulty. We seek solutions with preconditions and without compromising our availed comforts and conveniences. When seeking solution to the problem of increasing pollution caused by auto-fuel we mostly work towards finding less polluting fuels rather than trying to limit the need to commute as well.

Lasting solutions to prevailing problems can only be found by striking at the root of the problem from all venues. We will have to endeavour to change the mindset of people. Ahimsa way of life provides such solutions. It is heartening that more and more people have started thinking and discussing on these lines. Last year there was a sudden spurt in the demand of this book from many quarters. We were encouraged to know that the acceptability of ahimsa is on the rise.

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We take pleasure in presenting this second edition to our readers. We are thankful to the author for adding one relevant chapter about the scope of ahimsa in modern times. We are sure our readers will like this revised and enlarged edition. We earnestly hope that it may inspire a larger number of people towards a widespread application of the anti-toxin of ahimsa as a preventive measure for the spreading toxicity of violence in every walk of life.

Champa Lal Parakh
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

(from first edition)

Prakrit Bharti Academy, a non-governmental, voluntary broad based academic body, is devoted to the conservation and projection of Indian cultural heritage. It has already published more than 40 books dealing with different aspects of Indian culture. The present book on Ahimsa is an attempt to expound Ahimsa comprehensively for modern man so that, in this age of violence, intolerance, and excessive possession, an alternative could be understood and appreciated.

Shri Surendra Bothara, the author, has combined his scholarship with practical approach. We are grateful to him for this effort and the book. Since the author wanted one of the writers of the Publisher's Note to write the Foreword also, this was done in deference to his wishes.

We are grateful to Shri Jitendra Sanghi of Ajanta Printers, Jaipur for printing this book.

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AHIMSA: THE SCIENCE OF PEACE ❁

To

**ILA,
PRITHVI,
MAHI, BHOO, DHARTI,
EARTH, GLOBE, TERRA, OUR PLANET
WHICH, TO ALL WHO UNDERSTAND,
DEMONSTRATES MOODS IN CLIMATES,
SENTIMENTS IN OCEANS, EMOTIONS IN WAVES,
TEMPER IN VOLCANOES, TOLERANCE IN ROCKS,
AGONY IN GORGES, ECSTASY IN BLOOMS,
HUMILITY IN SAND, PRIDE IN MOUNTAINS,
CRUELTY IN DESERT, COMPASSION IN RIVERS,
BONDAGE IN CYCLES AND
FREEDOM
IN
EVOLUTION.**

THE DECLARATION

I so pronounce that all the omniscients of all times state, speak, propagate, and elaborate that nothing which breathes, which exists, which lives, and which has any essence or potential of life, should be destroyed or ruled over, or subjugated, or harmed, or denied of its essence or potential.

This truth, propagated by self-knowing omniscients, after understanding all there is in the universe, is pure, undefileable, and eternal. In support of this truth I ask you a question, "Is sorrow or pain desirable to you?"

If you say, 'Yes, it is,' it would be a lie, as it is against the evident reality. If you say, 'No, it is not,' you will be telling the truth. What I want to add to the truth expressed by you is that as sorrow or pain is not desirable to you, so it is to all which breath, exist, live, or have any essence of life. To you and all it is undesirable, and painful, and repugnant.

That which you consider worth destroying is (like) yourself.

That which you consider worth disciplining is (like) yourself.

That which you consider worth harming is (like) yourself.

That which you consider worth subjugating is (like) yourself.

*That which you consider worth killing is (like) yourself.
The result of actions by you has to be borne by you, so do not destroy anything.*

— Acharanga Sutra

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The first edition of this book was received well and appreciated for its approach. International scene has undergone considerable transformation since then but the usefulness of ahimsa as a potent instrument of universal peace remains unchanged. The only unfortunate part is that its application has not enhanced as much as it ought to be.

We give more emphasis to hasty short-term solutions and grossly neglect long-term solutions. We tend to forget that to fight disease one has to strengthen the body besides giving curative treatment. In the same way steps to strengthen the moral, ethical, humanitarian and economic fabric of the society have to be given due importance and priority.

After further elaboration on ahimsa way of life, specially with reference to prevailing problems of terrorism and environmental degradation, I have included some suggestions regarding its wider application. Religious organizations including the Jain can be of great help in this direction. However, leaving aside some welcome exceptions, they are reluctant to compromise their self-imposed ritualistic rigidity.

The perpetrators of rigid codes conveniently forget that Mahavir gave the unique principle of relativity of truth. When he called something right he did not mean that it was right for everyone at all times, at all places and under all conditions. It means that there is a scope of a thing being right for someone under certain circumstances but the same thing may be wrong for some other person or even the same person under different parameters of time, place and circumstances.

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For a thing to be claimed right its parameters have to be defined.

In a dynamic system the governing rules or the truth too has to be dynamic. When we try to make it static or absolute, we trigger disintegration, regression and *himsa*. In order to pursue the path of peace one should devise methodology based on needs of times with a judicious mixture of theory, practice and ritual. I hope my little contribution in this direction will be of some use.

I am thankful to Dr. Atul K. Shah and Young Jains, London for being considerate enough to give permission to reproduce a portion of his booklet '*Experiments with Jainism*' (*A workbook on Jainism in practice*). Special thanks to my friend Prof. L. A. Babb of Amherst College, USA for his encouragement, valuable suggestions and help in giving final shape to the new chapter. Last but not the least my thanks to Shri D.R. Mehta for prodding me to finish this long overdue task.

Jaipur,
24th April 2004

Surendra Bothara

AUTHOR'S NOTE

(from first edition)

It was mere coincidence that nudged me to start working on this book. During a general discussion about some forthcoming publications of Prakrit Bharti, Shri D.R. Mehta expressed his concern about the dearth of books on Jainism directed at the modern citizen. His observation was quite correct; most of the books available are either blindly traditional or too scholastic in style to appeal to modern man. He wondered if I could do such a book, or a series, especially on the Jain codes of conduct for the citizen. I couldn't but say yes, and here is the outcome of my first attempt.

I started with the idea of dealing with the *Anuvrats* (minor vows) in modern context. The research gradually made me shift towards Ahimsa, which is the most important of the five vows of Jains, and without which all the other vows lose their value. The Jain thinkers have developed the concept of Ahimsa in a unique and comprehensive way. Mahavir and his followers elaborated Ahimsa in such detail that it became universally applicable.

Ahimsa should not be considered just a part of Jainism or Buddhism or for that matter any particular religion. Its importance lies in accepting it as a universal concept, around which almost every religion has developed a variety of ideas, in many directions and useful to humanity in many ways. It is so fundamental that it is part of nature itself.

It is my earnest request to my readers that they try to understand, ponder over, and apply the philosophy of Ahimsa to their own individual life as a component of their own

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particular society. Do not treat this work just as another book. Consider it as one component of a dialogue. The second component has to come from the reader in form of views, questions and experiences. Please send your part of the dialogue to us. It might form into a chain of thoughts and may be useful to everyone as a means to understand more and more about Ahimsa. Come, let's again make it dynamic, which is its true nature.

My sincere thanks to Shri D.R. Mehta for inspiring me to take up this work as well as for his continued follow up. My father, Shri Shubh Karan Singh, has guided and helped me in my research besides providing an atmosphere conducive to philosophical thinking and bold enquiry since my childhood. It is certainly not adequate, but still I would like to record my gratitude to him.

Thanks are also due to Miss Rose DeNeve for copy reading and valuable suggestions. Nikhil Bhandari deserves a very special mention for the attractive cover design he has made, taking out time from his busy schedule at art school. Last but not least, thanks to Dr. Shamsheer Bhandari for providing volumes on nature sciences and other subjects from his personal collection.

I am indebted to the scholars and publishers, of past and present, from whose books I have drawn information, references and quotes.

Jaipur
30th Nov. 1987

Surendra Bothara

FOREWORD

First is knowledge then compassion; that is how disciplined live. How would an ignorant discriminate between good and evil?

– Dashavaikalik Sutra of Shayyambhava

The greatness of the great is humility. The gain of gains is self-control. Only those rich are truly wealthy who relieve the need of their neighbours.

– Naladiyar

Once we recognise all that we have in common with others, a feeling of compassion naturally arises and we can no longer treat people with such indifference. We more easily understand their problems, and as we learn how to heal ourselves, we begin to use our knowledge to help them as well.

– Tarthang Tulku

FOREWORD

We are living in a paradoxical situation. While on the one hand, modern civilisation is characterised by a concern for fellow human beings, on the other, the foremost problem of our age is growing violence, both in thought and action. A child in Europe may have sympathy and extend help to one of his ilk in Africa who may not have adequate food to eat or medicine to save his body against disease. As never before, this spirit of compassion has permeated state policies and the result is that we have so many enlightened welfare states in the world in which the poor and weak are taken care of at public expense. There are many international organisations as well which are equally concerned and are making significant contribution in arousing conscience as also directly alleviating human misery and suffering. But juxtaposed is the spread of violence at individual, national and international levels, on scales, which are unprecedented. The crime rate has increased many-fold because of growing greed, intolerance, other undesirable and unchecked propensities, and ready availability of sophisticated weapons. Indeed, in some countries, holding firearms is a fundamental right of citizens. Terrorism is becoming common and respectable.

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At the international level, the situation is horrendous. The expenditure on arms and armaments has increased manifold because of hatred and intolerance of other countries and their ideologies. The most shuddering situation is in the form of unabated development and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. Two small rudimentary atom bombs used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed and maimed several lacs of people. Much bigger and more sophisticated fission and fusion weapons and multi-headed inter-continental ballistic missiles are now capable of destroying the entire life on this planet several times over. Use of one such bomb or device, either by design or by accident, would result in immediate retaliation and escalate into a total nuclear war and complete holocaust.

Such bombs or devices would directly and instantaneously kill millions of people, most of whom would just be vaporised. Others would die because of the effects of radiation. Such bombs or devices would also raise thick dust clouds, which by wind action would fully enshroud this planet. This would lead to total stoppage of sunlight and the consequent prolonged, black icy night, in which the food chain would be destroyed and all remaining human beings would also die because of starvation and radiation. Such a ghastly spectre, spoken about by scientists, is being deliberately played down by politico-military groups dominating the national scenes. These merchants of war are scared of peace. Besides, it is believed that war, or cold war sustains economics. More and more people all over the world are realising that the answer to present problem of violence is to be found in a morality which replaces ravenous greed with contentment, hate with tolerance, and killing with reverence for life. There are many enlightened -And eminent scien-

tists, intellectuals and religious leaders who are talking in this positive language. At the common man's level also, awareness to these dangers of violence is growing. Many protest groups are contributing their mite in arousing the human conscience further. Principles of Ahimsa, Satya, Aparigraha, Anekantvad, etc. assume great relevance in this context.

One of the basic commandments of Jainism is Ahimsa. Ahimsa is Paramodharma. Acharanga Sutra states, "thus say all the perfect souls and blessed ones, whether past, present or to come-thus they speak, thus they declare, thus they proclaim: All things breathing, all things existing, all things living, all beings whatever, should not be slain or treated with violence, or insulted, or tortured, or driven away. This is the pure unchanging eternal law, which the wise ones who know the world have proclaimed, among the earnest and the non-earnest, among the loyal and the non-loyal, among those who have given up punishing others and those who have not done so, among those who are weak and those who are not, among those who delight in worldly ties and those who do not. This is the truth. So it is. Thus it is declared in this religion".

Jainism believes in the plurality and equality of living creatures. Since nobody wants to be hurt or killed, the general rule should be that nobody should be hurt or killed. 'This rule of conduct is not confined only to man but extends even to the smallest of small creatures. It is amazing that more than 2500 years ago, when scientific devices to detect micro creatures were not available, Mahavir stated that there were small living creatures in wind and water and enjoined his followers to avoid, to that extent possible, their killing as well.

This kind of comprehensive concept of Ahimsa is unknown in the philosophical world. Indeed, Albert Schweitzer, while dealing with Jainism in his book *Indian Thought and Its Development* said — “The laying down of the commandment not to kill and not to damage is one of the greatest events in the spiritual history of mankind... So far as we know it is for the first time clearly expressed by Jainism”.

The concept of Ahimsa as developed by Jainism has many significant features. These are

(i) Ahimsa is not to be practised at the physical level only but at mental -one as well. Apart from *Jiva* or *Dravya* Ahimsa there is a *Bhaava* Ahimsa. In another form, it is stated that there should be no *Himsa* by “*Man*” (mind), “*Vachan*” (speech), or “*Kaaya*” (body). Even hurting feelings is *himsa*.

(ii) The concept of Ahimsa means that one would not kill, get killing done, or approve any killing.

(iii) *Himsa* or violence and “*Parigraha*” or possession are intimately connected. In fact, the biggest cause of *Himsa* is possession. Thus to achieve Ahimsa, physical possession and the spirit of possession would have to be restricted.

Jainism believes that the first steps of Ahimsa would have to be taken at the individual level. Individuals, though their number may be small, would have to truly and sincerely practise Ahimsa in their daily life. Cruelty and killing of even small creatures brutalises a man. Indeed, one of the ways of preparing good soldiers in the past was to ask them to kill animals so that they got hardened and, in war, were capable of killing man.

In the present day world, with religion getting separated from daily life and, spreading commercialisation, killing has increased many-fold and sensitivity to life, whether animal or human, has declined in proportion. The need, therefore, is that this trend should be reversed and man should be made more humane not only in relation to man but also for other living creatures. With personal commitment to Ahimsa and personal transformation of individual, the real remedy to violence would be found.

One of the major problems with many of the protest groups trying to fight against violence at national and international levels is that personally they are not non-violent. One of the reasons why Gandhiji also could not succeed was that a large number of his followers were wanting to be non violent at the social level but were violent at the personal level. On 15th August 1947, Gandhiji was the most disillusioned man in this world because his emphasis on purity of personal conduct as a precondition for purity of social conduct was not heeded by his own followers.

As mentioned earlier, part of Himsa grows from acquisitiveness. Jainism does not subscribe to forced poverty but suggests that wants should be minimised voluntarily and there should be no grabbing at any level. Many economic systems today are based only on promoting wants rather than curbing them. This is having disastrous results. One of them is that we are exhausting the non-replenishable resources of this world; another is that material goods and money are becoming the measures of man. Internationally, this spirit is leading to regional and world conflicts. Here again, the start would have to be made from the individual and his mind would have to be changed.

Another malady of our age is general intolerance. While science has been a great boon both in promoting material prosperity and rationalism, it has made our thinking, even in areas other than science, extremely definitive. We learn that two and two can only be four and tend to carry the same certitude into social matters, though they are of a different character. The result is that those who do not agree with us are treated as wrong. Earlier dogmatism was based on ignorance. Now it is caused by certitude arising out of rational thinking. What is not being realised is that knowledge is relative. The faculties that we possess are limited. Even as compared to small creatures, our senses are much less developed. For example, dog may have a far better sense of smell and an eagle may have far more developed eye sight. Even in comparison with such creatures, when our senses are so poor, how can we claim absolute knowledge?

Jainism has its philosophy of *Syadvad*. It is a seven-fold logic, which replaces certitude with relativity in thinking. According to this principle, one may be right or one may be wrong. Even the opponent may be right. If one acquires this mental attitude, one cannot but be tolerant. In this, there is no place for dogmatism or fanaticism. This is one of the great contributions of Jainism to world thought; its application to personal conduct could make the world a safe place. The present ideological conflicts that we witness today would not be as intense as they are now if this principle could permeate the minds of adversaries.

It is also worth mentioning here that, mistakenly, the negative aspect of Ahimsa has been overemphasised at the expense of its positive form. While non-killing is certainly essential, Ahimsa in its positive form-means reverence for life, which in turn calls for compassion and service. In

Jainism, for attaining *Moksha*, *Samyak Jnana* (pure knowledge) *Samyak Darshan* (pure doctrine), and *Samyak Charitra* (pure conduct) are essential. To achieve *Samyak Darshan* or pure doctrine there are five requirements, one of them being “*Anukampa*” or compassion. Besides, the definition of Ahimsa is compassion. According to one of the Shastras (*Visheshavashyak Sutra*), which deals with the Ahimsa in 60 ways. Mahavir also speaks of “*Maitri*”, “*Vatsalya*”, “*Vaiyaavachch*” etc. It seems that the later Acharyas who had more of logic than realisation tended to ignore this aspect. If by doctrine, one has to be, the friend of all creatures, one is expected not only to, indulge in their non-killing, but also to help them. In one of the stories, relating to the life of Adinaath, it is indicated that he attained *Tirthankarhood* because in one of his earlier lives he treated the people well as a Vaidya. The need, therefore, is to reinforce this compassionate aspect of Ahimsa.

The author has dealt with these and some other facets of Ahimsa. His main anxiety has been to convey the traditional concept of Ahimsa properly to rationalistic and modern citizen. This makes this book quite different from many others on the subject. In pursuit of this he has mustered support from other thinkers belonging to different traditions but appreciating various aspects of Ahimsa. The effect of these supporting thoughts has been quite telling.

The author has also pleaded for giving a modern shape to the concept of Ahimsa. While doing so he also appears to be in mood for a combat, of course of a non-violent nature. Indeed, in his ‘Author’s Note’ he himself describes his effort as one to promote a dialogue. Occasionally one may not agree with him; however, every author has his freedom to express his views. Taking advantage of the concept of

Syadvad and this opportunity of writing the Foreword, I have expressed my own viewpoint on this matter briefly and in the same healthy spirit.

The general impression that Ahimsa of Jains is confined only to non-killing of small creatures and micro-organisms and does not extend to man is not in conformity with the Jain doctrine. Jainism forbids the killing as well as hurting of all living things small or big. The problem is not one of scale of Ahimsa but of quantity and scope. Killing or hurting is prohibited at all levels (except where circumstantially inevitable). It seems that the indirect cause of this misunderstanding is the excessive stress given on the negative quality of the concept of Ahimsa. What has been emphasised is non-killing rather than the positive concept of active altruism. The author finds fault with some of the rituals regarding foods and eating habits, while he may be largely correct, as some of the rituals do not partake of the basic spirit of Ahimsa, many others, which can be justified both in terms of religious doctrine and science, may be worth following.

It also needs to be added that any religion or doctrine that does not pay adequate attention to the conduct of its followers often degenerates. Jainism, without any disrespect to any other religion, highlights the need for comprehensive combination of knowledge, doctrine and conduct (*Samyak Jnana, Darshan, and Charitra*); emphasis on one at the expense of others leads to an imbalances result.

Though the author has relied more on Jain concept, his overall view transcends any sectarian treatment. He has relied on other spiritual and practical thinkers as well as scientific facts to present his views properly and forcefully. I look forward to more such works from him.

-D. R. Mehta

PREFACE

Gautam said, 'Monks, accept not what I say as truth because it is backed by tradition, or because it is the law of the land, or because it sounds good, or because it comes from your teacher. Accept as truth only that which is sagaciously acceptable to reason as well as sentiment.

— **Anguttar Nikaya**

That which is old has become so only by passing away (with passage of time). That which is new is also going to become old (with passage of time). Old does not mean stable or irrefutable, who would accept without examining what has been labeled as old.

— **Dvatrinshika of Siddhasen (6/5)**

All that is ancient (old) is not always true; whatever is new is not always faultless. The wise accept the best after proper examination and discrimination. Only the foolish depend on interpretation by others and follow blindly.

— **Malavikagnimitra of Kalidas**

I do not favour Mahavir, nor am I prejudiced against Kapil etc. I would accept any one's statement provided I find it true on examination.

— **Loktattva-Nirnaya of Haribhadrasuri**

PREFACE

Man, when he first opened his eyes, must have been astonished to see the infinite varieties of things and phenomena around him. When, he closed his eyes, he must have been equally astonished with his capacity to look into the world within. This capacity of observing the self in association with the environs as well as independently made him unique in the animal kingdom. That was the beginning of the long journey into the labyrinth of knowledge. This work is an effort to understand, through unbiased investigation, just one step on just one of the pathways of that hitherto unraveled labyrinth; the pathway known as Jainism.

Although, compared to Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam, Jainism has a small number of followers, it commands pride of a place amongst philosophies. It has a tradition of candid and original thinkers and a vast store of literature, covering a wide range of subjects.

Most of what we know as Jainism today is attributed to Mahavir and the lineage of his followers. One of the most revolutionary and radical thinkers of all times, Mahavir developed a unique method of analysis which could be ap-

plied to any facet of the two cardinal fundamentals: life and matter. He struck at the roots of blind faith, biased dogmas, and authoritative absolutism with the open minded, bold, and simple principle of *Anekaantavaad/Syaadvaad* (the first ever concept of relativity of truth).

As happens with almost every philosophy, Jain philosophy suffered under the weight of decaying traditions with passage of time. It stagnated and degenerated into a social system infested with ever multiplying misinterpretations. It became divided into sects and sub-sects. In spite of the array of brilliant scholars and original thinkers in its fold, Jain philosophy has, for all practical purposes, become a jumble of dogmas, idiosyncrasies, and sectarian fights on petty issues.

Although known as the most ardent opposition to ritualistic religions, it appears to have succumbed to ritualism. It now has subgroups and sects, perhaps, more than any other existing religion. Instead of following the path of right knowledge, right perception and right conduct, as was prescribed by its founders, the Jains have been sidetracked into petty fights of factionalism and religious power seeking. In the process, a large part of true knowledge has been forgotten and irretrievably lost.

While much of the profound knowledge of Jains has become extinct, whatever still remains buried in literature is enough for generations of scholars to study, evaluate, and revive for the benefit of humanity. The ideas put forth by the Jain thinkers were revolutionary not only for their times but continue to be so even today. In the remote past, when the creation of the earth and sky, and all we see was attributed to some omnipotent all pervading entity by almost every school of thought, the Jains said that the universe is without a beginning, ever changing and endless.

Mahavir expressed the idea in simple words – ‘There never was, neither is, nor will be a moment when this universe did not exist, is not existing, and will not exist. But at the same time, its apparent form continues to change with the passage of time.’ Such knowledge should never be neglected or discarded, and if frozen within the ice of misdirected tradition, it should be thawed out and revived.

The purpose of this work is not to enter a scholastic debate of establishing or disputing some philosophical statement or supporting or disproving the origin and period of some other statement. Its main theme is the religious disciplines prescribed for the citizen, the common man, by the Jain philosophers. Once understood in modern context, they will automatically raise the curiosity of people who have active interest and dedication towards reviving lost values for the benefit of humanity. They might go deeper and dig out the philosophical truth from the heaps of religious jargon.

To see how the Jain process of thinking and clarity of logic evolved, one needs only to look at any of the basic principles as described in the Jain texts and observe how elaborately every possible facet has been covered. The Jain texts convey the strength of each basic principle of philosophy, and also allow the possibility of progressive flexibility in applying it to social ways.

In its most simple form, the Jain philosophy starts with its conception of the fundamentals in nature: *Jiva* (soul), *Ajiva* or *Jada* (matter), *Aakaash* (space), *Dharma* (motion), *Adharma* (inertia), and *Kaal* (time). From these, the exposition progresses to the hypothesis that all life is the result of the interaction of the two fundamentals soul and matter, and that the goal of every individual should be to free the soul from the bondage of matter.

This simple doctrine has been developed by Jain thinkers into the most logical path of purification that leads to liberation without the help of any external supernatural entity.

Without going into details of the basic theories, we proceed to the process prescribed for liberation of soul. The soul progresses through a continuous interaction with *Karmic* particles. It is always in the process of acquiring and shedding these particles, the result of which is continued suffering through cycles of rebirth. Through individual efforts, the soul may stop acquiring new *Karmic* particles and start shedding those already acquired.

These individual efforts have been explained in a systematic way, and guidelines have been formulated for different stages. In this book we will discuss the stage that treats the common social individual, the human being living in a society and involved in his day-to-day activities as a citizen and householder.

A separate chapter, The Philosophy, has been devoted to the basic concepts in the path of purification. This is a glimpse into what lies beyond the simple life of a citizen: the pursuit of an individual trying to rise above the social level. It is but a general discussion, not the step-by-step detail of the higher philosophy.

The first step in the practice of purifying the soul is to minimize the influx of fresh *Karma*. It has been observed that the cause for this acquisition can be summed up in five vices. The codes of conduct to help refrain from indulging in these vices have been prescribed and elaborated. Efforts towards total abstaining have been prescribed for ascetics. As the common citizen has to follow the social rules and

laws of the state along with his individual pursuits, a partial abjuration of these vices has been prescribed for him.

The five vices are: *Himsa* (violence), *Asatya* (falsity), *Asteya* (theft), *Maithun* (libido), and *Parigraha* (Possessiveness). Abstinence from these vices leads to purification. The first step prescribed for purification is known as the *Anuvrats*, or minor vows. These vows are five in number and prescribe the code of conduct for abstinence from the five vices to a degree possible for a citizen. We shall try to understand just one of these in modern context.

Although the basis will be the traditionally accepted interpretations, the modern approach may open new insight and direction. It may even go against the tradition. It should not be taken as an attack on the faith of the followers of Jainism. It should be taken in the spirit that when truth is sought for, it is inevitable that the tradition of rituals and dogmas comes under heavy and unflinching attack. Reforms are inevitable result of such critical but constructive analysis.

Any reforms coming from any source should be considered with an open mind before acceptance or rejection. Reforms have never been denied by the authors of Jain principles, because if they are healthy they are within the framework of the basics. The form of these principles, which most of us know and try to follow, is nothing but the social religion, or the applied form of the Jain philosophy. As such, there should be no bias against healthy reforms.

Out of ignorance impossible rules based on faulty interpretations of the basics given by the original thinkers are sometimes formulated. Once such rules are made and followers find them difficult to observe, the next genera-

tion of blind followers formulate rituals to sidetrack the impossible rules. Once started, the process continues because no one has courage to face the wrath of the mass of blind followers that would be triggered by such challenges to the interpretations or the second-hand knowledge from the past.

