



APARIGRAHA - THE HUMANE SOLUTION

KAMLA JAIN



Pārśvanātha Vidyāpīṭha, Varanasi

..... about the book

Present day 'development', advancement, 'modernity that focus almost exclusively on science and technology poses a serious question in our minds regarding man's well being in the true sense and infact regarding his very survival. The answer to this question as the author sees it, is in *apari-graha* or *icchā parimāna* or the control of desires and material possessions. In doing so she also asks whether development, advancement and modernity are genuinely and unquestionably related to civilized human existence? In place of acquisitive and exploitative consumerism of today, the author pleads for a ethics-oriented world view. The first two essays referring to anti-human goal and risk to human survival find in the third essay a humane solution.

Using a critical analytic approach the author systematically and logically proves her point, in these three interrelated essays that outline first the dangers of the anti-human rat race and then put forward the humane solution of *aparigraha*. She, however, does hint at some of her apprehensions about the unobstructed applicability of the solution offered. A teacher of philosophy and essentially a reflective person Dr. Kamla Jain has thrown light on the issues that are very relevant today.

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Dr. Sagarmal Jain**

Aparigraha - The Humane Solution

Dr. Kamla Jain

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Dedicated
to
my revered mother
late Smt. Kesar Devi Parakh

- Kamla Jain

Publisher's Note

Aparigraha is an important principle of Jaina Ethics. Infact it is one of the principles of Universal Ethics. Its significance is substantiated by the testimony of various religious and ethical scriptures of the world.

At present when our ethical values are threatened the concept of *aparigraha* has become more relevant. As ethics is not confined only to certain commandments of scriptures or monastic codes of conduct, it includes anti-consumerist drive and environmental preservation also. It can play a vital role in containing ecological imballances.

The author of the present title '*Aparigraha: A Human solution*' has raised various questions with regard to true understanding of *aparigraha*, particularly in the context of consumerism and environmental degradation, alongwith their solutions.

We feel imense pleasure in bringing out this title. We are very thankful to Dr. Kamla Jain, the author, who prepared the manuscript and entrusted it to us for publication.

We are thankful to Dr. Sagarmal Jain who took pain in writing scholarly 'Foreword' for the present title.

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B.N. Jain
Secretary
Parshvanath Vidyapeeth

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Preface

The theme of *aparigraha*- the humane solution has been a subject of my interest for quite some time as a student of Indian ethics. I have always felt its importance and relevance in the modern society completely taken over by the present day consumeristic attitude being greatly fed by modern science and technology with its rapid advancement. The craze for newness is the order of the day. This is a society where the needs and wishes of the consumer are manufactured by the producer. Advertising stimulates the craze for consumption. This serious infection of consumerism has led to alarmingly great environmental loss. The well to do out of greed and the penniless out of the need are being cruel to our environmental assets. Thus, environmental degradation has become a burning issue.

As a genuine concerned member of a 'civilized' society, I was goaded by the desire to pen down my thoughts in these essays on related issues, from consumerism-the anti-human goal and environmental degradation-a risk to human survival to *aparigraha* or *icchā-parimāṇa* as the only humane solution.

Aparigraha is one of the five principles (pancaśīla) of Indian ethics, infact, it is one of the principles of universal ethics. All religious and ethical systems have emphasised the significance of this principle from both social and spiritual point of view. Its importance is substantiated by the testimony of various religious and ethical scriptures of the world. It is voluntary control on desires and possessions, in fact it is voluntary socialism; Which is good for this world as well as for the next. In modern times it has become fashionable to accuse religion since it talks too much about after-life or future. But a close look would reveal that some of our modern concepts of economics like 'development', 'progress', 'growth' also point towards 'future' refering only to immediate future but not to after - 'future', which is even more important.

Eminent economists, environmentalists have expressed their thoughts on these subjects in very prolific manner, who have greatly inspired and helped me to think on these related issues. An issue that shows concern for humanity is essentially ethical. Ethics does not have

to confine to scriptures or monastic codes and their jurisprudence or the spiritual exercises of recluses or mendicants. It is for all of us-the social animals. The horizon of ethics is wide enough to include anti-consumertist-drive and environment - preservation movement. With this in mind, my travel of thought from consumerism to environment degradation to *aparigraha*, finally, as a solution has given me some satisfaction of expression.

