

## Foreword: Aparigraha The Humane Solution

Our age is the age of science and technology. Science and technology have done a great service to the mankind by providing amenities of pleasant living. Scientific discoveries have enabled man to master Nature. But, now, man is showing the defects of 'slave turned master.' The scientific achievements and mastery over the nature have turned man into a selfish being open to temptation. Selfishness and temptation have eroded our spiritual and moral values of self sacrifice and service to the needy. In their place is the mad scramble for power and wealth, a mad race that has endangered our social institutions, these values can survive only if we check our selfish and greedy attitudes. Lord Mahāvīra in *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* has rightly observed 'where there is inner desire for material gain and possession of worldly objects of enjoyments, there is greed. The limitless desire for power and wealth has caused man to lose his sense of respect for others. This attitude, in turn, has created a gulf between haves and have nots, and this has resulted in the loss of mutual faith and sense of brotherhood. The desire for power and possession has also given birth to the race for atomic weapons. This desire to accumulate more power and wealth is called '*parigraha*'. And not to accumulate power and possession beyond minimum requirement constitutes the principle of *aparigraha*, a constituent of *pañcayāma* of Lord Mahāvīra's philosophy. Though Mahāvīra has laid stress on the principle of non-violence (*ahimsā*) yet, he also observed that in the root of all violence and war there is the lust for power and possession. Therefore, in order to restore peace and brotherhood and to uproot violence we will have to develop mutual faith and sense of security. Every one has right to use the gift of the nature, but has no right to deprive others of using these gifts.

In Jainism and Pātāñjala-yoga system the principle of non-possession (*aparigraha*) is accepted as fifth vow, but if viewed seriously it is the first basic principle. Jaina thinkers are of the view that if this very principle is violated all other vows automatically becomes violated because at the root of violence and theft there is lust for power and possession.

According to *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* the root of all mental and

physical and mental sufferings is the desire for worldly enjoyment, therefore only detachment from the worldly enjoyment can put an end to suffering. While materialism seeks to eliminate suffering by fulfilment of human desire it can not eradicate the primal cause from which the stream of suffering wells up. Materialism does not have an effective means to quench the thirst for possession of worldly objects. It only attempts at temporary appeasement of a yearning, and this has the opposite effect of causing the desire to flare up like fire fed by an ablation of butter. *Uttarādhyāyana* states : Even if an infinite number of mountains of Gold and silvers, each as large as the Kailāsa are conjured up, they would not be able to satisfy the human desire for possessions because the desire is as infinite as the sky.

The concept of *aparigraha* does not forbid an individual to fulfil his basic needs such as hunger, thirst, etc. The fundamental message of this principle is to eradicate the desire for power and possessions and lust for sensuous enjoyments. This principle also makes us aware of every living beings' right to nature's bounty. It questions the very concept of possession, for possession implies denying and depriving the others of their right to that which is possessed. This truth is stated in *Mahābhārata* too: so far as fulfilment of one's organic need is concerned every one has the right to use the gifts of nature but one who tries to take possession of them and deprives others from them, is a thief.

Jainism is not alone in its belief that the root cause of suffering is attachment towards worldly objects and lust for their enjoyment. All spiritual traditions are agreed on this. In *Daśavaikālika*, *aparigraha* is defined as *amūrchā* i. e. the detachment. *Tattvārthasūtrā* of Umāsvāti also supports this view. Amṛtacandra also points out that he who is unable to root out the lust for enjoyment and attachment to his belongings, can not be said to have been established in the vow of non-possession, even if he gives up all his belongings. In the real sense attachment is an obstacle in the way of emancipation. Attachment is born out of 'mineness' which ultimately binds the soul. All miseries suffered by the self are born of attachments towards the alien associations and so it is imperative to abandon the sense of 'mineness' with regard to these external objects.

Jainism regards abandoning of 'I and mine sense' and attachment as the only way for self-realisation. As long as there is attachment, one's attention is fixed not on self (soul), but on not-self, i. e. material objects. Materialism thrives on this objects-oriented attitude or indulgence in the not-self. According to Jaina philosophers, the identification with the not-self and regarding worldly objects as a source of happiness are the hallmarks of materialism. It is true that by detached attitude one can free oneself from his mental as well as physical suffering. Jainism maintains that the attachment is responsible for all our worldly sufferings. The most intense *vāsanā* is called *granthi* which is nothing but a deep attachment towards worldly objects and a desire for their enjoyment. The classical term for Jainism is *Nigganthadhamma*. The term *niggantha* means one who has unknotted his *hṛdaya-granthi*, or one who has eradicated his attachments and passions. The term 'Jaina' also conveys the same meaning; a true Jaina is one who has conquered his passions. Mahāvīra says the attachment towards sensuous objects is the root of our worldly existence. The five senses alongwith anger, conceit, delusion and desire are difficult to conquer, but when the self is conquered, all these are completely conquered. There is a vicious circle in the origin of desire and delusion, desire is produced by delusion and delusion by desire. Attachment and hatred are the seeds of *karma* which have delusion as their source. *Karma* is the root of birth and death which is the sole cause of misery.

*Aparigraha*, one of the five *Pañcaśīlas* is truly a part of universal ethics. Its role in restoring peace and harmony in the world can not be neglected. It is needed to be closely associated with modern society, its economic growth, environment preservation. Consuming 'too much' or possessing 'too much' has become an object of social concern as this is a real threat to the social environment. *Aparigraha* is the solution as it means limiting consumption and acquisition.

The author of present title Dr. Kamla Jain has beautifully discussed these problems with their solution. In the first chapter of the book she has discussed consumerism as anti-human goal with various aspects of consumerism and their possible dangerous consequences. She has also thrown light on the different ways of controlling consumerism by establishing a solution in *ichhā-parimāṇa* (limiting one's desires). To

substantiate her views she has cited the views of eminent thinkers and scholars. She has laid stress on coordination of science, technology and economics with ethics.

In second chapter Dr. Jain has expressed concern over environmental degradation. She traces the march of science and technology and shows how man has learnt to control nature to suit his purposes. But nature has also provided man with the capacity to think and to understand that nature's gifts are to be used intelligently. Conservation of natural resources is as important as their exploitation. She suggests proper environmental education and the establishing of agencies and institutions which can play an effective role in preservation and development of environments resources. In this context apart from discussing environmental degradation, she has tried to view the ecological issue from spiritualistic angle. She writes, "It is to be addressed to the people that mass rape of nature can be resisted only with spiritual strength. Our spirituality does not permit us to exploit nature for our self chosen purposes (p-69). For this to happen the author suggests the three fold practical ethics with (i) concept of co-existence (ii) concept of contentment (iii) concept of making best use of available resources.

Dr. Jain also points out that *aparigraha* is a realistic practical and rational principle with solid foundation in our social system. Defining various shades of *aparigraha* she stresses that it is *mūrchā* or *āsakti* that is in the root of all possessions, internal or external.

This book helps us to realize that *aparigraha*, *ichhā-parimāṇa* is not an abstract philosophy but it is a vision of life, providing us with the solution to number of problems that society is facing today.

Dr. Jain's first book "The Concept of Pañcaśīla in Indian Thought" published from our Institute in 1983 was welcomed by serious scholars of Indology from India and abroad.

In the present work she has analysed the concept of *aparigraha* in context of present day problems. In my opinion this work is a significant contribution in the field of socio-ethical studies. I am sure that the book will be well received by scholars as well as researchers. I must express my gratitude to Dr. Kamla Jain for approaching me to write the 'Foreword' to this work.

19 August, Varanasi.

**Dr. Sagarmal Jain**