Like other branches of Indian philosophies, Jainism has developed the subject of logic to a great extent. Unfortunately and ironically, more people have used logic for the purpose of rationalizing or justifying the statements of the past rather than for examining them and making necessary corrections. The efforts of a few towards unveiling the truth get lost in the crowd of die-hard traditionalists.

When judged in context of the modern knowledge of the physical world, the traditional meanings and interpretations generally appear to be faulty. On proper examination, however, it becomes evident that the major fault does not lie with the original concept but with the interpretations. After all, an interpretation reflects the depth of knowledge of the interpreter not of the original thinker.

One should not forget that the original concepts of Jainism came from a highly endowed individual, capable of direct perception and experience of the physical and metaphysical world. The gap between his caliber and that of the society around him was vast. As such, his conceptions and statements must have been interpreted in terms society as a whole could understand, given its limited knowledge and capacity to perceive. This work of interpretation must have been done by a progression of disciples bridging the gap between him and the society.

The quality of any interpretation depends on two factors; the purity and depth of knowledge of the interpreter, and the general intellectual standard of the society at which the interpretation is directed. The original concept must have come in the form of simple statement of reality as perceived directly by the thinker. The disciples linking him and the society must have first tried to understand the concept as far as the depth of their knowledge allowed them to, and then to put it in a simpler form understandable by the common people. As the distance between the original thinker and the common man grew in all dimensions (space, time, and intellect), the true knowledge diffused. That is why the practice of regularly examining and correcting the available information is very important and essential for removing the accumulated fog.

Philosophy, in its purest form, is an individual pursuit. The knowledge thus gained is then shared, accepted, and followed by people around the original thinker. With passage of time it is examined, debated, elaborated, dressed, etc. What results from these processes is religion or, to be precise, social religion. It has been an established practice in Indian society that almost all rules of social conduct have been included in religion in the name of god, or as causes of good and bad results in next life. May be, the reason behind this practice is that the fear of unknown is much greater than the fear of law.

In any event, this practice has vastly increased the volume of religious literature. As such, it is almost imperative that while looking analytically into the religious and philosophical works of the past, one must try to probe more and more deeply to dig out the truth concealed within the numerous interpretations. An unbiased approach becomes all the

more necessary because with passage of time quality of the interpretations and commentaries faces numerous ups and downs in the onslaught of ever changing social circumstances.

Such reforms call for an open-minded approach of being prepared to accept any change in interpretations necessitated by the progressive increase in the knowledge of the physical world through development of science and technology. In the end such approach can be beneficial to the fields of both science and philosophy and to their offshoots.



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1

THE CONCEPT

Ahimsa is disciplined behaviour towards every living being.

— **Dashavaikalika Sutra (6/9)**

Good is all that serves life; evil is all that serves death. Good is reverence for life, all that enhances life growth, unfolding. Evil is all that stifles, narrows it down, and cuts it into pieces.

— **Erich Fromm**

Absence of violence of any sort towards all beings at all times is Ahimsa.

— **Yogasutra of Patanjali**

By its very nature, hate destroys and tears down; by its very nature, love creates and builds up. Love transforms with redemptive power.

— **Martin Luther King Jr.**

1

THE CONCEPT

So much has been said, by so many, since so long, about Ahimsa in Jain literature and preaching that it has almost become a synonym of Jainism. The excessive emphasis on mere rituals has done more harm than good to the concept. For the common man Ahimsa, instead of being one of the most important concepts, has become the only concept of Jainism.

Today most of the followers of Jainism, leaving aside the students and scholars of the subject, consider their duty and pursuit to have been concluded simply by observing the grosser and formal aspects of Ahimsa. The codes of conduct have lost their basic meaning and have been reduced to mere rituals by this superficial observance.

It is the lopsided preaching and observance that has made the Jain principles of Ahimsa a theory that makes its followers weak and impractical. If we look into what is really meant by Ahimsa, it would, by its almost total absence in practice today, emphasize the need of research into Jain philosophy with the view to formulate healthy reforms in its applied form.

Majority of actions commence at the thought level and are then translated into action. Also, the thinking process is the link between the soul and body. Before committing an act the thought process starts and, as such, the violence of thought or feeling precedes any act of violence. The abstinence from such violence is Ahimsa according to Jain Philosophy.

This appears to be an original concept of the Jains. The word Ahimsa does not appear in *the Vedas* or *Brahmans*. In Vedic tradition the word Ahimsa finds its first mention in the *Chhandogyopanishad* (3. 17. 4). It may be deduced that this mention came as an influence of Shramanic or Jain thoughts on the Vedic religions.

The tradition of Shramans, which branched out into Jainism sometime in pre-history, is probably the most ancient philosophical and cultural tradition. The concept of Ahimsa also appears to have been associated with the Shramanic culture since the remote past.

The acceptance of existence of a religious order that was against animal sacrifice and propagated Ahimsa is found in the earliest Brahmanic literature. The term Shraman is generally used for religious orders other than the Vedic, specially those that practiced extreme austerities. Prominent among these are Jainism and Buddhism. The first Tirthankar of Jains, Rishabhadeva, is mentioned in *Vishnu Purana* and *Bhagavat Purana*, two of the oldest books of Vedic tradition.

Shrimadbhagavat has mentioned in details the life and works of Rishabhadeva accepting him as the founder of Jainism. According to *Shrimadbhagavat*, Rishabh was a yogi and ascetic. Almost all statues of Rishabhadeva as well as other Jain Tirthankars are in meditative postures. The antiquity of Shraman tradition is further confirmed by the infer-

ence of scholars of Indus Valley Civilization. They point out that the style of Indus Valley figurines is very much akin to the later Jain statues. Bull, the symbol associated with Rishabhadeva, is quite common in the Mohan-jo-daro artifacts; independently as well as in association with the yogi figurines and tablets.

The experts on Indus Valley Civilization also believe that- Ahimsa appears to have been a way of life with the pre-Aryan culture in India. It was in such high state of development that these people carried on their social, political and religious affairs without the need of involvement into war. The meager quantity and primitive configuration of destructive implements at Mohan-jo-daro and Harappa, in spite of the evidence of highly developed technology, is ample proof that the people of Indus valley had no need or inclination to wage war with anyone.

Whatever be the antiquity of the Jain school of thought, with the advent of Mahavir it was revitalized and brought to prominence once again. The acute vision, open mindedness, sense of analysis, love for details and dauntless discipline are some of the important social contributions of Mahavir. His greatest contributions are the original but candid concepts of relativity of truth and the metaphysics and philosophy of Ahimsa.

Whereas science has only recently stumbled upon the concept that all living things are related and that they trace their descent back to the same origin, Mahavir, who devoted himself to deep study of origin and spread of violence, conceived the idea of equality of all life forms more than two thousand five hundred years ago. He conveyed that all beings are fond of life, like pleasure, hate pain, shun destruc-

tion and desire to live. Even an iota of attitude opposed to this is detrimental to the progress of soul and may be termed as violence.

The fourth principle disciple (*Ganadhar*) of Mahavir, Vyakt, during his discussions about fundamentals in nature, asked, “If according to you earth, air, plants, water, fire etc. are full of living organisms even ascetics would be guilty of violence caused by eating, drinking, breathing etc. As such there would be total lack of Ahimsa.”

Mahavir explained, “You will have-to understand and adjudge violence in its proper perspective. The fact that nature is infested with living organisms does not mean that violence is inevitable. It is not correct to assume that a person commits violence merely by becoming instrumental in destruction of another being. Even this is false that a person is non-violent because he has not caused destruction of another being.

“Also, it is not true that violence increases or decreases according to the number of beings present. Even without actually killing someone a person is violent like a butcher if he has evil thoughts. Similarly, having pure thoughts a person is nonviolent like a doctor even if he has actually been instrumental in physical act of killing. As such, by virtue of pure or evil thoughts and feelings a person is violent or non-violent whether or not he is actually involved in the act of killing.

“In fact, in its absolute definition, violence is the presence of evil thoughts, feelings or attitude. It does not necessarily depend on act of killing. Any involvement in the act of killing by a person whose feelings, thoughts and attitudes are pure does not fall under the category of violence.”

A vivid definition of Ahimsa, but unfortunately we find it missing from the actual conduct preached and practiced today. The mere physical act has been given so much importance that the feeling behind it is almost totally neglected. It has been forgotten that if the feelings, thoughts and attitudes were made non-violent the physical Ahimsa would automatically be achieved.

The importance to the restriction of physical violence appears to have been given basically due to the fact that it is easier to achieve as compared to the restriction of the violence of feelings. Also it appears to be important to the orderly social life. But merely observing the physical Ahimsa and not caring about feelings is self defeating and even harmful. It gives an illusion of achievement, which in turn causes carelessness and apathy towards disciplining the attitudes and feelings.

Due to this over emphasis the fine principles of Jainism have lost their true value in their application to the social conducts. The followers of Jainism today are lost in rituals like taking vow of not eating after sunset, not eating meat and some vegetables, not eating at all on some particular days of the month or the year, doing some chanting at appointed hours of day etc. Even the ascetics encourage these rituals and consider their duties to have been concluded. There is hardly any serious effort towards disciplining the feelings, thoughts and attitudes. Cheating, bribing, smuggling, tax evasion, amassing wealth by fair or foul means are as common with Jains as with others. They forget that once the mind is disciplined, the physical activities would automatically follow.

According to the Jain way this violence of feeling is much more evil than the physical act. The reason is that ul-

timately every act as well as thought is judged by its effect on none else but the self. The creation of evil thought damages the soul. The physical actions only attract the *Karmic* particles in a continuous flow. The fusion of these particles with the soul is caused by the force of feelings, attitudes or thoughts, which have been termed as *Kashayas* or passions. This fusion is termed as *Bandh* or bondage and is the cause of continued rebirth.

Saving one self from this bondage is the central theme of the path of Ahimsa. All the other rules, vows, methods etc. are corollaries, offshoots or assisting factors.

Truly following Ahimsa conduct means saving one's soul from damage or tarnishing. Soul is formless and so its activities, conditions, states etc. are not directly visible or conceivable to the common man through his physical senses. It has to be understood by the common man with the help of suitable examples and similes from the physical world. Similarly its activity also can be understood and directed with the help of physical world through intellectual activities. That appears to be the reason that harm to other beings becomes the focal point around which the whole concept of Ahimsa revolves. By not harming others one is, in fact, trying not to harm his own soul.

Once a person transcends to the level of direct perception of soul, the process is reversed. By not allowing any harm to come to his own soul he automatically avoids harming others. The confusion between protecting the self and protecting others starts when the rules applicable for those at the higher level are forced upon those at lower levels.

The Jain thinkers have gone into meticulous details to analyze human psychology and behaviour in order to elabo-

rate the basics to almost all possibilities. The applied form of this detailed study is dependent on many extraneous factors and should be continuously reformed.

It is generally believed that philosophy is something beyond the normal social activities; it is abstract and has to be pursued by academicians or individuals away from the society. The philosophical principles are said to be impractical and useless for success in worldly life. Jainism and other philosophies, which stress more on Ahimsa, have been termed as impractical and to be followed only by those who want to be away from the society for meditation.

This appears to be a twisted way of putting things; an effort towards isolating a group of people from the mainstream just because they are windows to the truth, which is often bitter. Philosophy is an integral part of any form of human society. Any attempt to isolate and term it as a subject for a few is making but a dangerous fallacy. It is an inseparable part of human life and plays pivotal role in the march of humanity towards the destiny it chooses. What we term as practical or worldly is itself derived from the philosophical thoughts. Philosophy is a conception and what we term as practical way of life is but the applied form of philosophy.

Ahimsa, as defined and elaborated by Jains, is a universally applicable concept. It is not something esoteric like higher yogic practices or meditation done in extreme isolation. It can be practiced in every walk of life by simple adaptation.

In order to fully comprehend the Jain concept of Ahimsa we will have to proceed step by step, beginning with the Jain definition of life.



2

THE LIFE

See and understand about peace of every living organism.

— **Acharanga Sutra**

One should neither directly or indirectly cause death to any mobile or immobile living being nor support anyone doing so.

— **Suttanipata, Dhammik Sutta**

He, who does not seek to cause the sufferings of bonds or death to living creatures but desires the good of all beings, obtains endless bliss.

— **Manusmriti (5/46)**

We cannot create so much as one particle of dust, therefore, what right have we to destroy the very least form?

— **Max Heindel**

Mahavir did not stop at the concept of equality of all life forms. He went still deeper. In the history of human knowledge he was, most probably, the first person to conceive that the existence of living beings is not confined to the visible animal kingdom. It goes beyond the world conceivable through normal physical senses. He could perceive and conceive that living world existed even at the micro-level of particles.

It is obvious that this concept could not have been developed without a profound insight into the functioning of living organisms at all levels. The basics on this subject are very sound but, once again, the interpretations appear to be representative of the limited knowledge and fixed thinking of the later traditional authors.

The words used, by Jains, for living organisms are *Jiva* and *Prani*, which are common throughout the Indian religions. *Jiva* means to live; be or remain alive; alive; living; and existing. *Prani* means one endowed with breath or life. The word more commonly used by Jains is *Jiva*, which, to them, also means soul.

When dealing with life forms, their pleasures and pains, a sense of degree and quality of life comes into play. While elaborating Ahimsa, the Jain thinkers have done detailed study of full spectrum of living organisms and classified them on the basis of physical faculties. This classification starts with two broad divisions: *Sthavar*¹ and *Tras*. The traditionally accepted definitions of these categories are:

Sthavar Jiva: (Immobile beings): This category covers all those organisms that have no mobility. All this type of beings are one-sensed beings having the sense of touch. These have been further divided into five categories according to their living media. The five categories are: *Prithvikaya* (Earth forms), *Apkaya* (Aqueous forms), *Teukaya* (Fire forms), *Vayukaya* (Air forms) and *Vanaspatikaya* (Plant forms). Every one of these forms has two types according to the size; micro and macro.

1. A Sanskrit-English Dictionary by sir Monier Monier-Williams mentions:

STHAVARA, mf (a) n: standing still, not moving, fixed, stationary, stable, immovable, (Taittiriya Samhita, etc. etc.); firm, constant, permanent, invariable, (Apastamba's Dharma Sutra, Ramayana, Harivamsa); regular, established, (Wilson); vegetable, belonging to vegetable world, (Susruta); relating to immovable property, (Yajnavalkya); a mountain (Bhagvadgita, Kumar Sambhava).

Paia-sadda-mahannavo by Pt. Hargovind Das Seth, a dictionary of Prakrit language mentions:

Thavar (Sthavar): 1. That which is or remains Sthira, 2. One sensed being having only the sense of touch, life forms of earth, water plant etc.

Sthira as mentioned in Monier-Williams:

STHIRA, mf (a) n: firm, Lard. compact, strong, (Rig Veda etc.) fixed, immovable, motionless, still, calm, (Satpath Brahman, Mahabharata etc); firm, not wavering or tottering, steady, (Ramayana, Varaha-Mihir Brihat Samhita); unfluctuating, durable, lasting, permanent, changeless, (Rig Veda etc.).

Tras Jiva (Mobile beings): This category covers everything in the animal kingdom and also some conceptual forms. These have been further categorized into four types according to the physical senses. Two sensed, having the sense of smell in addition to the sense of touch; like shells, leeches etc. Three sensed having the sense of taste also, like lower forms of insects. Four sensed having the sense of vision also, like fly, scorpion etc. The five sensed beings having also the sense of hearing; like all the animals, birds, humans etc., as also the conceptual ones like gods, hell beings, demons etc.

It appears that, although the terms have been taken from the original concepts, the details have been filled in by people having very limited knowledge of the physical world. Also, the later scholars never tried to reform and redefine with the help of factual information. May be, this has been due to the inertia of tradition or closing the doors in face of up-to-date scientific research.

When the followers did not properly understand the basis of division of living organisms into the two broad categories, it appears that they took the simple literal meaning and collected a heap of logic around their belief. Capacity of movement was taken as the basic dividing factor. Based on this, at some point *Vayukaya* (Air beings) was put into the *Tras* (mobile) category with the argument that air has movement. As it does not have any initiative or will to move, *Vayukaya* was also put in the *Sthavar* category.

When someone put forth the idea that *Teukaya* (Fire beings) should also be put in the *Tras* (Mobile) category, it was rejected on the basis that *Teukaya* does not move on its own but is forced to move by air. Postulations on such weak grounds, like gross movement, appear to be out of place for

a school of thought that specializes in minute details, accuracy and logic.

It is surprising that people belonging to the school of thought that was probably first to conceive that sub-atomic particles of matter are in state of constant motion, would put forward such illogical views when dealing with living organism.

It is even more difficult to accept that a man of Mahavir's insight and in-depth knowledge would put forth theories based on such flimsy grounds. Who would believe that a person who could perceive the existence of micro-organisms and micro-particles, would not know that everything including plants, earth, air, water etc. are always moving in some way or the other. One component of every motion is the result of the numerous unseen physical and cosmic forces ever active on our planet.

Modern man, equipped with ever growing scientific information, ridicules such traditional interpretations. The irony is that with the rejection of decaying tradition the valuable, correct and profound knowledge is also rejected.

If we start at the beginning and try an open minded and analytical approach, it becomes evident that the basic concept is correct and scientific. The word *Sthavar* certainly means immobile or fixed at a place. But it also means stable, constant, invariable, dormant etc. As the classification given by Mahavir is based on level of development of faculties, the division of *Sthavar* and *Tras* should also come from those premises. The life forms at the initial level are *Sthavar* and those at the gradual higher levels of development are *Tras*.

If we redefine the *Sthavar Jiva* on this basis, the definition would be: The life forms at the initial level, which are constant or uniform or basic for all evolved forms and are incapable of willful movement are *Sthavar Jivas*. From the viewpoint of physical senses, they only have the sense of touch, not yet evolved into its finer branches of taste, smell, vision and hearing. The sense of touch, again, is a basic and constant factor, as the existence itself is evident through touch. This sense is also the constant for all the other senses, as all the other senses are nothing but touch of a variety of particles in varieties of motions.

In modern terminology the *Sthavar* category of life form would probably be termed as mono-cellular organism or flocks of them. It may be bacteria and virus, which are the simplest forms of life known till date. It may even be DNA, the basic building block of all life forms; or the clay crystals that are supposed to be the earliest duplicating system formed on our planet.

The latest scientific information also corroborates this interpretation. It has been observed that the undifferentiated cells of early stages of an embryo are similar across most of the animal kingdom. In their basic architecture all living cells have greater similarity than differences. All known life carries the same genetic language and other identical traits. Scientists believe that the trail of evolution of every form of living organism, including plants, animals and human beings, when traced backwards, ends up at individual ancestral cell.

The sub-categories, *Prithvikaya* (earth beings) etc., simply denote the biochemistry of the formation and life process of these simple cellular organisms. The second category,

Tras (mobile), covers all the living forms evolved at random from these basic organisms in different directions. At these higher levels willful as well as evolutionary movement is evident. Finer senses gradually evolve and with them the capacity of the brain. All these living beings, which are various as well as variable, come from the same source – the constant and uniform world of the *Sthavar*. The *Tras* beings can be placed in their proper sub-categories depending on the number of senses apparently functioning in them.

This factor, again, should be kept open to, progressive changes and not made rigid, as done by tradition, because the process of evolution is dynamic and ever changing. A living organism, known to have four senses may have the fifth sense in some hidden form. It may, at some later period in its evolutionary progress, develop the fifth sense. Any rigidity in factors that continue to change could lead to distortion and misinformation.

A startling example of such phenomenon is a small fish called the blind cave characin, which has no eyes. Long ago, these fish were trapped in a dark subterranean lake in some caves in Mexico. Eyes were of no use in the light-less water and the fish eventually stopped growing them. Other examples of such changes in form are the peculiar organisms like slime moulds, which in some instances spend half their life unmistakably as animals and other half unmistakably as plants.

These facts suggest that the terms *Sthavar* and *Tras* were used in dynamic evolutionary context and not just static physical context. The modern concept of when and how life began on this planet would be an interesting reading here. It would also reveal that how close is the Jain concept of life to the modern scientific concept.

The story of life starts most probably at a period when earth was still cooling and completely lifeless. The clouds of water vapour that surrounded earth had condensed to form seas, but they were still hot. There was a crowd of volcanoes spewing ash and lava. The atmosphere was thin and consisted of hydrogen, carbon monoxide, ammonia and methane. There was little or no oxygen, and an abundance of ultraviolet rays reaching earth's surface. Electrical storms raged in the clouds, bombarding the land and sea with lightning.

What would have been the result of this mixture of natural elements? Experiments were performed in laboratory and it was found that complex molecules like sugars, nucleic acid, amino acids etc. were formed in the solutions.

With this knowledge we go back to the primitive earth and speculate the progress from then on. (It is worth noting that the origin and progress of life forms remains a subject of speculation, even in science, till date). With passage of millions of years the concentration of these building blocks of proteins increased and the molecules started interaction forming more complex compounds. There are possibilities of some totally new factors being brought down through meteorites. (This unknown factor may be the dormant stage *Jiva*, or life particles that, according to the Jains, are present in abundance throughout the expanses of the Universe.)

Sometime during this increasing complexity of compounds there appeared a substance, which proved to be most crucial for the further development of life. We today know it as DNA. It has two unique properties: it can act as a blue print for the manufacture of amino acids and it has the capacity to replicate itself.

Surprisingly enough, these two characteristics are also those of the simplest living organisms like bacteria. Bacteria, besides being the simplest form of life, are also the oldest fossils hitherto discovered.

The bacteria, evolved from DNA, fed initially on the various carbon compounds accumulated during the preceding millions of years. (As the carbon compounds were formed from the condensed vapours, the life forms formed from them and feeding on them may be the *Vayukaya*, air beings). With the flourishing of these bacteria the availability of this type of food must have reduced.

The inherent capacity of the living organism to adapt and evolve according to the changing environment brought a variety of changes. Instead of taking readymade food from the surroundings, some started manufacturing their own, within the cell walls, drawing necessary energy from the sun. The process is known as photosynthesis and hydrogen, a gas produced in abundance in volcanic eruptions, is an essential part of the process. Conditions very similar to those in which the early photosynthesizing bacteria lived can still be found in such volcanic areas as Yellowstone in Wyoming. In the scalding mineral laden waters of the slope, these bacteria still flourish. (These could be the *Teukaya*, fire beings).

Other forms eventually arose, which were able to extract hydrogen from a much more widespread source, water. (These may be the *Apkaya*, water beings.) This was the turning point in the history of life on our planet. When hydrogen is removed from water, free oxygen remains. The oxygen accumulated through millions of years is the component on which all life on earth sustains. These organisms, which are complex only as compared with bacteria, are found wherever there is con-

stant moisture and are close relatives of green algae. The compound used in this intake of energy in the form of hydrogen is chlorophyll. Some of these algae, which are blue green, have developed a strange lime oozing form.

The blue-green pillars of Hamelin Pool are living stromolites and the group of them standing on the sun dappled sea floor are as close as we may ever get to a scene from the world of two thousand million years ago. They are living organisms that secrete lime, forming strong cushions near the shores of the pool and teetering columns at greater depths; an organism that produces a skeleton of stone and lives in an environment where deposits of ooze and sand are being laid down. (These may be the *Prithvikaya* or earth beings).

The most primitive life-like forms that share plant characteristics are also smallest viruses. Bacteria, which also cannot be seen with the naked eye, are closer to true plants. Algae that are microscopic can be seen only when they grow in great colonies in fresh or salt water, in soil or hot springs, on other plants or animals or even on snow, while the large algae are the familiar seaweeds. (These could be the *Vanaspatikaya* or plant beings).

The next jump in the evolution of life forms came with the formation of Protozoa. Although they are single cells they are much more complex than the bacteria. This is the starting point of purposeful movement, communal life at microscopic level, absorption of food more complex than single elements like hydrogen, sexuality etc. From this point onwards the rate of evolution accelerated and more and more complex forms evolved. This micro world of mono-cellular organisms continues to exist in almost all stages of its evo-

lution, whereas the higher forms of life exist mainly in their final evolved stage.

All organisms from algae to giant trees are composed of cells. In the plant kingdom many of the most primitive living things are simply single cells. Each cell is able to carry out the same basic functions as the whole plant. It must breathe, feed itself and reproduce. When there is a change in environment the cell either adjusts to continue these functions of life under new conditions or it dies.

This micro world of the living organisms, evolved through the chain — Chemo-bacteria to Bacteria to Photo-bacteria to *Stafilis Bacilli* etc., should be the *Sthavar* world of Jains, not because it is stationary but because it is constant throughout the world of the living. The organisms higher than this level, having variety of form and senses should be the *Tras* world of Jains.

It would be worthwhile for researchers to go into the finer details of the Jain theory on living organisms, with an analytical approach. A lot has been written about the levels of consciousness at different stages of evolution, the process of evolution and regression into higher and lower forms, the possible ages etc. All this is connected by the central thread of theory of bondage and liberation with and from *Karmic* particles. This theory, again, is an original concept of the Jains.

The evolution according to the Jain theory does not solely depend on physical changes in the environment, it is also dependent on the purity of soul. It seems that according to Jain theory nature's physical parameters affect the evolution of species in general. The place of an individual in the overall fabric of dynamic evolution is dependent on the state

of his soul in terms of the fusion of *Karmic* particles with it. The individual takes evolutionary leaps or falls depending on the quality and quantity of *Karmic* particles and the intensity of fusion. Ahimsa conduct helps him avoid the falls and take leaps that may ultimately lead to liberation.

Establishing that the existence of life is so wide spread as to defy the limited capacity of physical senses, the scope of Ahimsa automatically expands from grosser to micro levels of the physical world. Covering the physical world it enters into the subtler inner world of mind and soul.