The topic of *aparigraha* has been discussed in my earlier book- '*Concept of Pancasila in Indian thought*' which has become a form of basis for the essay on *Aparigraha-the Humane-Solution* but this has come out with revised approach and added reflections.

I would like to admit, here, that my knowledge in the areas like environmentalism is limited, not in any way near to that of erudite scientists in the technicalities of environmental science. However, I have tried to express as far as possible, my main concern about drastic environmental degradation due to excessive consumerism of modern society in the following essays. I have also attempted to give a sketch of the respect Nature is given in classical Indian literature, in contrast to what it is relegated to, now.

I, strongly feel, that no one would be a better judge to evaluate this humble work than the readers themselves. At places, one may see repetition of ideas but this repetition is perhaps due to related topics discussed. However, if there is any fault it would be only in the expression of ideas but certainly not in the subjects of my concern.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Prof. Sagarmalji Jain, Director, Parshvanath Vidyapeeth, Varanasi who took keen interest in bringing out this book, without his interest this book could not have come out so promptly.

I must also express my special thanks to Dr. Shriprakash Pandey, Lecturer at Parshvanath Vidyapeeth who has not only checked the proof but involved himself right from day one in the publication of this work.

I also owe a great deal to my friends and companions who have helped me in number of ways in producing this work.

Delhi : 1998.

Kamla Jain

FOREWORD

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 Mahāvira 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 Mahāvira's philosophy. Though Mahāvira 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 Pātanjala-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 become 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. *Uttarādhyayana* 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 *hr̥daya-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

Chapter-1

CONSUMERISM-ANTI-HUMAN GOAL

“Economists tell us that today Americans own and consume twice as much as we did in 1950. Are we twice as happy ?”

Maggikramm.

This statement clearly expresses the idea that the things that we own and consume and the happiness that we derive out of our possessions and consumption are not correlated. Both modern literature and the vast and rich ancient Indian corpus of texts repeatedly state that happiness does not come from the things that we possess and consume. On the other hand, to enrich one's life one has to streamline one's material world, one's possessions and consumption. Great thinkers have expressed the view that there is a link between accumulation for its own sake and restlessness. Nor is this just a trendy concept or fashion that has caught the attention of a few innovative thinkers of the West just for the sake of marketing it. The concept of limitation of possessions and desires is one of the fundamental principles of both Indian and Western ethical systems. It occupies a significant place in Indian ethical literature, where it is discussed systematically and in substantial detail, showing how unlimited desires and possessions can hamper one's spiritual growth. This, however, will be discussed in a separate essay. At present 'consuming too much' and 'possessing too much' are being discussed : these are issues that affect our social environment, and jeopardise our social existence, just as environmental degradation (meaning degeneration of the physical environment) affects our physical survival. Environmental degeneration may be attributed to the population explosion, but an objective reflection would reveal that it is more because of the consumeristic behaviour of the urban rich. The twin problems of physical and social environmental decay have, therefore, common consequences and should be taken serious note of, where we have the acute problem of population explosion.

The Meaning of Consumerism

The term 'Consumerism' is derived from 'consume' which literally means 'to exhaust', 'to waste', 'to destroy by wasting'; this

literal meaning of the term throws light on its negative implication. The term 'consume' should be differentiated from the term 'use', which has a positive implication; 'to use' means to put to some purpose. A consumerist is not a user. The terms '*Upabhoga*' and '*Upayoga*' in Sanskrit also show same difference in their meanings '*Upabhoga*' is 'Consumption', 'enjoyment' and 'pleasure', and '*Upayoga*' is 'Use', 'employment', 'service'. It would, therefore, be wrong to use the two terms interchangeably. Thus, the philosophy of consumerism reflects its dependence on 'wasting' or 'exhausting' a resource. This philosophy is based on purely amoral principles, where the principle of self-interest is predominant, and social welfare occupies secondary place. So, those who have concern for society and its welfare rate consumerism negatively. The so-called achievements of the select few are understood by them to be like colourful patches on a large sheet of grey paper. For those who think of society as an organic whole consumerism does not have much to offer.

Degradation of the physical environment and that of the social environment are related issues; we cannot deal with either of them in isolation. The problems pertaining to them will not be seen clearly and in perspective if any one of them is left out. The problems and consequences of consumerism are problems of the social environment, but physical environment cannot be saved without saving social environment. An awareness of this fact and a keenness to preserve the social environment is being noticed in the West specially in U.S.A. According to a recent poll, 'more than 75 per cent of Americans claim they would love to simplify their lives, work less, collect fewer possessions and devote more time to family and other meaningful pursuits.' It is no wonder then that researchers in this area have pointed out that 'the simplicity movement is one of the top money-making trends of the 90's'. This, again, may be a fad or just a new concept giving a thrill in thought and action to the American mind. But to a serious-minded futurist it is certainly not so.