3

THE FRAMEWORK

The killing which is done through the careless activity of mind, speech and body is violence.

— **Tattvartha Sutra of Umaswati**

It is good to maintain and encourage life, it is bad to destroy life or obstruct it.

— **Albert Schweitzer**

I still believe that man not having been given the power of creation, does not possess the right of destroying the meanest creature that lives. The prerogative of destruction belongs solely to the creator of all that lives.

— **M. K. Gandhi**

Would the system established by ancestors hold true to examination? In case it does not, I am not here to justify it for the sake of saving the traditional grace of the dead, irrespective of the wrath I may have to face.

— **Dvatrinshika of Siddhasen (6/2)**

THE FRAMEWORK

The concept of cause and effect has found place in almost all philosophies. In some way or the other, every religion has generalized that good or evil action results in good or evil consequences. But, probably, Jain thinkers were the only to develop a science out of this concept, making Ahimsa the fundamental factor enveloping every activity in the conscious life.

In order to follow the path of Ahimsa, one has to first understand violence and how it functions. After defining violence and non-violence (Ahimsa) in simple terms the Jain philosophers went deeper and explained the framework of violence in details.

Space, the first fundamental is the arena of all activity. Life and matter are the objects involved in activity. Movement and inertia are the forces responsible for activity. And time is the factor measuring the sequences of every activity between two fixed points of reference.

All these appear to be simple and grossly conceivable things but the principles governing the existence and activity have been evolved at much subtler levels, which do not

fall within the scope of this work. We start from the point where visible physical activities start. The only reference we refer to at these subtler levels is that life, as we see, starts with the interaction of life force (*Chetan/Soul/Jiva/Atma*) and physical force (matter particles even subtler than the sub-atomic particles, the *Karmic* particles). The mono-cellular living organisms, which are the tiniest outcome of this interaction, are much grosser in comparison.

The first interaction between soul and matter, which gives birth to the living organism also gives birth to the desire to live. The desire to live evolves into attachment towards the life sustaining factors and detestation towards the life curbing factors. This is the point where first seeds of violence are sown. It progresses with the evolution of the organism to higher levels. The attachment and detestation gradually grow into passions and cause the conscious violence.

Passions, *Kashayas*, are the factors that malign the soul and the feelings. Malignant feelings are the breeding grounds of violent thoughts, which ultimately are translated into action. The *Kashayas* are of four types: *Krodh* (anger), *Maan* (conceit), *Maaya* (illusion) and *Lobh* (greed).

Any violent thought created by each of these passions has three specific stages: conceptive, preparative and operative. Each of these stages has three medias of expression: thought, speech and action. Each of these three medias has three agencies for execution: through self, through order to others and through consent or support of others. Combined together these become 108 sub-classifications of violence and cover almost every possible type of violence that can be committed.

This comprehensive knowledge is helpful in pinpointing the malignancy and taking steps to cleanse the feelings. Any one out of these 108 sub-classes is enough to malign the soul and none of these come alone. There is a chain reaction starting with inception of just one of these. The purpose behind following the path of Ahimsa is to limit, and then stop the continuing tarnishing of the soul. It can only be achieved by striking at the root causes, the passions. It is a process of total change in attitude and does not end merely by avoiding a few of the said varieties of violence.

The avoidance of any or all types of violence is not the goal but the means in the cleansing process. As the degree of purity of soul increases it becomes easier to drift away from violence of a certain degree. Ultimately even the tiniest part of the urge to commit violence is wiped off. As a means Ahimsa is always progressive, but the moment it is made a goal it becomes just a ritual.

From these basics has evolved an applied system of Ahimsa, which has been included in the codes of conduct of the Jains. The codes for the mendicant or ascetic have been made very strict and are called *Maha-vrats*. Those for the worldly are comparatively lenient and are called *Anu-vrats*.

Ahimsa, as defined by Jains, covers widest possible field. It is also basic to all the other vows. As such, understanding and applying Ahimsa into conduct makes the following of other vows simple. Proper understanding of Ahimsa automatically gives insight into the other four conducts. Application of Ahimsa essentially covers the application of other four codes.

When the applied form of any basic principle is formulated an important factor comes into play; circumstance. This

includes a variety of ever-changing features like time, place, environment, social structure etc.

In the fundamentals of Jainism there is ample scope to accommodate these ever changing features within the framework of the basic principles. But, as happens with every system, the rules have not been improvised to suit the changed circumstances. There is a need and also scope for adapting and revitalizing these applied forms without which the chances of total rejection, of even the basics, by the modern society would continue to increase.

In earlier times the reforms and experiments in applied form of the principles of Ahimsa appear to be common features. Changes from time to time were made, it appears, depending on circumstances as well as interpretations by scholars. The study of intrinsic qualifications (*Mool-guna*) shows these variations. Somdev and Amrit Chandra's list of eight intrinsic qualifications includes rejection of wine, meat, honey and five types of fruits. Samantabhadra's list shows five *Anuvrats* and abstinence from wine, meat and honey.

Acharya Amitgati added curb on eating during night to the eight by Somdev. Vasunandi further added gambling, hunting, prostitution, adultery and stealing to the negations. Pandit Ashadhara further added respecting individuals at five stages of purification (Arhat, Siddha, Acharya, Upadhyaya and Sadhu). He also added drinking filtered water to the list. These lists show that as per the needs of times and depending on other variables, reforms were being made in the applied form without hesitation.

It appears that with passage of time the emphasis shifted from goal to means. In process, the observance of the codes of conduct became more and more ritualistic. Instead of

purifying the soul, the stress shifted towards negating the grosser acts of violence. Abstinence became the purpose. The degree of abstinence started being expressed simply by counting hypothetical number of living beings, which would supposedly be destroyed in any physical act.

The result is that we are more interested in hot but worthless debates on minor points like whether or not use of electricity and many other modern facilities is sinful. The much more alarming problems of corruption, adulteration, and dowry, cheating, etc. find hardly any place in the so called religious debates.

There comes a typical argument, from the hard-core traditionalists. “The applied form of philosophy is not religion but social rule. It cannot be justified on the grounds of philosophical principles. As such, one should always follow the rules laid down in scriptures and accepted by tradition.”

It is an age old and invalid argument born out of traditional prejudice. The philosophical truth is abstract and is a concern of individual experience. When it is applied to the social life, it has to be adapted to the predicament of the group of beings and to the level of consciousness of its individual constituents. The rules of the scriptures have to be mellowed down to attain certain amount of flexibility. The infinite varieties of species living in an elastic biome cannot be governed by a rigid set of rule.

Study of animal physiology and behaviour reveals that the nature and selective evolution has provided every living being with the means to survive and procreate in its natural habitat. The structure of a body reveals its natural habits, which depend upon its habitat. Its attitudes too depend on the requirements for survival. At this level the natural urge

to survive and the natural processes of perishing are the basic and dominant factors.

As long as individual consciousness is not developed to a certain level, all natural processes are cyclic and there is a balance in nature. Every act is directed towards this natural balance. There is no need to judge the destruction of things or beings on the scale of good and evil at this point.

A simple example of nature's balance is the life in a desert, where living conditions are very harsh. Vegetation is scarce, as also water. Still one can find thousands of species of specially adapted and interdependent animals. After the microscopic life forms, the lowest life forms are insects, on which birds, bats, many reptiles and rodents depend for food as well as water. These, in turn, are food for higher animals like fox, bobcat etc. If any species at any level disappears, those that form its food would multiply and disturb the balance.

If some new variety is introduced in some area there are chances that, if not properly controlled, it may disturb the already existing balance. When English settlers brought rabbits to Australia, in the nineteenth century, they never thought that this small, harmless animal could create any problem. The environment there had nothing to control the population of rabbits. The animals soon spread across vast areas of the continent. As rabbits get most of their moisture requirement from vegetable food, half a billion rabbits soon consumed most of Australia's grassland and turned to consume water supplies. In 1950 scientists had to introduce a disease to reduce the population of rabbits.

At this level, if one thinks properly, the interference with the natural balance would be termed violence, although

it appears to be non-violent. The measures taken to re-establish the balance should be called non-violent although they appear to be violent.

The moment a conscious being comes into existence all the concepts of philosophy, psychology, sociology etc. commence their interplay. One has to follow the dictates of many different sets of rules in a balanced way. The rules continue to change. The individual continues to progress and regress with the state of his consciousness. With the advent of consciousness, rules, individuals, groups, natural phenomena etc. and the mutual interaction between these, all become dynamic factors. Any effort to make any one or more of them static leads to distortion and disharmony.

The supporters of static traditional rules claim that efforts towards reform tend to create laxness and consequent degeneration. They forget that it is not the reform that brings laxness but the changes instigated for ulterior motives.

Mahavir himself brought about reforms in the Jain tradition he inherited, but his reforms never brought any laxness. In fact, he revitalized the traditions with infusion of healthy changes. Behind every distortion one can find a change in rules brought forth for the purpose of serving sectarian organizations, in terms of increasing the following or merely to facilitate the power of the leader of the sect.

The blind following of tradition is the root cause of laxness. The simple reason is that people bound by rules, without understanding the meaning; forget that the important thing is the discipline of mind and progress of the soul, not the following of rules like lifeless puppets, and earning applause of the masses.

What is to be understood and put into practice is the spirit behind the codes of conduct and not just the written word, which may have lost its meaning in the present context. It should not be forgotten that the Jain system of purification is based on the quest for true knowledge. Even the term used for the liberated, *Keval-jnani*, means omniscient. Ignorance is not commended in Jain philosophy, as Jainism is not a *Bhaktimarg* (devotional path). Any biases or prejudices, caused by ignorance, necessarily fall under the definition of violence. Efforts towards reformation by unbiased analysis should not be condemned in order to blindly support and preserve the tradition.

Man is a social creature as well as an individual entity. A major part of his life is spent as a constituent part of the social fabric. As such, his social needs, responsibilities and way of life cannot be altogether neglected as long as he does not rise enough, as an individual, to detach himself from the world around him, without damaging himself.

As the social conduct is formed on the basic assumption that a mass of individuals forms the society, the moment one becomes conscious of his own good he has necessarily to be conscious about what is good for others. At this level Ahimsa is that the benefit of an individual has to be based on benefit of others and violence is that the benefit of an individual is based on harm to others.

Keeping in view the social obligations and the need for individual pursuit for purification, the code of conduct for the worldly has been further elaborated in details. To help proper observation, after understanding, each of the five codes has been subdivided into sets of attitudes. The fol-

lowing five attitudes help in practicing Ahimsa conduct (*Tattvartha Sutra*):

(a) *Irya-Samiti*: The attitude of careful movement.

(b) *Mano-Gupti*: The attitude of diverting thoughts from impurity towards purity.

(c) *Eshna-Samiti*: The attitude of taking care that no harm comes to self or others while exploring, acquiring and using anything.

(d) *Aadan-Nikshep-Samiti*: The attitude of being careful before acquiring or giving a thing by properly examining and curing it.

(e) *Alokitapana-Bhojan* The attitude of proper examination of eatables before accepting and consuming.

We shall now go into some details about each of these attitudes and evaluate their importance as well as scope of application.



4

THE ACTION

With conscientiousness in activities like walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, eating and speaking, one does not enter into bondage of evil Karmas.

— **Dashavaikalika Sutra (4/8).**

I am absolutely convinced that peace means action — when necessary revolutionary, but non-violent. I recognize that a diseased situation can be brought nearer to health, and therefore nearer to peace, by other means too; but I know that violence, even when directed to good ends, still contains the seeds of death.

— **Danilo Dolci.**

The human behaviour codes have been framed as per human potential, for the benefit of humanity, by humans alone. Only the lethargic can utter that these codes are unfathomable. How can any rational person accept these by considering them beyond his reach?

— **Dvatrinshika of Siddhasen (6/7)**

Do not do unto others what you yourselves dislike.

— **Mahabharat of Vedavyas.**

THE ACTION

Irya-samiti is defined as the attitude of careful physical movement so as to avoid any harm to others as well as self. Traditionally this has become confined to watching that while walking or moving otherwise, no insects are crushed under a person. The rituals into which this attitude has shrunk are sweeping the floor before walking or sitting, not riding on an animal or vehicle, not traveling on water or in air etc. The followers of mere rituals forget that there are many other facets to harming by careless movement.

To be watchful and ensure that while moving no insects or micro-organisms are harmed does not mean that you ensure that only insects are not harmed. It means that you should be so careful that not even the insects are harmed. If, as is generally done, everything other than the insects is not cared about, the whole purpose of observing this discipline is lost.

It has been explicitly mentioned in *Dashavaikalik Sutra* that one should be conscientious in all activities. It appears that the numbers have influenced the priorities and importance of discipline of attitude has been pushed down. The so

called staunch followers of Jainism have become so overwhelmed with the projected effects of killing of infinite number of micro-organisms that they hardly care about inconvenience or harm caused to fellow human beings through careless movement.

In reality this attitude is much wider in scope and is not unique to Jainism. The development of this attitude is one of the essential parts of social life, because behaviour is nothing but the movement man and animals make. This includes running, swimming, flying, and all other types of locomotion as also talking, making gestures etc. Movement also covers breathing, twitching of muscles, blushing and even seizure of motion.

Behaviour has slowly evolved from the instinct for survival. Mechanically speaking it is a consequence of muscle activity stimulated by nerves. Any single act is not an isolated act of a particular muscle or nerve. It is an organized act of muscle movement initiated by the nervous system. While making any move, one should be aware of things around him and should be careful that the harmony is not disturbed. Also, one should be careful that no harm comes to himself or any other individual component of the biome.

Nature has equipped every living organism with a method of movement suitable to its body and living conditions. The basic need to live and the urge to procreate are the driving forces behind all its activities. The process of protection in nature is infinitely varied, and it is so difficult for an individual to comprehend and be prepared to counter each and every assault he may innocently or otherwise trigger through his careless movements. The story of aggres-

sion and defense in nature is age old. The methods of protection have evolved with the evolution of species.

The evolution of human social system too has its roots in this self-protection system in nature. Mahavir, it seems, realized that, as voluntary violence damages soul directly, the involuntary violence triggers the process of aggression resulting in increased chances of harm to the body and soul through the increase in violence all around. This appears to be the basis of formulating the discipline of attitudes and the control of physical movements.

Mahavir observed that if the conduct is based on Ahimsa, it becomes all-enveloping. If one becomes conscious to the harm of others and takes precautions against it, he automatically covers other factors like hygiene, social conduct, ecological balance and almost every facet of behaviour and short term and long term consequences.

The emphasis on discipline has been due to the fact that every individual has his own limitations of direct perception, capacity of observation, depth of knowledge and broadness of outlook. The curiosity and urge to learn has never been denied but discipline becomes essential because in nature ignorance or innocence does not affect the consequences of any action. Eating a poison would harm irrespective of the knowledge or ignorance about its existence or effects. The knowledge is effective only as far as preventive or curative measures before or after the action are concerned.

Violence triggers violence. This is a natural phenomenon. It is a pure biological reaction. Psychology, sociology and other such subjects have been built and developed around that basic, inherent biological need to live, procreate, and

progress. In nature uninhibited aggressiveness is almost non-existent, except for the cases where it has been acquired by unnatural outside influence. Violating others' realm or stepping out of one's own realm is the beginning of violence. It is not just the extremely agitated state of mind that is violence.

Even animals follow the rules of movement ingrained in them as reflexes, which keep on modifying by experience. The actions of animals are caused by events immediately preceding the action; they do not plan with future accomplishment in mind. The results of their actions may appear to be useful for the future but, in fact, they are just results of spontaneous or habitual reactions caused by immediate need or cyclic urges. The life of an animal runs in cycles. Some, like feeding, run on a short time scale and others, like sex, on longer time scale.

To be efficient, the behaviour of animals must include the ability to do the right thing in the right circumstance. For this they must have information about conditions in the outside world, which comes through sense organs. In fact, sensory stimulation is often the starting point of behaviour. This reception of stimuli varies with the species. In some the sensory equipment is much poorer than that of human beings and in others it is far superior.

Insect eating falcons are able to see individual dragonflies a half-mile distant, whereas for us the same insect becomes unrecognizable at 100 yards. The pit viper has the ability to sense heat and recognize its prey with temperature differences. Octopus can see only projected dimensions or rough shapes, whereas cats can see objects in much sharper contour definitions than us. Bats can locate by echo sound-

ing and can produce or hear sounds up to 100,000 cycles. Some senses like electric field sensing, salinity sensing, humidity sensing and many other hitherto unknown senses are almost totally alien to humans.

Tiniest of the movements is influenced by numerous variables and, in turn, the movement also influences innumerable things in variety of ways. An unintentional stance, cultivated through careless habits, may provoke defensive reaction of aggression from a totally unconcerned venue.

Living with such complex neighbours, with the added responsibility to maintain the balance in nature, is a tough job. When tackling those equipped with superior senses, we have to take care of ourselves and when tackling those with inferior senses, we have to take care of others. Experience and the unique thinking apparatus made human being the master manipulator of himself and the conditions around, to the extent that it became necessary to guard against misuse of his much superior prowess. That is where discipline came handy.

What, unfortunately, has happened is that the intoxication of ambition and success has made us forget even the natural discipline we inherited from the animal kingdom. One of the most striking things about the creatures is that they not only do which is required, but they also do no more than is required. They do not need to be switched off by an outside manipulator; something is built into them that makes them stop at proper time.

Man, with the development of his mental faculties, has lost that natural reflex of containing himself within the bare and minimal needs. The numbing of this restricting mechanism enhanced the feeling of greed, which today reflects in

almost every action and behaviour of the humans. Exploiting of fellow human beings, other life forms, natural resources etc. has become an accepted way of life. He has forgotten when to stop. The attributes that have been responsible for elevating human beings from the cyclic world of animals have, through indiscipline of movement, become the factors responsible for this despicable degradation.

The natural discipline is that to be effective, behaviour has to be controlled in space as well as time. Where and when to go is very important. The time factor is generally controlled by inside stimuli whereas the orientation by outside ones.

No behaviour is perfect the first time it is shown. In case of lower animals, the innate equipment is relatively complete and often efficient from start. But in case of the higher animals outward information in terms of experience plays major role. This is maximum in case of humans. Many complex behaviours are combination of innate programming and external experience.

To be observant of surroundings and careful in movement is the most important requirement of life in this extremely complicated and unpredictable soup of life and matter. Every society, religion or law has evolved methods of teaching this carefulness; only different names have been given to the process. Jains have gone much deeper and started at the roots of actions and reached the ultimate discipline.

In simple terms, the discipline is walk carefully, see where you put your next step, move gracefully, think before uttering, etc. These are the terms naturally evolved from the basic attitude of careful movement. Harm to self is as despicable as that to others. By careless movement one may

stumble and fall. This simple and innocuous looking consequence of a careless movement may end up in grave and irretrievable situation, effecting many lives in a chain reaction of events. Even the most insignificant thing like defective posture or gait causes grave physical disorders. The violent consequences of a simple movement of a tiny eye-lid muscle can trigger may be experienced by winking at an unacquainted lady.

Movement also means and implies the movement in life or the way of living. It is a very broad term covering almost every facet of life. That is the reason that the Jain thinkers have given it such an important place while defining conduct. Careful movement also reflects the state of alertness of mind and its discipline.

With the increase in purity the mind becomes open to more information around and beyond. As purity and alertness are complimentary, this attitude is equally important in the path of purity and liberation of soul. The purpose of this attitude is to discipline oneself for survival, maintaining of nature's balance and progressing in the path of purification.



5

THE THOUGHT

As improper thoughts, emotions and actions such as those of violence etc., whether they are done (indulged in), caused to be done or abetted, whether present in mild, medium or intense degree result in endless pain and ignorance; so there is the necessity of pondering over the opposites.

— **Yogasutra of Patanjali**

Battle with yourself! Of what use is fighting others? He who conquers himself by himself will win happiness.

— **Uttaradhyayan Sutra**

The solution of our problems cannot come from science; it can come only from man himself. As long as human beings are systematically trained to commit crimes against mankind, the mentality thus created can only lead to catastrophe again and again. Our only hope lies in refusing any action that may serve the preparation or purpose of war.

— **Albert Einstein**

*Be not overcome of evil
But overcome evil with good.*

— **'Letter to the Romans' by St. Paul (12. 21)**

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THE THOUGHT

It has been a popular belief that the human brain is about a dozen times as large as that of any monkey, which itself is the largest in the animal kingdom. Its size has been considered a factor responsible for its superiority. The human brain is certainly large as compared with that of many animals but not the largest. The size is not what imparts it the unique intelligence. It is the much greater complexity that makes it far superior to any other brain in the entire animal kingdom. In fact it is the most intricate and powerful of all works of nature known to date.

The unique thing is that most of this additional size and complication is devoted to memory, association, and speech. As far as the medium of observation is concerned, man is almost exactly same as the monkey. He essentially smells, hears, tastes, touches, and sees very much as a monkey does; only his reactions are vastly different.

Man is different from animals basically on two counts: the versatility in communication due to highly developed vocal organs, and the ability to think and conceive what is not physically evident. The human brain is not just a pulsat-

ing mass of flesh and blood; it is the only physical entity that is conscious of its own existence. It is the source of thoughts, feelings, dreams, emotions, ideas, imagination etc. and has an astonishing capacity to communicate or put into action all these abstracts with miraculous clarity.

The human mind is a sponge that absorbs all available information. It is a mighty computer that processes and stores all this information. It is an individual who creates and exerts its own influence. It is affected by a variety of outside forces and in turn it also influences these outside forces. It is connected with the remote past as well as the faraway future through its history, and the science of genetics. According to the Jains the links with past and future are due to karmic bondage. The mind is both master as well as slave of the body it lives in.

It is the information received through physical senses that assists mind in its functioning. The mind survives and grows on a continuous flow of information. Information is for brain what food is for body, a perpetual necessity for sustenance and growth. This continuous flow of information is sorted out, classified and stored as knowledge in the ever-expanding vault of our brain. Neither the smell of food is simple enough to be left out nor the twinkling of the faraway galaxies complicated enough to be beyond our capacity.

Over and above this infinite capacity and craving for knowledge, we have been endowed with voice and hands to translate knowledge into action. The progress from the wheel to space flight is but an insignificant example.

The mind manifests through the body. The interdependence of mind and body is almost complete. The mind gets majority of information through the body and the body is

controlled and guided in all its actions by the mind. In outward appearance we observe only the gross, physically evident interactions and consider the activities of mind and body as separate, beyond the level of coordinating the physical movement.

In reality the mind and the body are so intimately interconnected through the nervous system that even the routine and automatic functions of internal organs are affected by the mind and vice versa. Whatever we think affects our body and whatever we do affects our mind.

It would be interesting to note that in homeopathy the root cause of all diseases is Psaura, a term defined as 'evil thinking'. Based on this hypothesis, a complete and successful science of treatment has been developed. One who becomes free of all evil thoughts does not fall ill. Also according to homeopathy the Psaura is transferred genetically. As such, by thinking evil a person is endangering his progeny as well, through genetically transferred harmful effects.

Modern medical science also considers that almost all ailments are somehow or other connected with the brain. Some diseases, like hypertension, diabetes, cardiac deficiencies etc. are direct results of mental tension.

Stanford psychologist Carl Thoresen, Mt. Zion Hospital cardiologist Meyer Friedman, and Harvard psychiatrist James Gill studied 862 non-smoking, non-diabetic patients under 65 years of age, who had suffered at least one heart attack in the past, All of these displayed signs of 'Type A' behaviour which means self destructive ambition, impatience, and free floating hostility toward trivial matters in their every day life.

While all were given cardiological counseling, 592 patients also took part in a series of psychological exercises, designed to alter their 'Type A' tendencies. After three years, the recurring heart attack rate for the psychologically counseled group was roughly half that of the control group. Both groups still suffered the same rate of fatal heart attacks.

But Friedman believes that the reduction of non-fatal heart attacks is a step in the right direction. "Cardiologists have to start looking at what is going on in a patient's life", he says. Affairs of the mind, he maintains, are just as important as commonly accepted risk factors like smoking and blood pressure. This is an example of simple and direct effect of the activity of mind on the body. There are much subtler and deeper effects that have to be considered before evolving the disciplines; and the Jains have done that in detail.

As already emphasized, thought is the starting point of action. In order that the action remains faultless, the faults of the thought should be removed. The attitude of diverting thoughts from impure to pure is the most important and central factor on the path of Ahimsa. It covers every facet of the activity of human mind.

In the simplest terms, this attitude prescribes that one should not think ill of someone, should not indulge in evil thinking and should avoid thoughts which tend to harm someone. To be brief, the thoughts should be constructive and pleasant and not destructive and unpleasant. The four passions, described earlier (*anger, lust, illusion and greed*), should be diffused.

As violence breeds violence, evil thoughts breed evil thoughts. For a peaceful and healthy life at individual, social, national, and international levels, it is important that

this attitude of diffusing evil thoughts is encouraged and practiced.

The Jain canons have described in detail the results of evil thoughts so as to discourage people from indulging in such thinking. To apply these to the social framework should be the work of priests, preachers and propagators of different times. It is always effective to elaborate and define the applied aspects according to the prevalent circumstances, otherwise the intensity is lost and such matters remain only as the luxury of the academicians.

There was a time when social structure was simple and as such, simpler definitions and interpretations were sufficient to make people understand and accept the right path. Now that society has become much more complex, and a storehouse of knowledge of the physical world has been opened, the applied interpretations must be modified in terms understandable and acceptable to modern man.

The social life of an individual is dependent on an inflow of information into brain through physical senses as well as the activity indulged in through the body. The mind is the coordinator of this inflow and outflow of information and the link between body and soul. This integrated activity is what we call behaviour.

The continued and ever increasing interaction between individuals and outside factors confuses a person. A distorted relationship between him and society starts taking shape. The moment an individual starts dwelling in the misconception that he is small and insignificant as compared with society or the outside world, and he has hardly any influence, his journey into the realm of illusions commences. He either falls into the rut of inactivity and confirms his

insignificance or launches himself into hyperactivity to prove himself superior by pushing others into insignificance. Both these activities are the result of drifting away from the self or soul.

Once the direction of thoughts is turned towards self, the importance of the individual starts revealing itself. He realizes that as a component of the vast (group, society, country, humanity or nature) he has his own significant contributions towards the vastness. The slightest change in him starts a chain of actions, which eventually push the whole towards progression or regression. It is this realization that imparts a sense of responsibility in the individual and guides him towards constructive activities. If one really wants to understand this vital importance of one so called insignificant individual component, he should look towards the functioning of nuclear weapons. A change in a tiny, individual atom triggers the chain reaction, which turns it into the source of holocaust.

Simple social activities like lying, gossiping, cheating an individual, criticizing for the sake of criticism, succumbing to greed are the starting points of more complex problems. The attitude of directing thoughts towards purity includes erasing these dark spots from the mind and soul.

Human survival and progress depend not only on the extremely acute reasoning powers but also on the balanced interaction of these powers with other mental faculties. The emotional reactions play a very important role in human life. It appears that this emotional competence is the factor that makes us the most adaptable of the species in the animal world.

As compared with any other species we are much more responsive and constructive in our dealings with others. Our

capacity of endurance is phenomenal. Since homo-sapiens first walked naked under the sky and started tackling the elements with bare hands and a mind having unprecedented, dormant potentialities, we have been using individual consciousness, determination and cooperation as our most useful traits. These vital mental attributes sprout spontaneously from the Ahimsa discipline.

Our actions are as dependent on past events or experience as on planning for the future. It is this unique capacity that makes humans capable of achieving extremes, both towards progress and regress. The regression pushes us down towards ghastly bestial attributes like cunning, violence, ferocity, etc. Progress is indicated by good conduct and expression of kindly emotions.

The process is not as simple as it sounds. It involves a whole lot of experience and continued learning for generations. Emotions guide man towards better learning and better use. The powers of communication and capacity to accumulate and modify knowledge give him chances of improving his behaviour.

But these same assets may also take him towards bestiality. The two extremes a human being is capable of reaching are the feeling of romantic love and the capacity of legalizing murder, as in warfare. When indulging in war the predominant factor at work is not the animal instinct but the human faculty of reason. The instinctive feeling of natural and need based aggression towards intruders is thoughtfully converted into glorified, legalized murder in name of nationalism, communalism, racialism, etc., with the help of the immense thinking and manipulating capacity of human brain.

The manipulators of human mind, through propaganda, propagate that violence and brute strength are the best means of settling disputes. They have been persistently active for thousands of years, since men first started throwing rocks at each other, without reaching any conclusion. During last 5,000 years more than 12,000 wars have been recorded in the history of mankind. Since the Second World War, a period of comparative peace, 150 small wars have been fought, with some 20 million casualties. The total waste of human life and resources would add up, to mind boggling figures. The United Nations estimates that roughly half of the world's total scientific and technical force is busy in improving available armament and developing new ones.

The fiscal figures given by United Nations are even more revealing. Since 1900 the total money spent on armaments, not including the Second World War amounts to 8,000 billion US dollars. Today the planetary expenditure is approaching around one trillion US dollars per annum. This is more or less equal to the entire amount of the debt burden of developing countries. If such amounts were utilized, with the same zeal, to divert the thoughts of the masses towards peaceful and constructive activities, the results would justify the investment.

It is appalling that such enormous amounts of money — billions of dollars per day — are being spent to improve the aggressive capacities of nations, while a large proportion of the human population is literally starving and millions are dying from hunger, disease and famine. On the pretext of defending ourselves from a certain enemy, we are pushing humanity towards total annihilation. In order to quench our selfish desires and ambitions, we are sincerely and painstakingly moving towards self-destruction.

The capacity to perceive and conceive is a dormant tool having tremendous potential energy that can be used as a force to annihilate values or to foster and enhance them. We are at the top of the animal kingdom. The most and the best evolved of the species, we still have the animal within. The dividing line between beast and man is so fine that more often than not, while polishing our human traits, we involuntarily hone our bestial cunning and ferocity beyond even those of a beast.

Besides being the master of body, the brain is also the link between soul and body. The awareness of the entity life became possible only with the evolution of the human brain. It is this specialized and complex bio-instrument that can explore the inner depths and feel the presence of the life force pulsating within the ordinarily unfathomable void of inner space, where the two primordial forces of life and matter first interact. The awareness of the presence of that life force, the soul (*chetan*), is what launched the human being on the spiritual path of ultimate purity.

The inner discipline, attained through this attitude of diverting thoughts from evil to good helps aiming the inner forces in the right direction. No matter at what level one is Ahimsa is always helpful. Even if one is not at the level where spiritual heights are achievable, Ahimsa at least prevents from regression into the abominable world of beasts.



6

THE EXPLORATION

..... the use of disinfectants is Himsa, and yet we cannot do without it. We have to live a life of Ahimsa in the midst of a world of Himsa, and that is possible only if we cling to truth. That is how I deduce Ahimsa from truth. Out of truth emanates love, tenderness, and humility. A votary of truth has to be humble as the dust. His humility increases with the observance of truth.

— **M. K. Gandhi**

*This is the duty of a true man—
To shelter all as a tree from the fierce sun,
And to labour that many may enjoy what he earns,
As the fruit of a fertile tree.*

— **Naladiyar**

He who knows what is bad for himself knows what is bad for others, and he who knows what is bad for others knows what is bad for himself. This reciprocity should always be borne in mind.

— **Acharanga Sutra**

Ahimsa is not merely non-participation in destructive activities; it principally manifests its own constructive activities — services that lead to the upward growth of Man.

— **Vinoba Bhave**

THE EXPLORATION

The attitude of taking care that no harm comes to self or others, while exploring and using anything, forms another important part of the Ahimsa conduct. Traditionally this has been limited in scope to cover only eatables. Pondering a little deeper into the basics reveals that this attitude covers a much wider range of activities. In fact, it covers each and everything that can be acquired and used by an individual or a group.

With the instinct for survival and procreation came desire, and with desire came dependence on the outside world. The first need was the need for food demanded by the body for survival and sustenance. Once this was fulfilled came the need for shelter in order to be safe from the free flowing natural forces as well as intrusion from other beings. As the life progressed and evolved, the number of influencing factors increased, and so did the needs.

The needs of a simple form of being are simpler and less. As the species evolved the life forms became complicated and their needs also grew. With the coming of individual consciousness the requirements increased further and

came to the point of explosion with the advent of man, who has the capacity to think, imagine, and plan.

Need inspires one to explore for things and then acquire them. In nature there is an abundance of things that could be acquired, but at the same time there are numerous diverse forces, which may or may not harm while one is exploring or acquiring. The quest for usable adds one more factor to exploration: the risk from and to others who are also continuously in the process of exploring and acquiring.

The moment one goes out to explore, he transgresses the territories of others and becomes a threat. As a reaction the others start the process of protecting their own territories and become a threat to the explorer. This is the beginning of a chain reaction, which continues to grow till it reaches a natural pulsating balance. In nature survival does not necessarily mean the total annihilation of the opposing factors, because in that eventuality the means of survival too will be wiped out. A balanced behaviour and capacity to co-exist is what nature endows to each and every individual component.

The Yucca Flower and Moth provide a simple and inspiring example of such coexistence in nature. The female Yucca Moth is equipped with a tiny, needle sharp tube (ovipositor) for laying eggs. The moth thrusts it through the wall of the ovary in the Yucca Flower and lays the eggs inside. During this process, she collects Yucca pollen and pollinates the stigma, thereby ensuring that her larvae will have enough seeds to feed on while they develop. As there are many more seeds than the larvae can consume, the plant is not harmed. This symbiotic interplay ensures the survival of both plant and insect. Without each other both species would die out.

The Ahimsa principle incorporates within itself this natural balance and harmony of coexistence. While acquiring anything, generally the first thing that comes to mind is its usefulness to the individual. But according to the Ahimsa principle, there are many other long-term and short-term factors involved. The one thing that covers almost all factors is the consideration that no harm should be caused in any way to others as well as self while exploring, acquiring and using a thing.

As the number of things useful to human beings is an ever-increasing factor, the term 'harm to others' also takes a variety of meanings with changing circumstances. It is important that the interpretation of this term be kept open and not confined in scope.

The first of the needs, as already emphasized, is food. It is so vital and important that it has been dealt with separately under the attitude of *Alokitapana Bhojan*. The other important need of beings is dwelling. While exploring, its safe habitability has to be considered first of all. Once that is ensured many other considerations come into play: displacement of others living at that place, blockage of the passage of others, and the effect of inhabiting the place on the environment and consequently on the other living beings in the surroundings.

With the capacity to invent and organize, the humans gradually formed society. The social systems evolved and with the improvements in travel and communications, distances started shrinking. All this increased the complications of group interactions in human beings and consequently the social and other disciplines started becoming complex. Although all the present forms of disciplines have been raised

on the foundation of those early and simple but fundamental principles, they have lost their intrinsic strength of being the inbred disciplines. They have mostly become rules and laws to be imposed forcibly.

The urban and municipal rules are nothing but the extension, in modified form, of the attitude under discussion. These laws prevent the infringement of dwelling dimensions of one by the others in any possible way. The only difference is that these laws are mostly limited in their usefulness to human beings, whereas the Ahimsa principle has much wider range, including all living organisms and the environment conducive to evolution of life.

As this attitude covers everything acquired for human use, it covers a wide range of social and other laws. Apparals, modes of transportation, things of comfort and luxury, tools and implements etc. all come within the scope of this attitude. The simple and most important advantage of this inner discipline is that by practicing it, all the other rules and laws are automatically implemented without any outside pressure.

Originally it was need, which led to acquisitions, but as the human mind and body got used to convenience and material comfort, needless acquisitions also started. When ambition was added the feeling of caring for others reduced. It turned into oppression of others when bloated ego came into action. Wastefulness, extravagance, hoarding, adulteration etc. are the results of the absence of this attitude.

In order to keep the selfish components of human nature from transgressing the realm of others, the observation of this attitude is vital and essential. At social level this attitude will breed harmony as well as reduce the abuse of avail-

able resources. At individual level this attitude gives the necessary purity to follow the path of liberation.

The fourth attitude, which is just an extension of the third, is being careful before accepting or giving away a thing by proper examination and curing it, so that no harm is caused to self or others who use it. Once again this attitude also covers a much wider range of things and activities than the traditionally accepted eatables and utensils. It covers almost everything worth mention.

Once a thing is explored for use it has to be carefully examined. If found necessary it should be altered, cured and prepared for use. It is something like cooking food, building and furnishing a house, getting a dress stitched and so on. Once again, the central theme is that the thing or the process involved should not be harmful to self or others.

It appears to be simple and unimportant but when practiced its value is revealed. If anything is used or given for use without proper examination and curing there are chances that it may turn out to be harmful. Looking at it from social viewpoint, we find its application in every day life, although unnoticed till we try to analyze it. The job of inspectors in the department of food and other such departments is nothing but ensuring the application of this attitude. The rules of industrial safety, drugs act, municipal laws etc, also fall under the same category.

The importance of these two attitudes continues to grow with industrial and technological progress. Law enforcement alone is never efficient enough to bring about the required harmony in the society. The law is thrust on the people and there are elements that continue to go against it by inventing ingenious methods of circumventing the law enforcing sys-

tem. The discipline through these attitudes has to come subtly and by conscious and consented practice. It is education, not enforcement. Once absorbed, it is not easy to go against it and the work of law enforcement becomes much simpler.

As these attitudes apply both to accepting and giving, their growth in and effect on the society is much faster once sincere practice is started. The inbred vigilance due to the practice of these disciplines makes one conscious towards the sources of tarnishing of the soul as well. And that is one very valuable step towards purification.



7

THE FOOD

One should take a balanced diet, which is helpful to life and discipline, which does not cause intoxication or negligence towards duty.

— **Prashna Vyakarana (2/4)**

Knowledge is needed for liberation, body is needed for knowledge, and food is needed for body. As such, food has been allowed as needed.

— **Kshama Shraman Jinabhadra**

There is nothing necessary or desirable for human nutrition to be found in meat or flesh foods, which is not found in and derived from vegetable products.

— **Dr. H. Kellog**

A man can live and be healthy without killing animal for food; therefore, if he eats meat, he participates in taking animal life merely for the sake of his appetite. And so it is immoral.

— **Leo Tolstoy**

Meat can never be obtained without injury to living creatures, and injury to sentient beings is detrimental to the attainment of heavenly bliss; let him (man) therefore shun the use of meat.

— **Manusmriti**

THE FOOD

This is the attitude of proper examination of any eatable before accepting and eating it. But, before examining, we should understand what is food and what is its function. Food is the fuel that makes the body-machine work. Without it, living creatures would run out of energy and ultimately die.

Every living organism depends on three essentials for its sustenance: air, water, and food. Air and water are more abundantly available and available in consumable form. Food, on the other hand, must be searched out and prepared for consumption. Food has been the most important thing pursued by human beings as well as animals since the beginning of their existence.

An animal has to eat to live, and the story ends there. But with man it is more complex. What he eats influences his capacity to keep well, to work, to enjoy, and to pursue higher goals. The general maintenance of the body is called health. The World Health Organization has summed it up in a brief definition; “Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

The Jain thinkers have been very clear on this subject. They have studied in detail all aspects of human life. Knowing its importance for health, they have defined food as a balanced diet, which is helpful to life and discipline, which does not cause intoxication, and which does not cause negligence towards duty. Here again, they found that the concept of Ahimsa was not only applicable but also comprehensive.

Almost similar, but covering only the physiological aspects, is the modern definition meant for dietitians: 'A good diet must fulfill these criteria: (1) it must furnish the appropriate levels of all nutrients to meet the physiological and biochemical needs of the body at all stages of the life cycle; and (2) it must avoid the excesses of calories, fat, sugar, salt, and alcohol associated with increased risk of diet related diseases. Giving more attention to avoiding excesses does not mean that one gives less attention to dietary adequacy. The key words in achieving the two criteria are moderation and prudence.'

The biological mechanism for converting food into the energy required for various functions of body is almost same in all mammals, but diets vary with different species. There are three broad groups into which all mammals fall according to their food intake: herbivorous, carnivorous and omnivorous. The herbivores are those having plants as their staple diet. The carnivores are those having flesh, which is derived from any life form higher than plants, as their staple diet. The omnivorous are those having a combined diet of flesh and plants.

The division between these three groups is not very sharp, as the food habits are influenced by a variety of fac-

tors like season, age, reproductive state, health, hunger, environment. The greatest number of mammals, including most primates, are herbivorous.

The balance maintained by nature in the animal world becomes evident when we see the energy cycle inherent in the food chain. Sunlight pours upon the forests, algae in the pond, plankton, etc., giving its energy, which is converted into green growth by photosynthesis. The energy retained in the structure of plants becomes a reservoir upon which the entire community depends. Thus the plants are termed producers.

The plant eaters, ranging from animal plankton to elephant, become the primary consumers. They eat plants, use some energy for their daily chores of life, and store the rest of it in the form of flesh and blood. The carnivores, ranging from the smallest fish, animals and birds to big cats and whales, kill these herbivores and consume their flesh and blood. They are the secondary consumers. When the carnivores die, part of their stored energy is consumed by carrion eaters like vultures and part is decomposed by bacteria and fungi to become simple soil nutrients. This form of energy again passes to the plants, completing the cycle of energy transfer.

There are infinite varieties of living organisms, pulsating with life activities or lying dormant, performing their specialized functions all along this energy cycle or the food chain. The exact type of food consumed depends on the adaptation of the anatomy of the particular species. This, in turn, is dependent on the ecology of the habitat.

The simplest example of adaptation of animal anatomy can be observed by studying the denture of different species

of animals. Larger and sharper canines have developed in carnivores because of the need for stabbing and tearing meat. The pre-molars and molars, too, are much sharper as compared with those of the herbivores. The lower and upper sets of teeth are tapered in opposite directions because of the shearing function required to cut the meat into digestible pieces.

In the case of herbivores, the teeth are adapted for grinding function. In the case of rodents the incisors are long, overgrowing and self-sharpening, to facilitate the function of gnawing; the canines are completely missing. Other parts of the animal body are also suitably adapted to the type of food available in its habitat. The tongue, the nails, the eyes, and even the digestive organs, all have evolved according to specific needs.

It is not only the physical anatomy that adapts; the mental faculties and attitudes, too, develop accordingly. The problem of obtaining food is more complicated for carnivores, as they have to search their food from among mobile living beings capable of offering resistance or running away. The flesh eaters, as such, develop greater cunning and ferocity. The cat family is the most efficient of all carnivores.

Man, the unique animal perched on the top rung of the ladder of mammalian evolution, does not fall under the category of carnivores. His body has not been equipped with the natural tools of a carnivorous animal. The teeth, the nails, and the tongue are not those of a flesh-eating animal but those of a plant-eating animal. He does not have the natural ferocity, cunning, and offensive instinct of true carnivores.

Even according to the theory of evolution, man has evolved from some extinct species of ape. All primates, living and extinct, share a characteristic structure of ear and

molar teeth adapted for eating vegetable material. The staple diet of all apes and monkeys, excepting a few, is a selection of fruits and leaves. The largest of apes, the gorilla, lives entirely on vegetation. The study of early skeletons of ape-man, homo-erectus, and early homo-sapiens reveal that the teeth of all these were small and rounded. They were not structured like shear blades, as in the case of carnivores. Becoming hunters and meat eaters has been need based and not natural for humans. To man, eating vegetables came naturally and eating meat had to be learned.

As discussed earlier, according to the Jains, besides the gross and visible forms of life, there exist an infinite number of microscopic and sub-microscopic living organisms, which are widely distributed in nature. As such, destruction of some or other form of living organism is inevitable when any food is prepared for human consumption. It may be of plant origin, mineral origin, or animal origin.

We have to consider the quality of life before it is destroyed for human consumption. It is not that by discrimination we are doing something commendable from the viewpoint of practicing Ahimsa. The tarnishing of soul is certainly there, but by discrimination we are choosing a lesser evil.

Man's primary duty, as is the case with all living beings, is towards maintaining his body and health so that he can continue to live and indulge in higher individual pursuits towards purification and liberation. He has to eat regularly, and the food has to be nutritious. Following the path of Ahimsa, he has to be much more choosy. He has to select his food with care, keeping in view that the food is not obtained by wantonly destroying any life forms, as far as practically possible.

Since we must destroy some life in order to live, it is better that that life is from the lower levels; that is plant life. This is acceptable because at the lower level, the life process is more cyclic and involuntary as compared to that at higher level. Life and death at lower levels are much rapidly acted upon, not individually but as progressive evolutionary process.

Another and more important factor is judging the effect of a particular food on our own physiological and psychological systems. Broadly speaking, there are three types of foods according to their effects on the body: one that excites physically and mentally, one that imparts lethargy, and one which is purely nutritious without any side effects. There are a variety of combinations of all these properties in different degrees in all types of foods. One has to be cautious in selecting a combination, from the available eatables, so as to produce minimal undesired effects.

In this age of technological achievements, synthetic products have been produced where hardly any living organisms, as stipulated in traditional definitions, are involved. According to the traditional norms there should be no harm in consuming L. S. D. as no destruction or harm to any form of life is involved. A little rational thinking would show that the real object behind rejection of a certain eatable does not end at preventing more destruction of some particular form of micro-life. In fact, the determination of the harm it causes to the consumer is of primary importance. If a food is not obtained by destroying life, but after eating it pushes one towards irrational and destructive behaviour, it should be considered even worse.

Negation of flesh eating is based on both of these reasons. All animal forms are recognized as individually con-

scious components of society in its broader definition. Killing for one's own benefit is certainly violence and as such should not be committed. Besides this, meat is much more prone to decay and carrying infection as compared with plant-food. And the worst part is that, as compared with vegetables, the decay is much less visible and detectable in meat. It is otherwise also less suitable, as it induces excitement and other harmful effects to body and mind.

The use of synthetic chemicals in form of pesticides, herbicides, weedicides, fertilizers, preservatives, additives, medicines, disinfectants, etc. is continuously increasing. The residual quantities of all these chemicals administered on plants, animals, and foods is carried to humans mainly through meat and partially through plants.

In a study, conducted by Agriculture Department of Florida, U. S. A., for 18 months, it was found that 30% of the available quantity of eggs contained D. D. T. Of course, the use of D. D. T. is obsolete now, but the study confirms the role of eggs in carrying the residual chemicals to humans. Similarly, the increasing ineffectiveness of many antibiotics on human diseases is attributed partially to needless consumption of these antibiotics through residual quantities in the meat. Extra doses of antibiotics are being given to livestock to fatten them up.

Recent observations and recommendations by Peter Greenwald, director of the Division of Cancer Prevention and Control at National Cancer Institute, U. S. A., would be helpful in convincing people towards building an attitude against eating meat. He says that diet may be related to as much as thirty five percent of all cancer deaths in the United States, and he recommends, 'Eat less but eat more vegetables,

fruits, and whole grain cereals. Cabbage, Brussels, sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower and all of the mustard family may help prevent cancer.”

Saturated fatty acids in eggs cause high cholesterol count with advancing age. Excessive flesh-eating in the long run causes increased acids in the body; lack of fibrous food causes indigestion due to slack intestines and may be one of the causes of cancer, high blood pressure, hyper-cholesterolemia, and many other problems.

The epidemiological studies by some British clinicians showed that the rural Africans who had a high fiber intake, the main source of which are vegetables, had a low incidence of diverticulitis, irritable colon, hiatus hernia, hemorrhoids, cancer of the colon, coronary heart disease, obesity, diabetes, dental caries and gall stones. That is the reason doctors have started emphasizing lately the importance of including ample vegetables in the normal diet.

The reason traditionally emphasized, for abstaining from alcohol, many drugs, and certain vegetables is that many living organisms are generated and destroyed during the process of manufacturing. It seems to be out of place since, no matter what one eats or drinks, the number of living organisms destroyed is always infinite, and in infinites there can be no distinction on the basis of quantity or numbers.

The real reason behind abstaining from alcohol is that it numbs the senses and faculty of reason making one act irrationally. An irrational person is capable of committing any sort of violent act. Also, numbing of mind affects the vitality of soul, and so it is the highest grade of violence.

If properly defined, this reason would explain the purpose behind abstaining from many of the eatables mentioned in the Jain canons. Anything that produces any form of toxicity or toxic derivatives, at any stage of its consumption or absorption into the body, should not be consumed at all. If this definition were accepted, it would help modern people to understand and observe Ahimsa conduct much more easily and sincerely.

A common question raised by many is whether the flesh of animals that die naturally or are killed by others could be eaten? This question is born out of the belief that when you are not involved in the act of killing, there should be no harm in eating. Perhaps this question can best be answered by other questions: 'Should one eat flesh of a fellow human being, once he dies naturally or is killed by someone else?' and 'Are we carrion eaters?'

Taking food becomes a matter of habit. Once the natural revulsion towards anything not good for human consumption is removed, the formerly unwanted things are consumed indiscriminately. This tendency towards unrestricted eating encourages others to indulge in providing such food for commercial gains, and the process continues unabated. Whether you kill or not, if you consume, others will kill for you; and that is equally undesirable and violent. Moreover, even natural death does not alter the toxicity of meat.

Selection of proper food and eating in proper quantities is very important for physical and mental health. In the long-term social context, it is all the more important, as deviations from it adversely affect the health of not only the adult population but also the younger generation on whom the future of humanity depends.

Once the basics guiding the discipline of eating habits are understood all the other rules relating to food automatically fall in their proper place. There is nothing against adapting habits/rules depending on the social and other variables. Not eating at night, boiling and filtering water etc. never formed the basic conduct of the Jains. They are mere minor corollaries, and importance should be given to them only when and where necessary; no more, no less. These are basically circumstantial applications and should be much more pliable than their existing rigid and stagnated form.

From the viewpoint of individual pursuit of purification and liberation, the simplest and complete definition of Ahimsa conduct pertaining to food is that the food should be nutritious to the body without disturbing, at any stage or in any way, the mental equanimity needed on the path of purification.



8

THE FEELING

The saint with true vision conceives compassion for the entire world, in east and west and south and north, and so, knowing the Sacred Lore, he will preach and spread and proclaim it, among those who strive and those who do not, in fact among all those who are willing to hear him. He should do no injury to himself or any one else. The great sage becomes a refuge for injured creatures like an island, which the waters cannot overwhelm.

— **Acharanga Sutra (1. 6. 5)**

One should cultivate the feelings of fraternity toward all beings, pleasantness toward the proficient, compassion toward the destitute and, equanimity toward the irreparably distorted.

— **Tattvartha Sutra of Umaswati (7/6)**

Once we recognize all that we have in common with others, a feeling of compassion naturally arises and we can no longer treat other people with such indifference. We more easily understand their problems, and as we learn how to heal ourselves, we begin to use our knowledge to help them as well.

— **Tarthang Tulku**

8 *THE FEELING*

Every conduct has two facets. One is indulgence, the other abstinence; that means indulgence in what is good or pure and abstinence from what is bad or evil. The conduct is incomplete as long as it is only positive or only negative; it has to be both simultaneously. However, what traditionally prevails is over-emphasis on negation. In fact what is most often promoted as Jain conduct for the citizen contains minor rules of ritual indulgences combined with an over abundance of negations.

Negation and abstinence as aids to discipline have been given importance in almost all religions. Jainism, being the most ascetic of religions, has given increasingly stricter emphasis on abstinence, as an individual progresses on the path of purification. The discipline becomes gradually stricter as knowledge increases. Once again, the basics are evenly balanced. It is the interpretations that have tilted the balance toward ritualistic abstinence.