At present, our social environment is an environment of abundance and our physical environment is an environment of scarcity.

Helga's Dream Castle

HOME IS THE WARRIOR-
PAINFULLY LADEN WITH
A LARGE LOAD OF LOOT-
WHAT'S HE GOT TO BE
SO CHEERFUL ABOUT?

OH GOOD! YOU'VE
GOT MY DINING ROOM
FURNITURE AT LAST!



IT HAS COST HIM DEARLY IN
BITTER BATTLES ALL OVER THE
WORLD!



NOW HELGA'S LITTLE COTTAGE
IS COMPLETELY FURNISHED



NOW THE HOUSE IS PACKED
FROM TOP TO BOTTOM...
THAT IS WHY HE IS SO CHEER-
FUL... THERE IS NOTHING
MORE HELGA CAN
ASK FOR...



I WANT A
BIGGER
HOUSE!



ENDLESSNESS OF DESIRES

Increase in the former means decrease in the latter; as the former becomes more and more abundant, the latter becomes more and more scarce. This relation of inverse variation shows that they are causally related. Thus environmental concern and the anti-consumerist drive, have something in common.

Factors leading to consumerism; views of eminent thinkers:

The consumeristic-wave is a product of the post Industrial-Revolution period. With Adam Smith's views of economics and also Keynesian economic thought, western society took a marked stride towards consumerism as if this was the final goal of life. These ideas were intellectually glamorous. 'Good' meant 'happiness' or rather 'pleasure' to these thinkers, and happiness meant only goods. Thus 'good' got translated into 'goods'. Science or rather 'scientism' to use Krishna Chaitanya's words, and economics ran parallel and worked as like-minded brothers who equated 'good' with 'goods' while the father discipline philosophy, to be exact, ethics, of these two brother-studies looked on helplessly in horror and bewilderment, the grown up sons having a common goal would not bother to look at the experience and maturity of the grand old man.

The movement towards simplicity has never been superficial or unnecessary. It has survived all weathers and all ages for thousands of years in India. Today there seems even greater need for this because of the pompously aggressive roles played by scientism and economics. The stress of 'too much' and 'too fast' with 'too little' regard for balance is putting incalculable pressure on ourselves and on the earth. It is becoming increasingly clear that the formula of good = happiness = goods is taking us to the next phase, i.e., goods = unhappiness = psychological pressure or anxiety. The alarming consequences of environmental pollution will be discussed in Chapter 2. The consequences of consumerism or of 'too much' are no less alarming: heart disease, blood pressure, diabetes, paralytic strokes are in most cases diseases of 'too much'. So the concept of richness in terms of goods is thus being re-examined, and new thinking is emerging in a new light where man should be understood as 'rich in proportion to the number of things he can do without'. This is in fact,

the definition of a recluse or a sanyasin. The ascetic's life of meditation is for the few and that of an active householder is for the many, so instead of taking the extreme view it is sensible to take a moderate view. This essay does not therefore remain a purely theoretical discourse which would alienate the masses; on the other hand, it would serve a better purpose if it could provoke more people to think that it is futile on the part of the rich to go on collecting more and more, or of the not-so-rich to join the rat race.

It is not difficult to find literature on the ills of consumerism and environmental degradation as numerous writers and thinkers have written brilliantly on the subject but if such thoughts come from the category of thinkers who are well-known economists themselves, they are likely to attract more attention. If the modern economic ideology is attacked by eminent economists themselves, it would carry more weight than if it was criticised by a believer in renunciation. Among such critical writings two important works need mention. *The Affluent Society* by J.K. Galbraith and *The Cost of Economic Growth* by E. J. Mishan. These works look more like works of practical ethics than just critiques of modern economic thought. These economists, who are so well-versed with the complicated principles of economic theory have very forcefully and convincingly questioned the relevance of the dogmas religiously preached by the gurus of economic growth. What is now required is the understanding and zeal to say that these accepted concepts of economics are in fact only dogmas and that they are outdated in today's world.