Moreover, efforts to provide high-strung definitions, and rationalize wrong interpretations, have spoiled the application of this most rational and practical philosophy. The con-

cept of negation which is essential and important to some degree, even at the social level, has been made impractical and out of reach for the common man, for the sake of resultant social glamour. The penchant for glamour has increased to the point of glorifying even the suicidal tendencies.

Such extreme practices, without a workable knowledge of the concept, have clouded the minds of Jains as well as others and made them believe that Ahimsa is a concept leading to fanatic austerities.

Negating some food for some time or all food for some reason has no bearing on selecting religious death or rejecting sustenance of the so-called sinful life, dependent on inevitable destruction of other living organisms.

The disciplinary negations prescribed in Jainism are for people at lower levels of purification. The level where there is generally no intellectual capacity to first understand and then apply a principle into one's conduct. Once a certain point is reached, the individual or group has to understand before applying. Reaching a still higher point, the primary object becomes the pursuit of purification. At that level active negation sublimates into spontaneous and automatic withdrawal.

The principle of rejecting something has the inherent meaning of accepting its opposite. The moment we try to restrict any message to one-sided verbal meaning, we lose its spirit and deprive it of the required impact. This only confuses the masses.

In following the Ahimsa conduct the negations prescribed do not make one inactive or escapist. These negations are negations of a negative — *Himsa* or violence. The

positive and universal reality is that every being has an inherent and natural desire to continue life. Any thought or action opposed to this reality is essentially a negative act. Negation of a negative might rightly be classified as positive. Negation of harming life obviously means reverence for life, and that is the spirit behind the Ahimsa concept.

Take for example the admonition, “Do not tell a lie.” This statement obviously contains another statement: “Tell truth.” By restricting the meaning, there are chances of a statement getting distorted in the long run. The statement, “Do not destroy or harm life.” has the inherent meaning of “Protect and foster life.”

Consider the four passions. It is not practical and possible to win these over just by making rules that one should not get angry or conceited nor should yield to illusion or greed. In order to get rid of anger, one has to develop benevolence; to be un-egotistic one has to inculcate pleasant feelings of love and affection, illusions can be avoided with simplicity; and greed can be won over by practicing contentment.

Ahimsa has to be observed with feeling and compassion. The entire code of conduct has been devised solely to help develop and refine those feelings for the final thrust towards the ultimate goal of purification of soul. The scope of Ahimsa, as we have seen, does not end at condemning the physical act of killing or harming. It goes to deeper and deeper meaning, to the point where even feelings are not hurt. It is not just refraining from the act of harming, but to purify oneself to the extent that any desire to harm someone or something in any way is not born at all.

When you are harming someone you are, at the same moment, harming yourself. A certain amount of callousness

and hardness of feeling is required to harm someone. This hardness keeps on increasing with each and every act of violence.

Learning the rules is not enough. One must have the willingness to observe them sincerely. Even the force of discipline is not enough. What is vital is the knowledge of the harm caused by one's action and realization of the pain it gives to the object. Knowing this, one must abandon the act. Unless one is not aware of the harm and pain caused, the determination to abandon the act is not enduring.

Flinching and moving away from the source of pain is a phenomenon observed in all living organisms, no matter how small or primitive. It is only the limitation of our physical senses that makes us unaware of the effect of pain on innumerable living things. That is where the importance of knowledge becomes evident. In ignorance of the harm we cause, we continue to indulge in those acts that seem to be harmless, but are not.

One of the most primitive forms of life is the flat worm. Besides simple tissue structure, what mainly exists in flat-worm is a simple network of nerve fibers. They have no brains, yet they have surprising powers. One freshwater species, for example, can learn from experience. Individuals have been trained to find their way through a simple maze, selecting white-painted passages and avoiding dark-painted ones, by getting slight electric shock when they made a wrong decision. Another amazing capacity of the living organism, even at that micro-level, is that they contain and retain the information within their simple neuron structures. The worms that learned the mazes were killed and their flesh fed to other worms. It was found that the new worms ran through

the maze correctly without training. Pain is repulsive even at that simple primitive micro-level.

The effect of extreme pain is so deep that it causes mental trauma. This is true not only for the sufferer but also for the individual who observes. The closer, mentally or physically, the observer is to the sufferer, the deeper his trauma is. This proximity is the factor influencing the depth, clarity and effect of observation. Physical closeness enhances the physical impact and mental proximity enhances the psychological impact.

The impact of such trauma is so strong that it can influence a person's way of life and even deeply ingrained habits. This phenomenon, for example, has been successfully used to instigate family planning. When a husband is allowed to see his wife in the process of delivering a child, the effect of observing the extreme agony, of a person so close, is traumatic. It has been seen that for a considerable period this experience haunts the male, and he takes all precautions to avoid the next pregnancy. He even curbs his natural urge to satiate his sexual desires.

It is through observation of pain caused to others that we can properly understand the harm our actions impart to others. The harm, broadly speaking is of two types. One is visible, the harm of the physical world and the present moment; it is observable through physical senses. The other is the harm of the world beyond, the world of thoughts and feelings, the world of soul and the life beyond life; it is observable through feelings or sentiments.

Grosser and more direct harm can be observed in terms of resultant pain or sorrow, and so it is relatively easy to come to avoid them. On the same principle, one must be-

come observant and sensitive towards the subtle and indirect harm. In order to practice Ahimsa attitude it is vital to develop the sensitivity that what produces sorrow for us will produce sorrow for others as well. Based on this, Jains have postulated four positive feelings, which help toward reducing violence and sorrow by enhancing compassion, pleasantness, benevolence, contentment, etc.

First is the feeling of universal fraternity. In the Jain concept, this does not limit itself to fellow human beings. It really means the feeling of sameness or equality toward every living organism. Only by developing this feeling one can realize the depth of others' sorrow and become truly non-violent in his behaviour.

As soon as a being is conceived, a process of continued interaction between him and others starts. It continues until he dies or isolates himself absolutely. We are not concerned here with either of these states of isolation; we are dealing with the normal social life in which such interactions are manifold and inevitable.

These interactions, as we have already discussed, fall mainly into two categories, destructive and constructive, assisting or opposing, sympathetic or antagonistic. As with other actions and forces, generally speaking, a destructive attitude draws out destructive reactions from others, and a constructive attitude draws out constructive reactions.

The feeling of universal fraternity derives its value from a universal law of mutual interaction: destruction is evil and construction is good. In order to maintain harmony, destruction should be curbed. The curbing of destruction, antagonism, etc. can be achieved only with construction, sympathy, and other positive feelings. The maximum intensity of sym-

pathy is towards those whom we consider similar or equal to ourselves. Cultivation of the feeling of fraternity is a step towards recognizing all living things as same or equal to us.

Second is the feeling of inherent happiness. This helps in winning over the feelings of envy, jealousy, etc. and promotes goodwill, admiration and respect toward others for their achievements and acquirements. This also curbs violence generated through inferiority and superiority complexes.

The feeling of competition is another of the basic attitudes of living beings; it, too, has its origin in those basic instincts of survival and procreation. While acquiring anything from nature, every living being has to face competition from others striving for the same thing. Nature tackles this problem by the process of adaptation, evolution, and elimination to maintain the balance.

Equipped with superior faculties, man has evolved a variety of methods to tackle this problem. Once again, his inventive capacity gives him an edge over other beings, and this tends to spoil him to the extent of becoming egotistic or chauvinistic. He then strives to win for the sake of sheer pleasure and not out of sheer necessity. At this point, he loses his inherent, simple, and spontaneous happiness and derives happiness or sorrow only through fulfillment or deprivation of the ego of winning. With such deep involvement in his ego, he stops caring about others. Lack of awareness of the feelings of others is conducive to unhealthy competition and violence.

With the reclaiming of that natural feeling of inherent happiness, it is possible to create awareness of the feelings of others. This in turn encourages healthy competition, leading to progress without hurting someone in the process.

The third positive feeling is the feeling of compassion. This plays a vital role in the development of the Ahimsa attitude for the common citizen. Unless the pain of others moves one, he cannot initiate himself into Ahimsa.

When a person suffers pain, broadly speaking, two types of feelings are born in reaction to the cause of pain. One is to strike against the individual or group that inflicts the pain; the other is to remove the cause that triggered the action that inflicted the pain. The first is born out of the natural instinct of immediate survival, which turns into anger and then vengeance. The second is born out of the capacity to reason and the far-sightedness acquired through human intelligence and memory.

Starting from this initial point, the humans have refined both these feelings and the actions guided by them. The advances of the first are seen in individual and group advancements in the field of combat. The advances of the second are seen in the individual and institutional advancements in the fields of humanity, sciences, religion etc.

Compassion is the basis of all progress towards removing the causes of pain. It is one of the forces that pushes us towards sincere observation of Ahimsa. Without compassion, the principles of Ahimsa cannot come out of the volumes of canons and influence the common man, and all the talk about humanitarian endeavours and progress toward purification remain academic. Unless one is moved by the pain of others, it is almost impossible for him to be really active towards ultimate purification, where compassion transcends into pulsating bliss resonating around and from the liberated soul.

Fourth is the feeling of equanimity, which denotes a balanced state of mind. It includes, besides other subtle

things, the attitude of indifference towards the irreparably corrupt. It helps win over excitement and anger. Equanimity is the opposite of intense feelings of any sort that invariably subdue reason.

In nature, withdrawal is a necessary practice in the game of survival. Fight only when necessary and fight only when you can win, otherwise withdraw. When the strong stalk for prey, the weak keep their distance or run away. This is not fear as we have branded it; this is precaution for survival. Nature has also given every animal the inherent mechanism for withdrawal from any particular activity when enough has been done. This curbs over-indulgence, which may disturb nature's balance.

Man has found this built-in mechanism of withdrawal very helpful in improving his lifestyle as well as in his search for happiness and bliss. He could see that withdrawal is the quality, which is necessary for the conservation of gross and subtle energies and their efficient use in the right direction. It is equanimity that makes possible the curb on passions and the enhancement of purity by focusing energies at the desired point.

In the quest for purity, withdrawal is as important as indulgence, for the feeling of equanimity has its root in conscious withdrawal. There are so many factors in life that are undesirable and harmful but unalterable. Efforts to change them or convert them are futile. Equanimity towards them is the only way to save the soul from impending transhment. There are other situations that offer strong attraction for short-term gains but ultimate losses. Equanimity is also required to prevent one from falling into such traps.

There appears to be a misconception, widely prevalent, that Jain philosophy is against compassion, philanthropy, benevolence, etc., although it is a philosophy based on Ahimsa. This misconception is due to the fact that people form their opinions based on superficial information acquired through dogmatic, sectarian misinterpretations.

It is true that there are sects of Jainism where deeds of philanthropy and feelings of compassion are considered undesirable and detrimental to the ultimate goal of liberation. But such interpretations should be taken as sectarian only and not as original and central part of Jainism. A proper study of the basic concepts should be done before forming any opinion based on scanty information.

Ahimsa is a concept that naturally encompasses all these feelings of compassion, philanthropy, benevolence, etc. One cannot be non-violent if he is bereft of these feelings. A person believing in and practicing Ahimsa has necessarily to be compassionate and benevolent. But at the same time, there is no need to advertise these feelings or their applications while subduing every other feeling or deed. Such singular amplification is prompted by exhibitionism and for the satisfaction of one's own desires, rather than from benevolence.

Jain philosophy is a complete way of life integrating all facets of the mundane as well as transcendental world, where each and every component has its own place and importance. Magnifying one particular aspect is no better than erasing another, as done by those sectarians who preach that positive feelings should be avoided.

In fact, even to condemn Jain Ahimsa, on the basis that importance has not been given to one particular aspect liked by some particular individual, would be a biased attitude.

Such condemnation is tantamount to criticism of a general book of science by a supporter of biochemistry because biochemistry has not been given an important place in the book. There can be no end to such criticisms, as every individual has his own likings and disliking. Such criticism should be given importance only if they also include constructive suggestions.

If necessary, amendments and reforms should be considered, but without tilting the balance from one extreme to the other. It should be kept in mind that an individual's choice of a way of life is not necessarily worth blind emulation by all the others, in all walks of life. Based on the philosophy one believes in, every individual has freedom to choose his own particular path, depending on his capabilities, inclinations, and goals.

Ahimsa is one of the important concepts of Jain philosophy, although central, not the only concept. Similarly compassion is one of the important feelings within the framework of Ahimsa, not the only. One cannot truly comprehend a philosophy by isolating one statement and developing it beyond proportions. Such an approach is bound to end up in a lopsided application where some aspects are given undue importance and others none at all.

What is needed is an over all understanding and sincere application of the principles, with a balanced attitude and equanimity of feeling. The path of Ahimsa is the path of equanimity. Equanimity is the foundation on which the whole structure of Ahimsa has been built. Truly speaking, the central theme of Jainism is this equanimity in all dimensions, without which even the positive feelings, discussed here, may turn into prejudice and lose their value.

In the worldly life, where other factors continuously affect the individual, one has to evaluate his strength and ability to select the degree of Ahimsa he can handle. Only when one is aware and confident of his capacity can he follow the path of Ahimsa and progress to higher levels, gradually increasing his strength and ability. The Ahimsa observed by the ignorant and incapable is not truly Ahimsa, no matter what pompous names people give to it, or how they try to justify it with abstract logic. The Ahimsa of the ignorant is nothing but a religion of the weak and coward.

Ahimsa is the philosophy and religion of the strong. Only he is capable of following the Ahimsa path who has the strong desire and determination to purify his soul. This requires tremendous willpower and moral courage. Weakness or ignorance of any sort is violence in itself.

As you offer sympathy and goodwill, you attract sympathy and goodwill. Pure feelings have an inherent strength. It has been seen to develop to the extent that even wild and ferocious animals keep away from such pure people.

The effect of loving care and affection even on such lower life forms as plants becomes evident if one becomes slightly keener in watching their day-to-day growth and flowering. The growth and beauty of any plant is much more enhanced when it is handled as affectionately as we treat a human child. If it is treated harshly and negligently, its growth and blossoming is retarded.

The functioning of mental powers is still unexplored. Without going into debate about para-sciences and their validity, the power of goodwill and universal love can be observed in day-to-day life by studying lives of some prominent historical personalities. Mahavir, Buddha, Jesus Christ,

Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Mother Teresa are but a few examples. Their strength and influence came about only through practicing Ahimsa truly and purifying their souls.

On the path of Ahimsa, fraternity, goodwill, compassion, and equanimity are not to be practiced only at physical level, or mental level, or some other higher or lower level. These should be observed and practiced as a way of life, as a spontaneous feeling unhindered by the jargon of superfluous logic, and not tempered by egotistic exhibitionism.



9

THE PHILOSOPHY

Reverence for life, which grows out of a proper understanding of the will to live, contains life-affirmation. It acts to create values that serve the material, the spiritual, the ethical development of man.

— **Albert Schweitzer**

Right perception, right knowledge, right conduct combined together become the means to liberation.

— **Tattvartha Sutra of Umaswati (1/1)**

Enmities do not abate here at any time through enmity; and they abate through friendliness. This is the eternal Dharma (law).

— **Dhammapada**

Animosity dwindles when Ahimsa reaches perfection.

— **Yogasutra of Patanjali**

THE PHILOSOPHY

The Jain philosophy has described seven basic concepts in the path of purification. The first is *Jiva* or soul, which is the subject of the process. Soul is one of the two elementary energy forms out of the six fundamentals (soul, matter, space, motion, inertia and time). It normally, exists intertwined with matter at different stages of development, but it is different from matter. It manifests itself in the physical dimension through matter, but it is not made from some combination of matter. It is the doer of all deeds and also the sufferer of all consequences. In the path of purification, soul is the entity to be purified and liberated from under the yoke of matter.

The second basic concept of Jainism is *Ajiva* (the opposite of *Jiva*, or soul, or life) or matter. This is the second of the two elementary energy forms among the six fundamentals, and it continually interacts with soul. Matter in its gross forms is visible all around. The Jains have gone into details regarding sub-microscopic particles and beyond, even to the level of subatomic particles. The *Paramanu* as defined by Jains is not the atom, the meaning given by literal translators of scientific terms from English to Hindi. It is an

entity even subtler than any known sub-atomic particle. The literal meaning of the word '*Paramanu*' is 'ultimate particle', and Jains have used the word in that sense precisely.

Beyond that, Jains have hypothesized *Karmic* particles which, are particles of matter at such a subtle level that they can interact with soul. When fused with soul these particles, in their variety of combinations, are considered to be the dynamic blueprint of the whole life of a living being. The whole life according to the Jains is not just a lifetime as we define it, but a series of continued rebirths, which ends only on liberation.

The third basic concept is *Ashrava* or inflow of *Karmic* particles that cause the tarnishing of soul once fused with it. Soul is open to continuous interaction with *Karmic* particles, and this term includes all the tendencies that cause the inter-relationship between soul and matter.

The fourth basic concept is *Bandh* or bondage, the fusion of *Karmic* particles with soul. The forces responsible for this fusion are attachment and aversion. The intensity and extent of this fusion depends on the intensity of the passions within the attachment or aversion. This fusion is the cause of continued rebirth of the soul in varieties of mundane bodies.

The fifth basic concept is *Samvar*, or preclusion. This is the act or effort of stopping the inflow of *Karmic* particles, and it is the first essential achievement on the path of purification. All the disciplines, conducts, and practices lead to this stage of development.

The sixth basic Jain concept is *Nirjara* or cleansing. It is the shedding of *Karmic* particles already fused with the

soul in the immediate and remote past. It has two categories, one done with conscious effort and another that happens naturally. The first is similar to using a catalyst and speeding up the process; this requires a conscious effort to force the deep-rooted *Karmas* out to surface and tackle them with equanimity. The second category of *Nirjara* is the surfacing of *Karma* in their own natural course and, when they surface, tackling them with equanimity. The important factor is tackling them without evoking any intense feelings. Intense feelings only cause additional bondage and so all efforts go in vain.

The seventh basic concept is *Moksha*, or liberation. This is attained when a soul is absolutely pure and free of all *Karmic* particles. It is the state where all *Karmas* have been shed and also there is no further inflow and bondage of *Karmic* particles. The soul is in a state of eternal bliss floating in pure and all enveloping knowledge, free from the cycles of rebirth. This is the bliss of ultimate freedom, and it is the final goal.

Of these seven concepts, the most important and cardinal are soul and matter. Inflow and bondage are states derived out of the combination of life and matter, and are the causes of life cycles. Preclusion and cleansing are the terms for the cleaner states of soul, and these are means to liberation. Liberation is the absolutely clean state of soul and is totally devoid of any interaction whatsoever with matter. As such, the later five concepts become inherent to the two former concepts, or the first two of the five fundamentals, life and matter, as activities or states.

At the early stages of life cycles or the lower levels of living organisms only the first four of these concepts are

active; because the later three come into play only after the awareness of the self is born. With the birth of individual consciousness and its refinement, there is a slow transformation from group activities to individual activities. Beyond this point, any progress is through one's efforts towards purifying the soul and indulging in disciplined activities.

After defining these basic concepts comes the means of purification. A combination of three processes has been defined as the means of purification: right perception (*Samyak Darshan*), right knowledge (*Samyak Jnana*), and right conduct (*Samyak Charitra*). The capacity or intellect with whose development one can recognize and perceive truth is called right perception. The understanding, through right perception and undeniable proof, of the ultimate reality of all fundamentals and basic concepts is right knowledge. The activity guided by right knowledge and devoid of passions is right conduct. Right perception and right knowledge are complementary to one another, and one does not exist without the other. Similarly the right conduct has to be practiced after acquiring right perception and right knowledge.

The driving force, that gives soul the strength to elevate itself, is right knowledge, which comes through right perception and helps practicing right conduct. It is this combination of right perception, knowledge, and conduct that helps one at every step in the path of purification and liberation. Any act without knowledge is worthless as far as purification is concerned.

Poison mixes with blood and disrupts every system of the body by spreading its toxic effects. Similarly, passions disrupt the progress and activity of soul with their toxicity of *Karma*. In order for the body to regain its normal activities

and health, the input of poison has to be stopped and toxicity of the poison already ingested has to be flushed out. Without this, no amount of nutrition will help improve the health. Similarly, for regaining the normal activity of soul, which is endeavour towards purity through right perception and knowledge, the input of *Karma* has to be stopped and already fused *Karmas* have to be flushed out. Passions are poison for soul and they manifest through wide varieties of violence. Without eliminating violence, one cannot steer the soul towards right perception, knowledge and conduct. That is why Ahimsa finds such pride of place in the Jain Philosophy.

As already explained, violence does not just start at wielding a weapon and end at killing by that weapon; according to Jain Philosophy, it is much subtler, much deeper, and much wider than the mere act of killing of human beings or other life forms. Violence does not need a weapon it is a weapon itself. It is not just physical; it involves the depth of soul, mind, and psyche. Ultimately, leaving the gross world of subject and object, it reaches the singular world of individual consciousness, mind, and soul.

At the point where an individual leaves the physical and social level and enters the subtler world of realities of soul, there is a strange dimensional change. Some aspects start converging or concentrating and others start diverging and diffusing. Here the interpretations undergo a progressive change, and at points become confusing if the perspective does not match with the level.

The realization of the pain and anguish of other living beings is the starting point of the path of Ahimsa, for it is the directive factor toward refraining from causing pain. This realization is directly dependent on the object's capacity to

express and subject's capacity to understand. The expression depends on the quality of life of the object, while the observation depends on the level or knowledge and purity of the subject.

Since the capacity for expression decreases with lowering of level of life forms, the requirement of knowledge and purity increases. In other words, as the level of knowledge and purity increases the capacity to observe the expressions of lower life forms increases. This phenomenon automatically expands the field of compassion and brings more varieties of life forms into its scope.

The design behind the Ahimsa code is that one gradually purifies oneself, starting at the grosser levels, where one recognizes the feelings of the most expressive of the life forms, human beings. As one purifies the self and pursues the path of knowledge, the capacity develops to observe and recognize the feelings of beings at lower levels of expression. At a certain point of development, this expansion encompasses the simplest form of life. Here the expansion instantaneously collapses to one singular point-the pure life energy or soul.

In the process of blindly following the rules, without understanding their principles, the followers have left the principles in the pages of canons and reduced the discipline of mind and soul into mere rituals. We have totally reversed the process and, instead of starting with fellow human beings and going out to all forms of life, we start and end with unseen, unknown, and not comprehended life forms. We make a lot of fuss about harming or not harming micro-organisms, but do not even think about harming or not harming our fellow human beings. We think and talk too much

about gross physical activities, rather than the activities of mind, feelings, and soul.

Ultimately it is the impressions left inside the soul that are significant, as they are the only things that influence the soul in the higher path of purification. They are the only things one carries to the next life. Everything else is left behind, when the present fades into the past.

Looking from this ultimate viewpoint, violence becomes all the more subtle. Any transgression into the outer firmament by venturing out of one's own physical and mental borders triggers a chain of events which, if not controlled, results in violence.

From the social dimension of observing others, purity causes one to transcend into the individual world of observing the self and to strive for the purity of knowledge of self, or soul. Once this point is attained, the need to observe and refrain vanishes. With that purity, all the social concerns of compassion, fraternity, etc. become meaningless. Meaningless, not because they are wrong but because they are spontaneous, natural and integral parts of the purity. No efforts are required, no disciplines need be imposed. Pure soul is itself the embodiment of these positive feelings; it does not have to practice; it simply radiates these feelings.

The quality of our behaviour with individuals as well as groups depends on the level at which we comprehend the self, or soul. As our indulgence in soul increases, we continue to stir many unknown, and dormant parts of our brain. These are the areas responsible for our developing the finer qualities of equanimity, goodwill, compassion, etc. The true knowledge of self opens up the wellspring of all-round and spontaneous goodwill.

The unique principles of *Anekantvad/Syadvad*, relativity of thought or truth explains violence and non-violence at levels beyond the physical. Reality is multifaceted, and the attitude of condemning one facet due to ignorance is violence. After all, the truth, as you know it, may be just one facet of the whole, and the knowledge about the same fact may be understood differently through other facets. Condemning or denying the others' viewpoint without examining all the facets is violence.

Anekantvad/Syadvad, as many interpret, is not an effort toward compromise, or concept based on indecisiveness. It is acceptance of the truth from a viewpoint different from our own. If knowledge is multifaceted, it is also dynamic. There was a time when it was believed, on the basis of available proofs, that light travels in a straight line. As more knowledge was acquired, it was proved that light travels in waves. Going still further, it was found that it travels in impulses of particles. None of these statements can be termed as false; each is true from one particular viewpoint and up to a certain level of knowledge. Accepting all the three, once the level of knowledge is attained, can certainly not be termed as compromise or indecisiveness.

Anekantvad/Syadvad keeps one's mind open to various possibilities and curiosity alive to reach new dimensions of knowledge. Once a truth is accepted as one-faceted, the chances of exploring its other variants are reduced, and the knowledge remains incomplete. It is the unrestricted flow of pure knowledge from all directions that is the ultimate *Ahimsa* or *Keval Jnana* through which the soul transcends to the state of liberation or *Moksha*.



10

THE APPLICATION

*Why not declare that there is only one truly dangerous subversion, the subversion of life.
Why not encourage our best brains, scientists, artists, educators to make suggestions on how to arouse and stimulate love for life as opposed to love for gadgets?*

— **Erich Fromm**

But above all you should understand that there could never be peace between nations until there is first known that true peace which, as I have often said, is within the souls of men.

— **Black Elk**

It is because of the injustices of our society that the spiral of violence initially gets launched, and until and unless we get at the roots of injustice, we will be dealing in only a superficial way with the problem of violence.

— **Robert McAfee Brown**

The choice today is no longer between violence and non-violence. It is either non-violence or non-existence.

— **Martin Luther King Jr.**

THE APPLICATION

Ahimsa, although a concept given by Jains in its minute details, has been accepted and propagated by almost every religion and society in one form or the other. While popularizing Ahimsa, it should not be painted a sectarian colour, nor should it be assumed that its popularity would benefit Jainism only. It has a universal appeal. Its strength comes out of its universal application, not confined use. Mahatma Gandhi provided a successful example of such an application.

Ahimsa can, with proper adaptation and effective application, bring about the harmony much needed in the present chaotic world. Many of the cancerous problems prevalent today would not have come into existence had Ahimsa conduct been in practice.

The most violent problem the world faces today is terrorism. It starts as a minor problem of discontent with the establishment or established norms. If left unresolved, this discontent continues to grow and becomes explosive, hitting out at random in any direction. Once it explodes, it has the unique capacity of snowballing by drawing innocent bystanders into its ranks. Fanatics create fanatics out of in-

nocents as a reaction to their brutal treatment, and the process becomes self-sustaining.

Every society since time immemorial has had good and bad elements within its structure, and it is virtually impossible to wipe out any one of these completely. A strong and cohesive social structure, built on the lasting moral values of mutual coexistence and universal welfare, keeps bad elements within controllable limits. Generally speaking, this balance is disturbed, with consequent distortion of moral and social values, by self centered and power hungry individuals or groups. Once the social structure becomes weak and bad elements are encouraged and protected by selfish leaders, chaos becomes an inevitability. Terrorism of any brand thrives under such conditions.

Apartheid, racialism, communalism, religious fanaticism, etc. are basically similar problems. Deep inside each of these, the cause is ego and craving for power that gets more and more distorted with satiation. Ego is a self-feeding and multifaceted phenomenon that gathers impetus from individual, social, religious, racial, provincial, national or other prejudices. It cannot be overcome by suppression or subversion. On the contrary suppression gives it an added justification and impetus. Application of any force becomes a threat to survival, and to oppose such threat is basic human nature. As such, it results in increased cunning, ferocity and cruelty, further complicating matters.

Law enforcement holds a very important place in any society because it is the agency that protects the interest of all against the ambition of one or a few. It is the deterrent that keeps an individual or a small group from disturbing the overall social fabric, thereby protecting each and every

individual component. But to make law enforcement effective, it is necessary that the number of such disturbing elements is kept within controllable limits. If one enforcer per citizen is required, the impossibility of the task can well be imagined.

With the prevailing acceleration in violent activities, throughout the world, we may have to face that impossible task sooner or later. The only way to keep the burden on law enforcement agencies within functional proportions is to encourage discipline by habit and mentality, not just by force. The Ahimsa conduct, if made a part of the education, can be a most effective step toward this goal.

Society as a whole can be strengthened and even extremely violent activities can be discouraged simply by checking the supply of fuel on which they sustain. This can best be done by reestablishing the lost social and moral values with the help of Ahimsa conduct.

Turbulence of thought essentially leads to violence. An agitated mind is inclined toward irrational thinking and ultimately becomes destructive. Agitation and turbulence of thought is derived from conflicting ideas. A difference of opinion, if misdirected because of prejudice, leads to mental agitation. *Syadvad* of Mahavir, the intellectual derivative of Ahimsa, strikes at this point. The understanding and acceptance of the multifacetedness of truth makes a difference of opinion tolerable, instead of a source of conflict. This relativity of truth has all-round application and can be used effectively even in solving complex problems that continuously arise with technological advancements. For the disease of mental turbulence and agitation, *Syadvad* would act like a vaccine; it would activate the in-

built defense against any problem arising out of conflicting ideas and views.

Ahimsa conduct imparts a much broader outlook and tolerance toward viewpoints of others. It is almost the opposite of fanaticism and as such, if made popular, it would act as the best deterrent to bloodshed in name of religion, racism, provincialism, communalism, etc. A person or a society truly practicing Ahimsa conduct wins over biases and prejudices. This dispassionate outlook enables one to reconcile contradictions and strike a balance.

Since the discipline of Ahimsa strikes at the root of evil, it has the capacity to bring about reforms in almost all directions. The increasing malpractices in business and trade are rooted in greed and the ambition for wealth and grandeur. Although these are common human vices, they have been blown out of proportion because of a lack of consideration for the rights and needs of others. Consideration does not come out of fear. As the Ahimsa attitude makes one sensitive to the anguish and sorrow of others and, consequently, toward rights and needs of others, it keeps greed and ambition within limits.

Corruption is a disease with roots and branches so intertwined and widespread that it is difficult to trace out its source or evaluate its extent. It is to mind what leprosy is to body and to soul what cancer is to cell. It is almost impossible to treat once it passes initial stages. The only remedy then is to isolate or amputate the effected part of society. Against corruption only preventive measures or strong corrective measures during initial stages can work. Ahimsa conduct is an effective preventive measure against this disease, as it makes the person sensitive to the harms that corruption

causes to others, thereby helping him to realize the consequences he will have to face if he does not keep himself free of this disease.

Discipline is an essential part of Ahimsa conduct, as indiscipline of any sort increases the chances of harm to self as well as others. With the application of Ahimsa conduct, discipline of thought, speech, and action automatically follows. Indeed, discipline is a two-edged sword for tackling any problem. It improves the person practicing discipline and at the same time discourages others from being wanton. Traffickers in drugs and arms would be forced to abandon their loathsome trade if the masses were disciplined enough not to buy and use drugs or arms, for such trade would thereby be rendered unprofitable.

At an international level, the main cause of almost every problem is greed for power and territorial supremacy. The cold war, the arms race, economic subversion, etc., are all problems sprouting out of that craving for domination over the world. Ideological justifications are nothing but efforts to camouflage real intentions. No amount of negotiation, at whatever variety of conference, is going to solve these problems unless sincere mutual understanding comes into play. The concept of peaceful coexistence can be very effective at the international level; but this concept, while derived from Ahimsa conduct, can be effective only when Ahimsa conduct is adopted and practiced at all levels and in all dimensions of human society.

It can be observed from its pervasion of different fields that Ahimsa, as defined by Jains, includes not only life but also life supporting systems and elements, such as earth, water and fire. Damage to these in any way that makes them

harmful to life, or to the evolution and sustenance of life is also included in the Jain definition of violence.

Fire, water, earth, air, etc. in various combinations are the ultimate sources of life as we scientifically know. The abstinence from violence toward these elements is the most effective measure toward the prevention of pollution. Violence toward these factors includes the unrestricted consumption of natural resources, disturbing nature's ecological cycles, deforestation, industrial and other pollutions etc.. etc.

Natures working, as far as its individual components are concerned, is simple. But it is extremely complex in the overall combination. Ecological interdependence is almost absolute for every one of its components, for it is impossible to eliminate any one component without disturbing the delicately poised balance. To maintain a healthy community, each and every component must be present and functioning at its appointed level. With the increasing information about the intricacies of the dynamic balance of a biome, it becomes more and more evident that indiscriminately disturbing or destroying any component, for any short-term convenience or inconvenience, is futile, even fatal.

The ecology is like a large machine composed of so many gears meshed together. It is self-defeating to try to label any one of the gears as more or less beneficial or injurious to those using it. Yet, man continues to plunder nature and interfere with its components on one pretext or the other. The experts on ecology forecast that in all probability we are on the threshold of a biological tragedy. By the end of this century, we are likely to lose at least one million out of the earth's five to ten million surviving species, and the process is likely to accelerate itself exponentially within the

first few decades of the next century. There are chances that almost one third of all species that exist today will be lost. We would not have come to this point of degeneration had we been a little cautious and practiced Ahimsa conduct.

The so-called energy crisis is another burning problem facing human society. One factor that may be helpful is energy conservation or its restrained use. For those indoctrinated in the Ahimsa way of life conservation comes naturally. A society practicing restraint in all its activities, so that no harm comes to others, consumes energy only to the extent that is minimally essential. There is no extravagance or waste due to neglect and carelessness.

The energy crisis and maintaining the ecology are connected problems. In our greed for wealth and power we continue to exploit nature at every step in our technological progress. In our egotistic pursuit to harness and improve upon nature, we have disturbed it with a blind eye toward the grave consequences future human society will have to face.

Taking care not to disturb ecology, so that the coming generations do not face the peril of destruction caused by a ravaged and hostile land, was and is a necessary part of behaviour in almost every society. The Jains, however, have put that social practice into scientific and philosophical terms. With the advent and expanse of industrial culture and territorial competition, all such values have been lost to selfish pursuits, which, in Jain terms, is violence.

Even people as remote and supposedly primitive as the Bushmen of Africa had a very sound tradition for protecting ecology. They would not dig two roots from the same place. They would not take all eggs from one ostrich nest. The norm was that one must always walk past one before dig-

ging another or picking up from another. Given in these simple terms, the reason for this behaviour was that you must take one and leave another for the children. If you leave nothing for the children, what will they think of you when they starve? When you leave them, your children will grow strong, remember you, and do the same for their children. In the simple language of these people children mean all the future generations.

This is the real essence of Ahimsa in its applied form. It has to be a way of life; it has to be a belief rooted deep down into the mind and sentiments. Ahimsa is neither a rule nor a ritual. It is discipline, not only for an individual at a certain time, but for all people, at all times.

If infused in large groups of people the Ahimsa attitude would help human race to live in harmony with nature. Ironically, this widely applicable principle has been confined to the individual level by none other than Jain interpreters and propounders themselves. It has not progressed since the early interpreters, living in simple society, evolved simple applications. Later scholars, preachers, and ascetics have been content with blindly following those early and simple interpretations, which had already become a spent force. The few who tried to keep abreast of times were condemned, and their radical reforms and non-traditional viewpoints were pushed into obscurity by making them purely academic.

In the campaign against evil, we have never tried to improve our arsenal, whereas the evil have raced ahead. The evil thought in simple society meant thinking of direct harm to any other being. With the ever-increasing complexity of life, direct harm has lost its importance. Harm can be caused by manipulating people or events, or even by pushing a re-

mote button. If we continue to keep the traditional applied definitions of philosophical concepts, they will soon lose whatever little is left of their impact.

It is time that the basic philosophical concepts are explained to the common man to the fullest extent, so that applied interpretations become dynamic and effective. Knowledge that has been kept esoteric by a few must be made more, and more accessible to the common man. Each and every question should be answered sincerely and elaborately, so that more and more people become interested in Ahimsa conduct as a preventive measure against grave consequences of evil thought now confronting humanity. What is required is proper education and effective practice of Ahimsa conduct among the masses.

It is the observation of child-psychologists that when the parents point out to a child the consequences for others of what the child has done, the child seems to learn such positive moral lessons as empathy and compassion. This is especially marked when the child has injured someone. In experiments, children raised in this way were more likely than others to help or comfort distressed children.

Use of threats or raw physical force may solve the immediate problems of violence, but they may impart an unintended moral damage. The children of parents who rely on force or threats, research shows, tend not to console or help another distressed child, or even to start fights or otherwise engage in unprovoked aggression. The feeling of being loved is one of the most basic influences on a child's moral development.

When a human being starts his life, he is like a miniature but highly sophisticated computer with a vast poten-

tial to be programmed. The *Karmic* blueprint or, according to biosciences, genetic code provides him with that potential or capacity. He has no on/off switch that could provide control at will. He is open to the surrounding world and starts absorbing information or programming himself from the instant he is born. As far as absorption is concerned, he has no discrimination. He absorbs good information as well as bad.

The irony is that this unique computer has no system to erase any information or programme completely, without damaging itself in the process. All the important and basic programming, which forms the foundation of and continuously influences later programming, is concluded by the time the human child is seven years old. The foundation of racial sexual, ethical, religious and national attitudes is laid down during this early infancy. Thus, the circumstances and environment in which an infant is raised is vital to the quality of citizen he is going to turn into. Parents are the most powerful factors influencing the mind of the man of tomorrow. If they understand and practice Ahimsa conduct properly and try to influence the basic programming of the infant human computer, they could ensure a physically healthy, mentally sound, and ethically strong citizen for tomorrow.

This education and application has to be implemented at almost every level. The masses will have to be educated right from the primary grades so that future citizens grow up with sustaining moral values and tolerance. The Jain ascetic organization can do a lot in this direction as they have the required background and knowledge. They can effectively popularize Ahimsa conduct in masses at all levels. But for this, they will have to prepare themselves to consider as their

student each and every human being, not just the followers of their particular sect.

Equally important is the education of our leaders; the people who stir the masses into an uncontrollable storm capable of destroying whatever good or bad comes in its way. These men must be made to believe that the strength in and power derived from Ahimsa is much more stable and healthy than that derived from terror and violence. It is surprising that people miss the historical reality of the conquest by Ahimsa demonstrated by Ashoka. The territories won by the onslaught of Buddhism launched, without a trace of violence, by Ashoka were much larger than the largest ever, conquered by Genghis Khan; and they remained under its influence for a much longer period.

We have all the ingredients of the remedy to many important problems the humanity is facing, available within Mahavir's concept of Ahimsa. What is needed is extracting them out of the dogmas, formulating them for the different ailments of societies, and applying them sincerely. Let us hope we are not too late in reviving this science of harmony and peace, lost within religious stigmas.



11

THE SCOPE

Others too do not like to be subjected to the violent activity you do not like to be subjected to. The compassionate treatment you expect is also expected by all others. This is the gist of all what the Jain order preaches.

— **Brihatkalp Bhashya**

The qualification of being called an Arya (noble) is not to kill or oppress beings. In fact, he who does not kill or oppress beings is called Arya.

— **Dhammapada**

Do not do to others what you yourself detest.

— **Manusmriti**

I do not want to turn my stomach to be a graveyard of other beings. He who has saved one life has probably spared life of all humanity.

— **Kuran Sharif 5/35**

11 *THE SCOPE*

[Since the publication of this book I have often come across two questions: Can ahimsa effectively help us tackling the two gravest problems we face, those of terrorism and deteriorating environment? And is it practically possible to popularize the ahimsa way of life? I have already touched on these two problems in the last chapter. But the continued escalation in the intensity of these problems requires that we give them further thought. They have multiple dimensions, which means that we need comprehensive methods for tackling each one of them. It is beyond the scope of this additional chapter to go into detailed discussion of every aspect of the problems and their solutions. However, it is pertinent to provide pointers to inspire readers to formulate practical solutions suitable to their individual surroundings. I have tried to do that to the best of my ability with the hope that such islands of peace may expand and join together to form continents of peace and mushroom into universal peace.]

The gravest maladies haunting this planet today are terrorism and ever-increasing pollution. These damaging con-

ditions are breeding grounds for many other problems, including the increase in diseases, new and old, in spite of the rapid developments in the field of health sciences. There are no simple solutions to these problems. However, ahimsa, put into practice as a way of life, provides a progressive solution to such problems. It does so by tempering and diluting undesirable or dangerous social attitudes.

As already discussed, Ahimsa as evolved by Mahavir is infinitely wider than the word's simple meaning. He made a single point explode in all directions, breaking the limits of a concept or a doctrine and turning it into a universally applicable principle. It evolved into such a dynamic principle that it does not change fundamentally when shifting from one area to another. It is a way of life covering every facet of life from the mundane to the spiritual and from the least evolved to the most evolved. If worked out properly and earnestly, it can provide solutions to a wide range of problems almost at every level. It does not act like a medicine that attacks a disease; rather, it acts like nourishment that improves the overall health of the body and gives it the strength and resistance to prevent and fight diseases in general.

Because of space restrictions, we shall confine our discussion to the two gravest problems in this context, those of terrorism and environmental degradation. Much has been said and written about political, religious, social and individual causes and ramifications of terrorism as well as environmental degradation. We shall not go into the details of every individual field, but instead look briefly into root causes and proceed to speculate about how the ahimsa way of life can be effectively utilized in that context.

TERRORISM

Before attempting to find the exact means and methods needed to tackle the ever-growing menace of terrorism in different areas of the globe, we need to understand that it is a self-sustaining phenomenon. It is a fire that finds its fuel as it spreads, without any outside help. And this makes it all the more dangerous and difficult to contain. This is a reminder that we must treat this disease, like any other, at the time of its inception, irrespective of the fact that the affected area could be far removed from us in terms of time and space. If we neglect it because of its distance from us, or nurture it for ulterior motives and postpone devising means of confronting it until it reaches us or has become full-blown, we are risking an unending battle in addition to inflicting suffering upon unsuspecting and innocent masses.

The root cause of terrorism is acute adversity in both financial and intellectual development, and these are inter-related in most cases. These adversities are the breeding grounds of religious fanaticism. Such problems tend to be grossly neglected, sometimes due to the urgency of some competing problem, but mostly due to callous neglect of the 'have-nots' by the 'haves'.

Leaving aside persons who are mentally deranged, violence has its roots in the basic survival instinct of every living being. In nature, violence, as we understand it by observing the food chain, is associated with survival. In absolute terms, violence forms an essential component of the survival mechanism intrinsic to every being no matter how micro or macro it is. Under normal circumstances, this survival instinct works as a constructive force driving us to utilize the means of survival with which nature has provided

us. But in adversity, when we are deprived of these means, justifiably or unjustifiably, we are faced with a threat to our survival. Terrorism is born out of this threat. It would not be wrong to conclude that all violence, other than that associated with natural survival needs, is dependent on the threat perception of an individual being or a group.

Under the influence of this threat, the natural survival instinct turns into a potent and destructive force, driving beings to grab and snatch to meet their needs. Among human beings, who are equipped with highly evolved faculties of perception and imagination, the scope of 'need' continues to expand, and the dividing lines between need and desire, ambition, covetousness and greed become hazy. The intellectual tools of rationalizing and justifying provide durability to this destructive force, which then becomes nearly limitless.

Once this turnaround takes place and finds an atmosphere conducive to its spread, it grows with ever-increasing speed and overpowers the normal functioning of mind. When this happens, even a normal person begins to behave like a mad and deranged person, and a new terrorist, who is 'sanely insane,' is born. The evolutionary journey from being an animal to becoming a human being has been long, but that from human to animal is very short.

When working against evil, it is essential to condemn it unequivocally and to dissociate oneself from it. The moment any "if or but" conditions are laid down, one is associating oneself with those who do evil. Maybe the medicine should be different for the diehards and the fence sitters, but both should be counted among the sick. The diehards, who are beyond any chance of retrieval, have to be given the

ultimate treatment of punishment. But fence sitters are to be quarantined within fences of proper education and social uplift. The extreme treatment could involve acts of violence, but as it is curative in terms of the larger human interest, punitive violence need not be considered violence as such.

If violence is to be reduced or curbed, it is essential that the looming shadows of threat be diffused or removed. As there is no standard formula for this, it has to be tackled at different levels and in different dimensions. However, because adversity is the prime source of this threat, it is of fundamental importance that adversity be addressed on a high-priority and long-term basis. We need to remind ourselves frequently that if sincere and concerted efforts are not made in time, humanity could soon be overwhelmed by the choking stink of cordite and its own decaying carcass.

Polarization is another cause of conflicts. Polarization leads to dogmatic absolutism because it is not aimed at the search for truth, but rather the vindication of previously established beliefs. The increase in the tendency of imposing our thoughts on others is the cause of the spread of the prevailing stressful atmosphere.

Intellectuals these days are mostly involved in discussions that lead to an unpleasant and unproductive hardening of attitudes. The basic purpose of any discussion should be to develop better mutual understanding. But this kind of discussion seldom takes place— not in visual or print media, nor in seminars or meetings, general or private. Instead, we usually find argumentative exchanges or heated debates propagating dogmas.

The first thing we should do is prevent any further escalation of violence in our own lives, for it is we who pro-

vide fodder to terrorism. We should understand that an increase in the tendency of imposing our thoughts on others creates the kind of tense atmosphere in which terrorism thrives.

We have to realize that terrorism, or any sort of extremism, thrives on partisan attitudes hardening into dogma. We must understand that deliberation or action confined to a small group or area has no immediate influence on the major incidents of violence unless we are at the spot or are involved directly. Those who are at the helm of affairs should be allowed to do what is required of them. Even if they have some shortcomings, our spur-of-the-moment reaction is not going to help them in any way. In fact, it may distract them by turning into a new local dispute and drawing on their limited resources.

Any discussions or debates engaged in by people not concerned directly and immediately with the issues involved have a tendency to inflame both sides and provide fuel to the already blazing fire. This grows in importance in direct proportion to the level of influence of an individual or organization. The wider the reach, the stronger is the momentum of the dogma. Therefore, instead of reacting immediately, we should stop and think. And that cannot be done when attitudes harden.

As terrorism depends not just on threat but threat perception, it has to be primarily tackled at the psychological level. As psychology covers almost all dimensions of conscious and sentient life, the task at hand seems impossible. But reality is to the contrary. Precisely because it is connected with psychology, social psychology can provide a basis for sound and effective measures to deal with the causes

of terrorism. And that is where the importance and efficacy of 'ahimsa way of life' lies.

ENVIRONMENT

Like terrorism, environmental degradation is a burning problem of our times. Experts from diverse fields have done a lot of work in this area and continue to do so. However, we too must continue to enhance our awareness of the gravity and scale of the problem.

How much time is left in the oft-predicted scenario of devastation by the increasing pollution in the atmosphere? Scientists opine that it will take fifty years for the ambient temperature of the earth to rise by two to three degrees. The forecast about acid rain and the global warming is also that their widespread effects will be visible in about 50 to 100 years. The same is being said about ozone layer depletion.

All these estimated forecasts are based on available information about present day conditions. However, as the fragile balance of environmental conditions depends on innumerable variables, it is impossible to arrive at exact or even nearly exact predictions. This gives rise to an important question: Has some component of this complex system already deteriorated so much that it is on the brink of collapse and has lost the capacity to absorb even a slight nudge? If that has happened, the forecast of fifty to one hundred years could be reduced to five to ten years. What would happen then? Would the pundits of development and consumerism be left with the time and choice to readjust their responses?

The scenario is horrifying. To some it may appear to be a baseless apprehension. Even if we conform to this hopeful attitude, the impending disaster cannot be ignored by brand-

ing it impossible. Even in a remote possibility of disaster, it is wise to take precautionary measures. Such measures are all the more essential in face of the high degree of unpredictability of a dynamic system, with innumerable variables, in precarious balance.

How fragile is the balance and how far reaching are the effects of changes brought about by uncontrolled human desires and ambitions is evident from numerous phenomena widely reported during the past fifty years.

One of these phenomena is ozone layer depletion. For more than forty years scientists have been warning that the quantity of chlorofluorocarbons in the atmosphere is continuously increasing and adversely affecting the protective ozone layer. This layer of ozone—fifteen to twenty kilometers beyond and around the earth—protects life on earth from the devastating effects of ultra-violet rays. The predictions based on available information are that, if corrective measures are not taken, this protective layer of ozone could be so much depleted by the third decade of the new millennium that large holes will appear in it. According to these warnings, we still have twenty years to take corrective measures.

In 1985, a group of British scientists on a survey mission to Antarctica were taken aback when they found that a hole had already appeared in the ozone layer above Antarctica and was increasing in size. Why did this happen, defying all the careful calculations and predictions of ozone holes being forty to fifty years away at that time? In all probability, the ozone layer in that part of the atmosphere was already so depleted that a slight nudge created a hole there. It is difficult to pinpoint from exactly where that nudge came.

Another incident that elaborates the far-reaching effects of innocuous-looking local stresses on this fragile ecosystem occurred in South America about twenty years back. Near the western coast, a cold water-current was then flowing. It was called the Humboldt Current. This current brought to the surface nutritious elements from the deep sea. This was the reason for the abundance of fishes off the shores of Peru, and it gave rise to a sizeable growth of fish-based industry. Besides this, large flocks of sea birds had been thriving for thousands of years on the abundance of fish near the coast. This turned the uninhabited offshore islands into rich sources of guano.

Due to environmental degradation caused by human activity far north of there (in some other country), a warm stream suddenly and unexpectedly appeared. This flow pushed the Humboldt Current far south. The new warmer current lacked the nutrients required by the fish population. Before any measures could be taken, the large population of fish became almost extinct. This resulted in death of thousands of birds due to depletion of their natural source of food, the fish. The onshore fisheries closed down and the stockpile of guano dwindled. All this had an extremely disturbing effect on the human population.

The chain of events did not stop there. The harvesting of fish on the shores of Peru was not used only as food for humans. The larger part of the hundreds of thousands of tons of fish was being exported to Brazil for its cattle-feed industry. When all of a sudden this large source of raw material vanished, an alternative was found in the Soya bean. Overnight Soya bean farming became a lucrative business in Brazil, and a systematic and organized deforestation

started. Thus commenced the tree-by-tree destruction of an extensive and ecologically balanced natural system. Surprising is the complexity of the balance in nature and how precariously it depends on the interdependence of its multiple components.

The present state is that in spite of all our efforts of the last fifty years, we have failed to put noticeable brakes on the continuing environmental degradation. It is high time for some radical thinking and action. Limiting needs at the individual and social levels can prove to be an effective measure in this direction. Once again the required ingredients are inbuilt in the ahimsa way of life.

CONSUMERISM

One of the major causes of intolerance leading to violence as well as environmental pollution in the modern world is consumerism. It sounds strange but is very true. A simple and benign looking thing can, in the long term, cause psychological changes that have a far-reaching influence in many other areas in the system. Consumerism is a two-edged sword. On one side, it systematically depletes natural resources, polluting and destroying the environment as a consequence. On the other side, it breeds destitution, disparity and discontent leading to terrorism.

Basically and essentially we consume to survive. Next comes comfort, and then ambition. In every human society, as evident from the history of this planet, ambition necessarily overtakes need and comfort at some point of time. If this onslaught of ambition is not curbed and bridled, it eventually leads to collapse. This has been happening time and again since the beginning of human history, but we fail to learn a lesson. We continue to fall into the same trap and

suffer. Unfortunately and ironically in the present scenario, the concept of development has been contaminated with ambition. This has turned the benign terms consume and consumer into the all-consuming devil of consumerism.