The economic philosophy of the last two hundred and fifty years can be credited to Adam Smith's ideology as expressed in his *The Wealth of Nations*. His ideology of self-interest for self-promotion combined with the development of science and technology is responsible for an attractive economic philosophy but is one that lacks human values. The concept of self-interest as the motivator was justified and was given a proper shape in Jeremy Bentham's ethical hedonism around the same time. He derived 'ought' from 'is' and from 'self-interest' the 'interest of all'. His ethical philosophy is summed up thus : 'We do desire pleasure, therefore we ought to desire pleasure'. He derives his ethical hedonism

from psychological hedonism. His main thrust is on the pursuit of self-interest which he believes will automatically lead to the good of society. Thus the ideologies of ethics and economics began running parallel to each other and it is this combination of Adam Smith's economics and Bentham's ethics that is causing concern now. Individual 'needs' and 'necessities' got translated into advantages. The force of this ideology gave it the form of a dogma, which marked the beginning of a social evil leading to the present day pursuit of self-interest and pleasure in accordance with the ideals of economics; the interests of the society were made secondary and that of the individual became primary. This economics was 'revered as mechanics of utility'. Maximisation of personal gain was rationally justified: implicit in this was the philosophy that other individuals are only instruments or means in one's personal ends. Equally when the ethics of 'pleasure' was transplanted into the world of economics, it got equated to the ideal of 'having more' rather than 'being more'. Thus began man's journey towards self-destruction.

Self-interest or the pursuit of material prosperity or worldly pleasures also existed in ancient Indian philosophy. Cārvāka - the philosophy of 'sweet words' (Cāru=sweet vāk=words) held *artha* and *kāma* to be ideals and advocated the goal of personal happiness through a life of indulgence. However, Cārvāka was a solitary exception to the more prevalent schools of philosophy propounding altruism and the ethics of self control and holding out the goal of Mokṣa to the acolyte. Significantly Cārvāka did not survive as a living faith, whereas other systems continued to prevail with their rich traditions.

Let us return to our discussion of the myths and dogmas of economics with their emphasis on the expansion of economic output and income, and the underlying principle that all social ills specially poverty can be cured by more and more production. Such economic theories neglected education, health and recreation. The neglect of these was real cause of deprivation. The emphasis on production as the panacea for all economic imbalances implicitly paved the way for 'affluence' as the economic ideal or the only remedy. In turn this made consumerism as the only commanding force. The rationale of production in such a

system is the urgency of consumer needs which have to be aroused at all costs. Maximisation of wants leads to maximisation of goods by production: the spiral has to go on undisturbed. Production then is not for real needs, but for created needs and wants, since the goal lies only in production and more and more production. This made economics completely divorced from its normative aspect. Yet, this is an aspect with which it should be primarily concerned, for as Alfred Marshall has said, economics is a science of human welfare and 'an economist like every one else must concern himself with the ultimate aims of man'. Modern economics, however does not distinguish between necessary and unnecessary and important and unimportant goods; the legitimacy of desires is not in its purview; it ignores the difference between essentials like food and basic needs, and inessentials such as a good automobile and a plush house. Moreover, ignoring this difference was justified on the grounds that production generates employment for the people. Thus production and employment became the key factors in the economics of 'affluence' and 'development', where variety rather than quantity became the aim of dogmatic economics. The irony is that production is defended not because it satisfies wants, but because it satisfies created wants. The urgency of production has completely replaced the urgency of wants or the number of people to be satisfied by production, and 'one man's consumption becomes his neighbour's wish'. This demonstration effect or keeping up with the Joneses becomes central to people's lives, trapping them in a vicious circle. Massive publicity, high-tech advertising and salesmanship are the methods used by such producers to sustain themselves, but none of these ways of sales promotion have any relation with independently determined primary desires.

So much can be said on the culture of advertising and its overall impact on economic and psychological side of the needs, and on how the cost of advertising affects the price of an essential consumer good. What is the rationale of a brand of salt or *atta* to be advertised on hi-fi electronic media? To what level of human intelligence do these advertisements cater? Are they merely pieces of amusements/entertainment or do they create true awareness? Many more questions may crop up in our minds.