Consumerism has its origin in planned exploitation of human need by turning it into greed. With a confidence bolstered by the notion that our planet is a vast, unending storehouse of natural resources, we have been milking it for ages. Initially out of ignorance and later due to force of habit, we have neglected all the warnings and continued to invent new and more efficient methods of exploiting all that nature could provide us. On the pretext of technological and financial advancement, we have put human society on a fast track that could inevitably take us to the precipice of irredeemable destruction.

The communications revolution has provided a highly efficient tool for the globalization of consumerism with the added evil of an ever-increasing pace of life. Racing and competition have become essential parts of modern life. Intolerance is a natural attribute of a mindset driven by wanton ambitions. It is not that intolerance was non-existent in the past, but it certainly was not as widespread as now, thanks to the communications revolution.

When we move too rapidly the chances of committing mistakes increase. When we move too slowly we tend to become lax and once again the chances of mistakes increase. This is *himsa*. The optimum is *ahimsa*, and deviation from the optimum is *himsa*. Balance is *ahimsa*, and imbalance is *himsa*. When we take care not to drift from the path of balance we are pursuing the path of *ahimsa*. Limiting our needs comes through self-discipline, and that in turn comes from a

balanced state of mind. This is a broad definition and covers every field and facet of life. This principle needs to be applied in different ways in different situations.

SELFISHNESS

Taking a step further towards understanding violence and finding ways to avoid it, we find that when human sentiments evolve into mutual relationships, social rules are born. The primary rules are based on sentiments. These sentiments then evolve into rules that benefit the whole society. With the increasing complexity of society, new dimensions are added to these rules. With this increase of complexity comes a greater probability of confrontation or struggle. But at the root of all struggles is the selfishness and ego of the individual. Once again, as it evolves from the basic survival instinct, no one is free of this selfishness, not even religious leaders, social workers, or activists. When individual selfishness arises within a group in any manner, it gives birth to struggle between the individuals comprising the group, and the group's functioning as a cohesive unit gets disturbed. Also, when outside conditions start influencing inner sentiments, contradictions are born, but it is difficult to avoid such interference and influence.

What is the method of completely avoiding such struggle? This is an almost impossible goal. Still, it is certainly possible to reduce struggle. One solution is to suppress selfishness, but this is obviously more easily said than done. It is easier, comparatively, simply to compromise with selfishness. But this, too, carries the risk of going wrong, because the process of compromise is itself adulterated by selfishness. We tend to seek compromises that benefit only us. It is a natural sentiment and cannot be just wished away.

In social life, the most effective solution to the problem of struggle is to find ways of ameliorating or redirecting selfishness. We should develop the attitude that it is difficult to satisfy those selfish goals that collide with the goals of others. Therefore, we should pursue those goals that are common and have little or no chance of conflicting with the goals of others. Competitive opposition should be tempered. However, for this to happen, the established definition and vision of development have to be changed drastically. In the prevailing vision of development, competition is an essential tool, and tempering competitiveness is unthinkable. Persistent and sincere efforts will have to be made to shift the orientation of development from materialism to beatitude. The blind race for wealth and power originating from the materialistic orientation of development creates whirlpools and black holes of terrorism. People need to select benign fields in which to compete. The desire to compete should be associated with emulation and not envy or jealousy.

AHIMSA

As the aforesaid and other problems facing humanity in modern times are interrelated and interconnected, it would be wrong to seek solutions for each one in isolation. Our approach should be to establish the relevance of ahimsa as an overall solution to all these problems, and then proceed to general methods of application.

To understand peace, or the state of tranquility, we should first understand struggle. A collision of two opposing things, forces or ideas is struggle. Then in order to attain peace, is it necessary to wipe out mutually opposing things? That is impossible. The next alternative is to prevent collision. But that, too, is neither easy nor completely achiev-

able. The reality of life is that nature and life abound in complexities, confusions and chaos, and it is impossible to find some simple and permanent solution to the problem of struggle.

This is the reason that man has been searching since the beginning of time for some way of life that minimizes these natural complexities. The numerous outcomes of this search are called philosophies and religions. Each one presented its own fundamentals and concepts, and experiments were carried out. Each stream of thought had its ebb and tide, progression and regression. Some vanished and others survived. Throughout the history of civilization, we find that, one way or another, ahimsa has been a part of each and every ideology and way of life. For some, ahimsa has been the central theme. As we have seen, the most developed of the ahimsa-oriented philosophies are Jainism and Buddhism.

The way of life evolved by Jains on the basis of ahimsa included welfare of the state, the people, and the individual. Even to this day, this system is pertinent and rewarding if we understand it thoroughly and adapt it to suit modern society. Jainism basically believes in progressive development of spirituality. Ahimsa is the primary means of spiritual development. However, when ahimsa is tethered to formal ritualism, it does not remain ahimsa but transforms itself into *himsa*. Ahimsa cannot be observed for long through compulsion or fear. Its success lies in breeding, or imparting, or cultivating an inherent revulsion for *himsa*.

Undue stress has been laid on formal and ritual ahimsa as practiced by the ignorant. Very little genuine efforts are made to prepare the ignorant by explaining the meaning and importance of the five vows and thereby laying a founda-

tion for further development. The foundation of the structure has been left weak, and the higher level has been made heavy. The fall of such a lopsided structure is inevitable. That is the reason that hypocrisy has crept into the ascetic organization as well as the society. The higher the level of religiosity, the more is the hypocrisy. Following the ahimsa attitude is not just meant for the next life or attaining liberation, as generally preached by the religious. It is true, applicable, effective and beneficial in our normal day-to-day life.

The term ahimsa literally means negation of *himsa* (the whole range of violence starting from an idea of hurting and going right up to destruction). Ontologically speaking, when we talk of *himsa* (destruction) we should first consider to which of the Reals it is applicable, soul or body. Soul is immortal and there is no question of destroying it. Therefore what can be destroyed is body. Body is matter, and matter is never destroyed; it just undergoes continuous transformation. Then what is *himsa*? On serious contemplation, we find that at a subtle level *himsa* does not mean destruction or killing; it just means transformation. This makes sense only when we understand that life is formed by a combination of matter and soul. Therefore the fundamental definition of *himsa* is to curb or impede the natural evolution of embodied soul. All other definitions are mere derivations, extensions or elaborations of this.

When ahimsa is interpreted or explained as ‘not to do himsa’, it is a simple social stricture. As long as the meaning of ahimsa is confined to its connotation of negation, it is just a prohibition and remains within the realm of legal codes. When negation takes the form of a stricture, it is just a prohibition of the simplest form. However, this initial level,

too, is not so insignificant as to be neglected. It is important in the sense that it is the primary step. What is required is we should make efforts to rise above it instead of considering it to be the goal and turning it into a mere ritual.

The other facet of ahimsa is the need for the elimination of violence. This does not merely mean the absence of violence at a superficial or physical level. It really means the absence of the need for violence at the mental and spiritual level. We must acquire, or get endowed with, those attributes, or virtues, or powers, or capacities, that enable us to function in all ways without *himsa*. This is a gradual process and practice that cannot be accomplished just by some whimsical or ritual resolve or vow. It has to be accomplished by endeavour and practice. This involves both the processes of attack and escape—an attack on, and escape from, the need of violence.

The third facet of ahimsa is the absence of violence. That is the level at which we are not merely inspiring everyone around us towards abandoning *himsa*, but are actually turning them ahimsak (perfectly non-violent). It is the ultimate and ideal situation that we call ultimate purity.

Once again, we take the common meaning of ahimsa to be the absence of *himsa* or violence and presence of empathy and fraternity. To refrain from violence is ahimsa and to cultivate friendship is also ahimsa. If we go still deeper in our deliberation, we find that ahimsa is a state of natural peace, free of any opposing factor, or of any struggle whatsoever. But can such a state exist? We normally supposed that it is possible only in imagination. It sounds utopian. But the truth is that such a state is possible; it has been attained and can be attained.

RELEVENCE TODAY

‘The concept of ahimsa has become irrelevant in modern world’ – many people support this idea. There is a genuine basis for this, because this is the age of competition, the economic mindset, and technological progress. All this steers towards the mundane or materialism which, in turn, is conducive to violence (*himsa*) rather than ahimsa. The supporters of ahimsa are being consigned to oblivion.

However, if we profoundly and pragmatically study the true situation, and if we sincerely try to diagnose the ailment, another reality will be revealed to us. In fact, it is the present condition that needs ahimsa most. It would not be out of place to recall that the famous phrase ‘Ahimsa is the loftiest among duties or religions.’ (*Ahimsa paramo dharma.*) is from the epic *Mahabharata*, which is about a great war. We find many historical instances of war-torn, violent and complex periods in which ahimsa has provided far-reaching solutions. Why not look into them and analyze them?

How to affect the spread of ahimsa? It is a tough problem, especially in the present circumstances when violence is widespread and ever growing. It is impossible to change the complete life style of the whole society overnight. Then should we just wait for the change to come naturally in due course? But that would mean going for reconstruction only after complete destruction.

When we look into the past, we find this to have been a possibility. This was because, even after destruction, enough was left to facilitate reconstruction or regeneration. But the destructive machinery we have created today is all consuming. It will probably destroy the atmosphere on which all life depends. From the scale of centuries or millenniums,

the process of regeneration of life will shift to the scale of eons and more. Given these stakes, we cannot brand this destruction inevitable and accept the prevailing conditions.

We should not forget that not to oppose evil amounts to supporting evil. A sincere endeavour never becomes worthless under any conditions. If nothing else, it leaves an imprint of its existence on the fabric of space and time, a seed that sprouts whenever the conditions are right and conducive. Even if favourable conditions are absent now, we must strive for the goal, no matter how difficult the endeavor may be.

As long as we continue to define ahimsa in sacralized, ritualistic terms as non-killing and non-hurting, it will remain a matter of sentiment and will continue to be governed by the flickering state of the human mind. The definition should not be confined to this narrow verbal meaning, but should be elaborated—as Mahavir did—as a way of life in which balance is emphasized and discerning attitude or *vivek* is made the means of implementation. This is imperative because ahimsa is neither an exact term nor static. It is relative as well as dynamic. It varies from person to person and time to time depending on one's spiritual level and circumstances. When it comes to defending the country, the duty of a citizen changes – he may have to resort to violence. When it comes to his treatment of his fellow humans and animals, his duty shifts to protecting living beings. At one place he is governed by courage, valour and aggression, and at the other by compassion and sympathy.

The discipline of ahimsa at every level does not mean that a criminal is not to be punished. It is a dynamic principle, as given by Jains, and its application is also dynamic. Ahimsa literally means absence of *himsa*. Thus, when in

application it means do what leads to the absence of violence, and that does not convey not punishing a criminal.

It sometimes seems that in the face of growing violence it is futile to talk of turning the other cheek. That is because we are under the general impression that turning the other cheek is a display of humility and weakness. However, in the context of ahimsa it is not so. *Abhaya* is the true expression of ahimsa and *abhaya* means absence of fear, which in turn comes from strength, not weakness. However, what exactly this strength means and how can it be put to use should be well understood.

Weakness gives birth to anger, hatred, vengeance and many other negative attitudes and feelings. Weakness, both of body and mind, blocks the fulfillment of our desires. Unfulfilled desires cause sorrow and pain, which in turn culminate in feelings of hatred and vengeance. Inability to correct the situation gives rise to anger. Although anger is harmful to us, it satisfies our ego and we derive contentment by harming others. We forget that anger sprouting out of hatred and vengeance multiplies the destructive power of physical weapons to dangerous proportions. The only way to pacify hatred and vengeance is through self-control attained through inner strength.

By removing weakness we reduce anger and the other passions, but it is not so easy. Weakness should be removed from exactly where it is. It has first to be pinpointed. It should be understood that the strength or power we utilize to remove weakness can go astray, and this complicates the matter by increasing weakness, anger and consequent ill effects.

We have to recognize the exact place of weakness in our individual system, i.e. whether it is in the body, mind, or

brain, or in the individual, society or politics, or in some other area such as economics. First, see the patient and his environment, then understand his weakness, and then seek the treatment. Of course, there are certain cures that are universally applicable and give an all-round health. These methods should be made active perpetually.

Ahimsa is a feeling inspired and backed by strength. Anger and other such feelings are consequences of weakness. However, like weakness, power also has many guises. Generally speaking, a being is a combination of strength and weakness. Thus the directions his life takes multiply depending on various combinations of the intensities of this strength and weakness. This is the reason a control over strength and weakness is required. And this comes through discipline or self-control. Ahimsa appears to be the most efficient system of discipline.

It is only a handful of people who follow the path of violence and promote violence. The larger majority who indulge in violence are mere followers on whom violence is thrust for one reason or another. In fact, it is easier to accept and follow the path of ahimsa than that of *himsa*, which involves comparatively larger physical, mental and financial resources. If efforts are made in the right direction, the influence of ahimsa can be spread in a much wider area. Violence is like a forest fire that consumes everything in its path. The best and most effective way to contain it is to dig trenches of ahimsa so that it comes in contact with a void alone.

To fight *himsa* with ahimsa is easier said than done. The problem becomes all the more complex when it relates to society and nation. Individual decisions become easy when the problem is viewed with reference to an individual in iso-

lation from society. To tackle the problem at the social and national level requires the enormous moral strength, conviction and devotion of a Gandhi.

How do we go about promoting the feeling of tolerance and co-existence? Is it so difficult? In order to seek a solution to some problem, it is best to look for the cause of the problem. If that cause can be removed, the problem will slowly die its own death. Any other solution will be temporary. In case it is impossible to completely eradicate the cause, then a long-lasting balance has to be achieved where cause is reduced to an almost benign level and enough strength is given to the system to sustain and maintain that level. Ahimsa can provide such a solution because it has universal application beginning from reforming an individual's attitude right up to international relations.

Mahavir's ahimsa way of life involves three vital factors — dynamism, discipline, and balance or equanimity. These factors are linked with the ahimsa way of life, forming a mutually dependent progressive cycle of development. When any one of these factors improves it automatically brings improvement in other factors and the whole system.

DYNAMISM

In an open ended dynamic system, any load at any point affects the whole system. Needs are loads on the system, and the system has three broad levels of arrangements for coping with such needs. First is the response to genuine need (justified), second is buffer for unforeseen spurts, and third is an emergency supplement from other components of the system. Beyond these, every need, no matter how small it looks, causes the system to start getting overloaded.

It appears that Bhagavan Mahavir, once he had transcended from contemplation to direct perception during his spiritual endeavour, realized that he lived within a dynamic system. He found that his soul and body both were dynamic. He looked around and found that everything he set his eye to was, once again, intrinsically dynamic. He paused at anything that appeared static and, after a more penetrating look, he found that this, too, was dynamic. Once he established that the only thing static in this universe was death or extinction of the form under consideration, he set about to frame codes of how best to live in such extensively dynamic system.

Fundamentally, this universe is dynamic. Irrespective of whether it is an expanding or a collapsing one, whether it started with the big bang or otherwise, its existence as we see it is the consequence of dynamism in sustaining balance. Thus, in this system the concept of stasis is relative. Relative to a more dynamic thing, a less dynamic thing is static, although within itself it is dynamic.

Life is dynamic and death is static. These two are apparently opposing concepts, but inseparable. To be either completely dynamic or static is impossible. No matter from what angle, level, or context we look at nature, we will find that balance is the ultimate and all-pervasive activity in nature.

In the process of analysis, Mahavir used a microscopic splitting of things and processes, and studying each in its own firmament. However, it appears that when it came to evolving a way of life based on his findings and leading to peace, beatitude and ultimate bliss, he took into consideration the overall or holistic view of the universe in its state of dynamic balance.

When dealing with a dynamic system we have to be careful not to disturb it. When a system is in the state of a dynamic balance more precautions have to be taken. Any proposed changes or variations should be carefully calculated for their immediate as well as long-term effects. This is applicable when we are outside the system. However when we are within the system or part of the system we have not only to be careful about such changes, but also about changes within us and our behaviour within the system.

To pursue what one desires in such multi-dimensional dynamic system is a daunting task. However, Bhagavan Mahavir, the omniscient, devised a simple and universal formula — as transgression is *himsa*, keeping needs within these systemic standards is *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* conduct includes limiting your needs. Transgression has been discussed in great detail and given a very wide definition in the *Ahimsa* way of life. At the micro level, it covers all that is covered by particle physics. In biological field, it covers all things and activities of the world of the living, micro and macro. At gross levels, it covers everything and every process existing in this universe. It is a fundamental principle and can be applied with necessary variations to every field and at every level within a specific field.

Starting at the level of the dynamic and static, one should first understand that in a dynamic system applying static rules and vice versa amounts to transgression. Understanding this, one should realize that the principle of *ahimsa* has an intrinsic dynamism of application that includes the static points as well. That means that a person who has the ability to follow *ahimsa* perfectly must be, in absolute terms, so open minded and elastic that he can constantly change or pulsate.

He has to be absolutely dynamic to be able to be static momentarily according to need. These things are nearly impossible for us to understand at our mundane level.

However, we should never forget that every true philosophical principle has to be applicable at the mundane level, though of course with a necessary change in parameters. This application is the true test of its perfection. Thus, the ahimsa principle should be applicable at the most *himsak* or violent level also. Unless we tackle violence at its extreme we cannot establish ahimsa way as a workable system.

The success of any complex system, such as human society, lies in continued interaction and cooperation among its numerous components in terms of experience and thought process. Problems arise when the increasing trend of specialization, instead of honing the intellect for the benefit of all, somehow compartmentalizes the society and creates insulated static pockets in the otherwise dynamic system. Supplementing the natural clash of egos, this trend accelerates social disintegration.

DISCIPLINE

The word 'discipline' has been made so fearsome that we even avoid discussing it. This appears to have been done by those of our ancestors who could not grasp its true meaning and were inspired only by their misplaced ambitions. Those who could fathom its profundity were systematically weeded out. In hands of the ignorant and with support of the ambitious, discipline gradually transformed into negation, proscription, suppression and finally into oppression. As a natural reaction to this trend came movements of freedom from such oppression at every level in every facet of life. However, the quest for this freedom did not stop at the right

point. Like a pendulum, it swung to the other extreme. Freedom gradually transformed into boldness, abandon, imper- tinnence, and finally into wantonness. Whatever happened is for the historians to research and evaluate. But there is no reason we cannot explore true and healthy discipline again.

This quest will lead us to nature. We will have to understand the basic laws of nature, the restraints in nature and the inherent discipline of nature. We will have to learn from it. We will have to instill such natural discipline in every facet of life. Only then can peace be achieved. True spiritual progress is beyond all this. In our existing state, we lack the ability to discuss that subject in its true spiritual sense. However, even that can be accomplished through the understanding of natural discipline.

Discipline is a natural and spontaneous activity of life. If we free it from the clutches of idiosyncrasies and dogmas of religions, sects, or other organizational and institutional setups, it loses its oppressive dimension. In nature, such discipline can be observed at every step. A flower blooms at its proper time in its proper season. The gravitational laws govern the sun, the moon, the earth, and all other celestial bodies. Various activities we see around us are, in turn, occurring under the discipline of these movements of heavenly bodies. Other forms of life in the natural world are living according to their own specific disciplines. It is only the humans who, driven by their unique intellectual and creative talent, keep on transgressing that discipline.

If we discipline our abilities or capacities, all problems could be solved. And all our energies will be directed at solving the problems caused by natural forces and circumstances. Only then will we be able to devote our energies to

spiritual pursuits. Spiritual development certainly thrives in a favourable atmosphere, but it is not totally dependant on favourable circumstances at the mundane level.

To seek harmony and goodwill in one's area of activity is an intrinsic part of ahimsa. This avoidance of offending others and transgressing their territories culminates in the right practice of ahimsa. Thus, the ahimsa way of life is nothing but a natural discipline of beatitude at the mundane level and that of eternal bliss at spiritual level.

BALANCE/EQUANIMITY

A human being is very weak, but also strong. Sometimes his strength becomes his biggest weakness and sometimes his weakness becomes his greatest strength. In fact, his uniqueness lies in this ambivalence. This adaptability makes him the most efficient creature in nature.

Nature has made man highly adaptable, physically as well as mentally. Moreover, it has equipped man with a mind with infinite capacity and scope. He turns weakness into strength, which at a point again becomes his weakness. Love-hate, greed-altruism, anger-equanimity, are some strange bipolar feelings which meet at their extremities or peak. When one peaks the other is born. Extreme love turns into (and also invites) hatred, and vice versa. That appears to be the reason for avoiding extremes of both.

The meaning of purity, in Jain or absolute terms, is not just embracing the mundane good; it is to be free of good and bad alike, or nullifying bad with good exactly. Vitaraag (free of attachment) necessarily includes Vitadvash (free of aversion). In psychological terms, it means absence of sorrow in adverse conditions and absence of happiness in

favourable conditions. The goal is absolute detachment and equanimity. But these absolute definitions are applicable only at a lofty spiritual level and should not be used as a venue of escape from normal worldly duties of doing good and avoiding bad. For all practical purposes, at the mundane level the importance of equanimity lies in realization of the fact that excess of a good thing may end up as bad. Therefore, excesses should be avoided and balance should be struck in all physical and mental activities.

In a dynamic system in balance, correction is required only to the extent required by the system. If you are obsessed with just one component, no matter how useful and beneficial it is, it will disturb the overall balance of the system and prove to be harmful. We will have to try to understand ahimsa accepting the basic premise that hurdles and struggles are essential constituents of the dynamic system that we know as nature. Just believing in abstract philosophical terms that ahimsa is a basic attribute of soul we will not be able to understand much. Ahimsa is a universal and eternal truth. It is a fundamental principle applicable to all facets of life and all dimensions of the physical world. It is not just about equanimity of feelings; it is also about balance in the physical universe. Anything conducive to balance is ahimsa.

Equanimity is neither numbness nor suppression. It is reining in and regulating natural reactions with the help of sagacity. Equanimity is achieved with the strength of exercising control over feelings and the capacity to understand the causes of action together with the consequences of reaction. Not to offend is part of ahimsa and is important. Equally important is not to get offended, which is part of equanimity. Practicing equanimity helps pacify aggression, which is a consequence of reaction. .

AHIMSA TEACHING

Mahavir emphasized on the fact that as pain is disliked by us so it is disliked by all beings. The whole edifice of the ahimsa way of life rests on this basic concept. We should try to understand the importance of this statement. Mahavir is going deeply into the realm of thoughts, feelings and sentiments. It is a clear indication that *himsa* and ahimsa are essentially connected with feelings. In order to accept and follow ahimsa we should try to tackle *himsa* at the level of feelings and from there proceed to influence every field of life.

Violence is born when we respond to stimuli gained through sense organs. Other than the autonomic physiological response, this response depends on our psychological built-up. This, in turn, depends on various factors — *karma*, inheritance, basic programming (till seven years of age), social learning, etc.

To block, oppose, impede, obstruct is *himsa* in its ideal definition. And to refrain completely from doing so is ahimsa. But practically this is not achievable unless there is absolute isolation, isolation not just physically but mentally as well. It is something like absolute zero in physical terms. It is, but is not achievable. The concepts of *Maha-vrat* and *Anu-vrat* in Jainism signify the process of gradual development of purity of thought and conduct. Any transformation, progress or development necessarily has levels of accomplishment and they can be attained through level-specific practice and perseverance. This calls for concerted and continued efforts, and not just ritual indoctrination or acceptance of some sets of vows. The purpose of defining the ideal is to derive practical or approachable rules and codes for different levels

without the bias caused by judging them on scales of good and bad, excellent and ordinary, etc.

When talking of abstaining from all violence and killing of life forms there certainly is a gap between the ideal theory and actual practice. What critics generally ignore is that even where ideals are achievable, there is a gap of degree between the accomplished and the beginner. Because their criticism tends to be doctrinaire, they conveniently ignore the reality that the same rules are never applied to a child and an adult.

As far as evaluating the gap is concerned, it should be done from various angles and the best possible and practicable combination should be chosen. In case of ahimsa, the parameters could be — mental violence, physical violence, intensity of passions, number of beings involved, kinds of beings involved, needs, circumstances, etc.

Ahimsa is not just a ritual. When it started turning into a hollow ritual, on the pretext of following the ideal definition, it gradually lost its efficacy. Although ritual is an essential part of training in almost every field of life, it has a tendency to turn into a goal if the real purpose and meaning behind it are not fully understood and strengthened continually. It is like a system that is created to facilitate efficient working, but people tend to become slaves of that system and forget about actual goal-oriented efficiency. They take it for granted that just because they are following the system they ought to be efficient.

There is no doubt that diamond is more glorious and lofty than clay. But if we criticize and disparage clay by comparing it with gold to the extent of rejecting it by branding it worthless, we are committing a grave mistake. In fact,

by not trying to appreciate and acquire clay and then gradually progressing towards gold, we end up singing songs in praise of gold instead of owning it. This is the prevailing state of affairs of most of the religious sects and preachers. In the process of institutionalization of their sect, they have twisted the role of religion on the seemingly logical pretext that the spiritual quest is loftier than any mundane accomplishment. According to them, religion is exclusively for the achievement of *moksha* or liberation. Even when they talk of *ihalok-parlok* (this life and the next), their emphasis is more on *parlok* (next life) than *ihalok* (this life). They have almost alienated religion from normal mundane life, except for the mundane gains of the sectarian organization.

As *ahimsa* is basically related to attitude, it should emerge from mind, thought, sentiments, and feelings, not just from rules and codes. Rules and codes are designed to help put the feelings into practice at various levels and dimensions. However, whatever is being practiced at present should not be completely refuted and rejected, even if it is an empty ritual. This, at least, provides a basis for further progress. The healthy process is first to educate people in vows and other religious rituals as well as basic principles. Only after this should the practices be commenced. Only when the practice of normal human behaviour, social etiquette and codes is observed satisfactorily should the observance of these vows begin.

In order of importance the five vows are — *ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya*, *brahmacharya*, and *aparigraha*. The same order is seen in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* under the heading *Yama*. But a little serious and analytical thinking makes it clear that, in the context of practice, this order is reversed —

aparigraha, *brahmacharya*, *asteya*, *satya*, and *ahimsa*. The perfect observance of *ahimsa* is the culmination of the practice of the preceding vows. *Ahimsa* envelops all other vows. On perfection, all these vows turn into *ahimsa*. It appears that, at some point in the past, the actual practice of vows stagnated into mere ritual, losing its true significance and logical order. The consequence of all this is that the efficacy of healthy religious practices including the five vows is lost, and so are the desired fruits. If we really want to make these vows useful for the social as well as spiritual life, we will have to understand and practice the five vows in this specific order.

Like gold, *ahimsa* is best and loftiest. But *aparigraha* (non-possession; absence of fondness for possessions) is the starting point like clay. Unless we start practicing *aparigraha*, we will never be able to practice *ahimsa*. We will have to be contented and happy by merely singing songs in praise of *ahimsa*. Frustratingly enough, that is what most of us appear to be doing.

The first step of observing the vows is to understand the definition and importance of each of the five vows. The second step is to observe the vows, if only ritually, in a manner suiting the capacity and ability of the individual. Only after this comes serious practice, and it begins with the vow of *aparigraha* (limiting desire for possessions).

Parigraha means fondness for possessions that turns into deep desire, which in turn leads to unlimited acquisition and hoarding. Fondness for things and covetousness have a tendency to grow continuously. As they are mutually complementary, they grow very fast. Fondness enhances covetousness and covetousness enhances fondness.

How then to go about practicing the vow of non-possession? The first step is to take the help of rules or codes, resolve, and fear of sin. This is that primary level where the reasoning capacity of the aspirant is not equipped to understand and appreciate the concept, or he has no time to reflect on the matter. He merely has enough faith in the teacher or the teachings of the scriptures to do what he is told.

The second step is to understand the evil attached to covetousness and the tendency to hoard. At social level, the hoarding tendency gives rise to disparity and therefore triggers violence. At personal level, it generates stress leading to a variety of ailments. At the environmental level, it depletes the available natural resources inviting disaster. Opening our eyes to these evils, we should practice limiting our needs and assess the results. We will soon realize that *aparigraha* at a mass scale reduces violence and stress, and removes the load on the environment, allowing it to rejuvenate itself. Once we take this path and enjoy the benefits of a peaceful life, we are certain to progress towards observance of the other vows, and ultimately transcend to the spiritual level, if and when the time comes.

The Jain system of *aparigraha* has been used very successfully for more than 2500 years; it has indeed deteriorated, but is still in practice, though mostly in the form of religious charity. The deterioration in any system is inevitable with passage of time. The efficiency of a system is judged by the period taken for its complete corruption. After judging on this scale, steps should be taken to further improve and implement reforms effectively.

Does ordinary education help to prevent dogmatism turning into terrorism? No. The available evidence suggests

that it helps make terrorism stronger by sharpening the perverse intellect of the individual terrorist. We tend to confuse the role of deep-rooted sentiments with that of superficial information. The place to attack violence is *Samskaars* (ingrained attitudes). What is being taught to the children up to seven years of age is where changes are required.

Ahimsa can be promoted with comparative ease in two categories of people – those who are untouched by violence—i.e., simple and innocent—and those who are tired of excessive violence. The methods employed for these two have to be totally different.

In the first category come children and those groups that are still untouched by complexities of life or still devoid of callousness caused by the rampant violence. These people can be taught ahimsa through radical changes in their education system. Even before formal education begins, attitudes conducive to ahimsa will have to be developed. For that, *Samskaars* of ahimsa will have to be imparted. The first step in this direction is teaching ahimsa to parents.

An expecting mother's attitude during pregnancy should be positive, pleasant, non-aggressive and pious (pious meaning free of aversion, specific and general, or appreciative of virtues and virtuous people). The father should help create such an atmosphere and make necessary adjustments in his demeanour and deportment. After the birth, the child should be provided things and an atmosphere conducive to ahimsa and peace as well as free of complexities and stresses. As the child grows, his curiosity should be aroused and satisfied. He should be subtly steered to do things and acquire habits that are healthy physically and mentally and not confusing or ambiguous. The parents and other members of the

family should enhance their knowledge, especially of the things the child is curious about. They should be equipped to satisfy his curiosity if and when it arises.

This is the time to teach him to appreciate others' feelings and not to hurt them. Everything that widens his horizons should be made available to him. This all-round development should include an enhancement of his physical, mental, moral and spiritual strength.

For implementing this, the two most effective groups of people are teachers and religious gurus. They have the required power and reach to contribute effectively in this direction, provided they sincerely desire to do so. All other sections of the society can also play a constructive role by formulating methods and means of encouragement.

The second category includes those who are completely malformed by violence, are filled with violent feelings and attitudes, but are weary of violence and want some change, some rest, from tiring violent activities. They can be rehabilitated by drastic changes in their living conditions. For this something akin to rehabilitation centers for alcoholics or drug addicts will have to be devised; may be under the guidance and supervision of psychologists as well as mature religious gurus. We have to recognize openly that continued indulgence in violence is an addiction.

One very important but mostly neglected step towards the popularization of the ahimsa way of life is to change the ritualistic mindset of stringent adherence to a code of conduct and vows, irrespective of the level of the individual. This mindset is prevalent among religious and social leaders who blindly stick to the word and not the meaning of codes of conduct. Instead of giving importance to their role

as preachers, teachers and guides, they give more importance to their role as sectarian administrators and monitors. As a consequence, the inbuilt flexibility of gradual progress to higher levels of spiritual attainments evident in Jain scriptures has stagnated into calcified stumps of hypocrisy.

What is required is that every individual should be free to choose the level of practices and the pace of his progress to higher levels. Theoretically, a Jain should necessarily be a follower of the five minor vows (*Anuvrats*), but it is not practically possible to adhere to these vows all at once or by birth. Even a devout individual gradually learns and moulds himself. The general masses merely take the vows as a ritual, without proper understanding. By doing so, they consider their religious duty to be over and go about their normal activities without any regulatory influence of religious codes. The alienation of normal worldly life from the spiritual or truly religious life is complete.

There are, indeed, difficulties in the practical application of austere religious codes in their ideal definition. The best way to overcome these difficulties is to remove the exacting and sanctimonious sectarian hurdles from the practical, utilitarian and humane path of gradual progress towards the ideal.

Based on the circumstances, an individual (or a group of individuals) should define the path he has the ability to follow. He should then formulate his own rules, based on the ideal, and follow them sincerely. When he comes across some hurdles, he should start thinking about solutions and alternatives. The accomplished but open-minded seniors could provide the needed help and guidance. The only essential in this process is that he should understand that flex-

ibility is for the purpose of facilitating progress and not regress. He should ensure that the adjustment he makes does not lead to regression.

With regard to the ahimsa way of life, the first step is defining ahimsa in the context of mundane activities. Let us, for example, divide basic ahimsa into four levels in the context of destruction of life forms:

a. One should not kill, cause harm or pain or discomfort to another human being like oneself.

b. One should not kill, cause harm or pain or discomfort to animals in the visible world.

c. One should not kill, cause harm or pain or discomfort to beings in the micro-world.

d. One should refrain from destroying things and processes conducive to life and spreading things and processes that destroy life.

These are gross definitions and will have to be expanded and elaborated as follows:

a. One should be truthful, avoid stealing (of all types), remain free from vices, control one's temper, be responsible towards family and society, and follow non-possession (i.e., discipline desires and limit needs), and not exploit labour or employees.

b. One should avoid eating meat, limit the use of leather goods, avoid cruelty towards animals, and refrain from trades that employ violence or harming of beings.

c. One should gather knowledge about microorganisms, specially with reference to the activities whereby these are

destroyed. After this, one should decide which activities are essential and which are merely for enjoyment, comforts, or other extraneous purposes. One should reduce these avoidable activities.

d. This mainly includes the discipline related to environment.

Every member of society should have awareness of these points and freedom to decide where to start and how to proceed. The accomplished should set examples for others to follow and be available to provide guidance. Platforms for the exchange of ideas and experiences should be created. For the ahimsa way of life to be effective as an instrument of peace, we should understand that an Ahimsa attitude has to be inculcated and nurtured to the extent that it becomes second nature (*Samskaars*).

The heaps of taxonomical details worked out by Jain scholars of the past are evidence of the fact that all Jain practices were split into levels of competence. There is a place even for the ignorant at the lowest level. Such a person could start his practices depending on his capability and progress at any desired pace. As the laity is an intrinsic part of the religious organization of Jains, the practices begin at social level and smoothly merge with the ascetic level. It appears that, with the passage of time, the rigid system of austerities designed for ascetics cast a shadow over the flexible system designed for the laity and made it difficult to follow.

It is not that the *ahimsak* way of life has to be forced. The act of forcing is against ahimsa. It has to be presented in a way that is acceptable and attractive. There should be incentives for those who are reluctant. Mind you, these incentives cannot be effective for a long period if they are alien to

ahimsa. They have to come from within. If the ahimsa way of life is so good, and if it has been propagated by an omniscient being, it has to have real benefits that will become strong incentives. It is our own weakness that we are not able to comprehend ahimsa fully and interpret it to suit the present day requirements. Everyone who claims to be the follower of the ahimsa way of life should start working on the lines described here to find out how, and to what extent, ahimsa can become beneficial to the modern man.

Surprisingly enough, a group of London-based Jain youth has worked in this direction. They have realized the importance of Jain principles and their useful application in social life. They have developed a method for the application of the Jain system of religious practices to their normal social life. It is a practical approach and should be emulated by all Jains. (Some portions from their booklet — *Experiments with Jainism* by Atul K. Shah are included here as appendix.)

CONCLUSION

The search for peace essentially thrives in an atmosphere of reconciliation and forgiveness. Entering into any argument or debate, or discussions about contentious issues, should be carefully and consciously avoided, especially by people who know that they can be swayed by sentiments. This is because any hardening of attitude is antithetic to compromises and peaceful solutions. If we want others to respect our viewpoint, we should first prepare ourselves to respect viewpoints of others. Mahavir's *Anekant-vaad* or relativity of truth, an extension of the ahimsa attitude, effectively propels us in this direction.

The relativity of truth as postulated and elaborated by Mahavir evolves from his straightforward and simple definition of ahimsa — as you do not like to be hurt, none else likes to be hurt. From physical parameters, this extends to mental, social, religious, and philosophical domains. When there is an interaction between self and the other, this basic premise of ahimsa has to be kept in mind. As we want others to accept our ideas, others also want us to accept their ideas. As we want others to convince us fully before we accept what they say, others also want us to convince them fully before they may accept what we say. This basic premise of ahimsa is not contradicted by the principle that ‘truth ought to be accepted no matter what’. This is because, basing his teachings on spiritual experience as well as evident reality Mahavir postulated that truth is multifaceted, many sided, pluralistic and dynamic as well. It is never absolute. What we pronounce as irrevocable and absolute truth, in fact, becomes so only when it falls within some fixed parameters of matter, space, time and, most vital of all, life (the observer).

With the growing problem of violence in the modern world, there is a marked increase in discussions about *Anekant* among intellectuals as well as others. Unfortunately most of these discussions are not oriented towards finding practical ways to use this unique concept, but towards either glorifying it by its so-called copyright holders who seldom practice what they preach, or denigrating it as an antonym of firmness by its antagonists. With the advent of post-modernism and post-structuralism, some thinkers are suggesting that *Anekant-vaad* and *Syad-vaad* were mere tools of logic devised to counter the arguments of other schools. This is partially true because this was indeed one application, but certainly not the only application, of this doctrine.

All these and other debates, including those about the formation and history of this concept, are best left to the academics. We should simply judge it on its possible efficacy as a tool for social harmony and peace. When a doctor prescribes a medicine, a patient thinks only of its efficacy as a cure for his suffering; he does not ponder questions about the inventor of the medicine, or the date of its invention, or the theory at the back of its invention, and so on.

Most of the leaders and many of the movements working towards peace concentrate on solving the gravest problems. This is due to the fact that it brings greater glory. We should, in fact, tackle small problems first and let the solution to greater problems evolve on their own.

If we strive for peace and are sincere about spread of peace, we should not derive satisfaction from the increase of the strength, popularity and glory of our own group. This ultimately leads to conflict and violence. We should instead derive satisfaction in the overall progress towards peace brought about by the efforts of all groups working on the path of peace. The moment we think that the path followed by us is the best if not the only path towards peace, we are laying foundations for future conflict and violence, no matter how non-violent the method may appear.

Ahimsa is gradually becoming an excessively talked about topic. This is not surprising in times of increasing violence, but the alarming thing is that there is an upsurge in the number of talkers and fall in the number of example-setters. If someone is really sincere and serious in his concern about spread of violence and wants to do something on the Ahimsa front, he should stop preaching in words and start preaching in action. Preaching in action is to set an example by follow-

ing the ahimsa code of conduct sincerely and honestly in his own life. The irony is that some are following the ahimsa code merely for display, for the glamour or glory attached to it. We tend to forget that honest display is actually more difficult than observance. Gandhi was a rare example in modern times of one who gave due importance to display value, too. But he never sacrificed his sincerity and honesty in practicing ahimsa at the altar of glamour and glory.

For any doctrine to be effective, the gulf between preaching and abiding by what we preach has to be bridged. This duality of theory and practice can be turned into unity only by sincere and honest application. Ironically, the sincerity and honesty of application dwindle with the passage of time and stagnate into ritualism. The unity of theory and practice must be constantly rejuvenated.

After understanding the prevailing circumstances, those who are genuinely concerned and want to work for peace and the well being of humanity should present what is good or beneficial in all religions of the world in the language that modern man understands. Nothing should be force-fed, as is generally done. Evoke the curiosity of people by demonstrating the benefits of the ahimsa way of life and describing it in their own language and idiom. Once they start asking questions, give them more details. Once they realize the benefits, they will surely seek more and more.

It is my strong belief that ahimsa is a perfect system for living, a complete way of life. The life-style based on ahimsa brings about changes in every facet of one's existence. This is the reason for its efficacy in bringing about universal peace.



APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Excerpts from the booklet 'Experiments with Jainism: A workbook on Jainism in practice by Atul K. Shah; A Young Jains publication.

EXPERIMENTS WITH JAINISM

In London, the Young Jains have developed a new approach to practicing Jainism. Young people are generally well educated in science, and the western mode of teaching encourages them to question. Many are asking deep and searching questions about religion and its relevance in modern life. Much more attention is focused at schools on science and the scientific approach. Religion is rarely taught. In contrast, the Indian education system is different, and there is much more faith about religions than in the west. As a result, if we are to convince young people about the relevance of religion in modern life, a new approach is needed.

We have developed a new method of translating these principles into our own life, which is both enjoyable and educational. It does not assume any prior faith in Jainism. It is a scientific approach, thus appealing to the young. In essence, it takes one principle of Jainism at a time and pre-

scribes a method of practicing it for a limited period. Participants are required to keep a detailed record of their experiences during that period and a follow up meeting is held to discuss the results.

The most important technique given in the scriptures is the vow. It is a promise which one makes before god to observe certain principles for a fixed number of days, for example a 'pachakhaan' (a specific vow for a specific period) is taken when one decides to fast (upavaas) for one day. Irrespective of what happens that day, such as feelings of hunger, one is determined to fast and completes it. The experiments with Jainism are an extension of this central principle in our scriptures.

However, it must be emphasized that one cannot climb the stairs if one does not have the energy or the commitment. Similarly, one cannot get happiness in Jainism if one does not want to work towards it. Reward only comes with effort.

All the experiments we have conducted so far are shown in the appendix. We will now look at one experiment in detail - the experiment on ahimsa.

EXAMPLE: EXPERIMENT ON AHIMSA (NON-VIOLENCE)

This is one of the most popular Jain principles. Its common translation is 'non-violence' but in reality it is a very positive principle and means respect for all life. Mahatma Gandhi was one of the strongest supporters of Ahimsa. He believed that rather than being a sign of cowardice its practice requires great courage and inner strength. He practiced Ahimsa in all aspects of life from having no personal en-

emies to the concept of ‘satyagraha’ or passive resistance. And he succeeded.

Aim: To perform a limited test of the Jain principle of Ahimsa and evaluate its usefulness through personal experience.

Method:

1. For a period of seven days, participants should attempt to refrain from all forms of violence towards other human beings. Examples of violence include: anger, hate, gossiping, personal criticisms, evil thoughts, jealousy and of course physical violence.

2. We must try to remove violence from speech, mind, action and also not support others if they engage in violent conduct or thought. This is still a limited test because Jainism applies to all living beings.

3. The most important thing is to try your best at pursuing these principles without letting it interrupt your daily tasks.

4. You will find that there are certain techniques which help: e.g. observing silence for an hour each day; spending your evenings reading good books; trying to think about the good aspects of all your family members and close friends and to understand them.

5. All participants should maintain a good record of their experiences for their own benefit. You will find that whilst doing the experiment you will make lots of observations and develop a better understanding of the principle.

6. Please complete and return the enclosed questionnaire. A follow-up meeting has been organized at the usual venue to discuss individual experiences.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Before experiment

Q. What is your opinion on the practical relevance of Ahimsa in modern society?

A. It is an important principle and relevant to modern life. In practicing Ahimsa, one is not only calm within oneself, but also does not do harm to others.

After experiment

Q. Do you think that the Jain principle of Ahimsa is useful in everyday life? Is it practical in modern society?

A. It is very positive principle - it prevents us thinking negatively. I do not think it is possible to practice to the full extent. It helped build up my will power and have cordial relationship with friends and colleagues.

Q. Which aspects of the experiment did you find difficult? Why?

A. Trying to restrain my anger was very difficult because I am very short-tempered. Also being passive and non-critical was difficult as I am very prone to do this.

Q. Which aspects did you find enjoyable and illuminating? Why?

A. Being on good terms with people around me and not arguing or finding faults was very enjoyable. I found that by my being non-aggressive and cordial, people reacted very positively to me.

Results of experiment

1. Before experiment

Most felt that Ahimsa is a useful principle in everyday life. However some conflicts were raised by Ahimsa e.g. psychiatrists often say that one should show one's emotion and not bottle it up; during discussions on India's partition, Mahatma Gandhi offered ruling power to the Muslims in order to practice Ahimsa and stop violence and bloodshed - was this a good thing?

One extreme view suggested that it could never be used as an ideal because if we look around us all leaders or managers of successful organizations are aggressive!

2. After experiment

The following points emerged from the questionnaires and the discussion:

Gossiping— definition is a problem e.g. talking about others without hating them cannot be against Ahimsa. Gossiping is very likely and tempting in social situations i.e. where you have a group of people meeting without any serious purpose. Either these situations should be minimized or if one finds oneself in this situation, attempts should be made to reduce gossiping by shifting the discussion to a more constructive tone.

Criticism— Mahatma Gandhi once said to the Governor of India, "I am aware your Excellency that I have been the cause of much distress to yourself but I hope it will not stand between us as men." He felt that under Ahimsa one cannot and must not hate or despise the enemy, however, one might disagree with his views. Criticism should not end in hate.

Observing silence — Very useful. Forces an inner search. Helps to keep calm. Helps to talk less and do more. Gandhiji found this a very useful way of controlling his anger.

Thinking about the good aspects of close friends and family — When we are angry, we tend to dwell on weaknesses of others and do not see the problem in perspective. Performing this exercise helps in practicing Ahimsa and gives rise to harmonious relationships. “It is very useful in meetings; one should never attend a meeting with an angry mood,” a participant commented.

3. General comments about the experiment

Most participants felt that it was a very useful principle in everyday life. However, they found it was a difficult principle, which needed gradual effort. They commented:

“Controlling my anger made me feel happy and generally trying not to hurt others also made me feel better. I enjoyed the whole week.”

“It helps to reflect on one’s actions.”

“Being on good terms with people around me and not arguing or finding faults was very enjoyable. I found that by my being non-aggressive and cordial, people reacted very positively to me.”

“I felt unusually relaxed during the experiment.”

Many found that at work Ahimsa conflicted with assertiveness; for example if your boss asks you to do something you do not want to, then you should not say no. It was decided that Ahimsa does not mean that one should not disagree with others. Assertiveness need not conflict with Ahimsa.

It was felt that it might be useful to focus the experiment even more in future (e.g. deal only with anger).

DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION OF ABOVE EXPERIMENT

The above experiment did not focus on all aspects of ahimsa e.g. walking with shoes is violent and results in the killing of insects. This was not prohibited in the experiment. However, it focused on some aspects such as anger, gossiping and provided positive techniques e.g. observing 'mauna' (silence) for an hour a day. At the end of the experiment, participants cannot claim that they will never be violent for the rest of their life. What they can claim is that they have experienced a taste of non-violence and can make their own judgment as to its usefulness in their own everyday life. They may decide to continue it and develop their own experiments, which include other aspects of ahimsa, and thereby experience its higher richness.

THE YOUNG JAINS PROJECT

We started this project three years ago when we launched our first 'experiment with anger'. We have since conducted several experiments all of which are given in the appendix. They included principles like aparigraha, asteya, tapas, satya, and of course ahimsa. Instructions were sent to our members through our newsletter and a follow up meeting to discuss the results of the experiments was held. On average about fifteen people attempted the experiment to varying levels of seriousness and we have collected some of the questionnaires which they completed. We found that the experiments were at times ambiguous and there is scope for refinement and improvement through experience.

The method of the experiments was designed by us. There is scope for improvement in these methods, but the ones shown in this booklet are a reasonable first step. When

designing the experiments, we found that there was some overlap between the various principles and this sometimes confused the real issues. For example, tapas does not necessarily mean fasting only — it can be extended to self-control of the senses. Thus it can mean that a ‘tapasvi’ should not lose his/her temper, which is similar to being non-violent. This is also part of the principle of Ahimsa (non-violence). Therefore, there is overlap between ahimsa and tapas and we cannot do separate experiments!

Jain principles were not designed to be totally different from one another, and are part of a common wider philosophy. If they overlap, it means that the philosophy is consistent and unified. It is therefore important that the participants should not get bogged down by some of these apparent conflicts between principles. Ideally, the design of the method of the experiments should be refined and focused as opposed to general and vague. Communities in different parts of the world should adapt the experiments to their own environment.

GROUP INVOLVEMENT

It must be emphasized that a central ingredient of success in this project is that it must be a group effort. For example, if there are problems of interpretation, these must be shared with other participants and if they are doing it at the same time, it is more enjoyable and rewarding. Ideally, these should be conducted with the guidance of Jain monks (or other sagacious individuals), since they are the real practitioners of Jainism. Unfortunately, in the western world we do not have easy access to monks, and thus this is very difficult.

The need for reflection after each experiment cannot be overemphasized. If one completes a work assignment or an

examination, one must know the result. This is the only way one can assess and learn from one's effort. This would point out the mistakes or the knowledge of Jainism that has been gained as a result of doing the experiment. Follow up meetings must always be held to discuss the results, and ideally, everyone should be reading good spiritual books such as Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography and books on Jainism. A suitable bibliography of books in English is suggested at the end of this booklet. The leader of the discussion group should be knowledgeable about Jainism. If one were living in a small town where there are few Jains, a good solution would be for the whole family to do the experiments collectively.

INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

The most important point about this whole experiments-technique is that it cannot be understood 'second-hand'. Each person should try the experiment first hand – only then can he/she benefit through his or her own personal experience. At the discussion stage, we often found that the experiences of each individual were different. However, the conclusions were similar. Many participants found that the experience showed how far they were from practicing the principles in their own lives. This is a very important revelation.

We found that those who did not participate in the discussions, contributed very little to the discussions. Through direct experience, one develops one's own understanding and interpretation of the religion. Experience leaves a permanent mark in one's memory.

What happens after the experiments? Do people continue these principles in their own life? Our results have shown that for most serious participants, the experiments have left a mark on their lives. They have a much better

idea of their needs, and a greater awareness of their inner violence. It has brought them closer to Jainism and encouraged them to practice the principles in their everyday life. Their approach to life has become much more positive, and it has helped them in continuing Jain work, despite busy schedules.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Jainism is a religion of everyday life. It can be practiced in our jobs, business or at home, provided we have the will to do it. It can lead us to a path of real happiness. Unfortunately, few of us practice the principles, and there are several reasons for this. Practice requires commitment and knowledge of Jainism and the techniques of practicing it in everyday life. The experiments that have been described in this booklet are one way of developing a technique of putting the principles into practice.

As an example, the experiment with Ahimsa (non-violence) was described and a detailed questionnaire was presented. The results were summarized. These showed that the principle is so profound and workable even in modern life. It is not a burden and can prove to be a source of joy and contentment for the participants. The limitations of the experiment were also explained. Ideally, the experiments should be focused and capable of being translated into practice.

Young Jains, a youth organization based in the United Kingdom, has been conducting these experiments for the last three years. They are conducted in a group and each time, a follow up meeting is held to discuss the results of the experiment. The importance of group participation cannot be overemphasized.

This would make them enjoyable and at the same time very educational. It was emphasized that for anyone to benefit from these, they should be experienced first hand. Only through personal experience can a deeper knowledge and awareness of the power of Jainism be obtained.

In the appendix, all the experiments conducted so far are described and the results have been summarized. It is sincerely hoped that this booklet will be used as a workbook and that Jains living in the western world will start to practice the principles in their own lives. In this way, the flame of Jainism will remain shining even outside India.



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