Another important pitfall of the economics of affluence is the persistence of inflation, which throws individual, family, and social budgets out of gear. 'Inflation, earlier had been an outcome of wars, civil disorders, famines, natural disasters. In recent times, it has acquired new habits, it persists in periods of peace and rising prosperity. Everyone deplores the failure of effective action against it, but no one suggests a remedy... Everyone agrees on the importance of stable prices but no specific action or serious suggestion is made to remedy this evil. It simply confines to conversation.....'"¹

The effects of continuous inflation not only confine to the economic side of the individual's life. They have great bearing on his psychological side too. The desire to acquire more and more in terms of both goods and money, is in direct relation with inflation, since what one has as 'sufficient' today is insufficient tomorrow, and since 'today' is of very short duration and 'tomorrow' is of a very long duration, one cannot sensibly forego 'tomorrow' for 'today'. Thus the unseen 'tomorrow' becomes very powerful in comparison to the seen 'today', creating feelings of anxiety and insecurity. This feeling of insecurity could be a reason for the individual's covetousness, greed, lack of self-control, all of which can lead to mental disturbance and anxiety amongst the masses. This psychological state is bound to have repercussions on man's moral plane. A very small group of people, however, may remain unaffected by the inflationary trend, and they are the ones who have significant control on economy. Their argument may be that inflation could be controlled by more and more production, -many economists adduce similar solutions, but as Galbraith has suggested and logically explained, this is a very superficial solution; because more production would mean more and more nurturing of created wants; and an increasing demand for a product would keep inflation uncurbed. The complexity of this problem is, therefore, cleverly handled by policy makers and those with vested interests by a policy of inaction or of postponement of consideration of the most complicated issues. Galbraith points out that though economists are able to understand this contemporary attitude

1. Affluent Society- J.K. Gailbraith

towards inflation but they are unable to change the dogmatic presumption that increased production is the remedy for inflation. So the only solution that economists are able to suggest to curb inflation is to increase inflation. Clearly then the methods of control of inflation are unsatisfactory. It is also coupled with lack of seriousness on the part of policy makers. So in the final analysis inflation takes the society to the threshold of social injustice.

Social disharmony, which Galbraith calls social imbalance, is more due to production than due to non-production. The line that divides the area of wealth and the area of poverty is actually the line that divides privately produced and marketed goods and public services. Our wealth is quite evident in the former, and scantiness or meagreness is clearly visible in the latter. 'In fact our wealth in privately produced goods is to a marked degree, the cause of crises in the supply of public services'. There is lack of concern to maintain the balance. The disparity between the flow of private goods (or the private sector) or public goods and services (or the public sector) is an indication of social disharmony. It is the functioning of public services which is the true barometer of the health of a society. For instance, if production of air conditioners grows but the electricity supply remains erratic or non-existent, then can the society be said to be healthy? Educational, recreational, health and transport facilities reflect the status of society in general, rather than a high GNP or advance automobiles. Galbraith further points out "If affluence brings a state when sophisticated cars cannot be parked, children are unable to go to good schools, suffer with odd tastes though equipped with sophisticated television sets. etc., such affluence is not worth aiming at", and such economic progress is actually social regress. A harmonious relationship between production of various kinds of goods is therefore necessary.

A balance is also necessary between what the society produces and what it consumes. Our commonsense tells us that many of our demands are complementary. An increase in consumption of one product creates a requirement for another. If we consume more automobiles we need more petrol, we need broader roads to operate them and so on. We

cannot have consumption of single isolated products. This is the logical conclusion of increased consumption. A satisfactory relationship between supply of privately produced goods and services and those of the state is what is called the social balance. The need for such a social balance becomes obvious when we see more cars than the roads can cater to. Similarly, when we notice the road congestion, air pollution, and poor sanitation around us, we definitely feel something is wrong somewhere. And it becomes clear that there is increased disequilibrium of excessive production and public services. There is yet another factor which shows social disharmony to be a function of mindless production, and that is conspicuous consumption by a few leading to social inequality and the big gulf between scarcity and abundance. The existence of this inequality has been accepted by us as a reality and we feel that nothing can be done to overcome it. This apathy is a disturbing sign. Social harmony can to some extent reduce the gulf between scarcity and abundance. This gulf can be bridged by production of socially desirable goods meant for the masses rather than by the production of unimportant goods meant for a select few. The aim here is therefore not to attack production but to ensure the right kind of production of the right kind of goods. The attack is on the production of goods that are irrelevant but are made to see as very relevant. It is here that the fallacy lies, and it is here that the gulf between scarcity and abundance widens. If people will not see newer and newer things every day no catastrophe would befall on them but it will certainly be very close to them if the craze for new things continues, with scientists, technologists, industrialists and then ultimately with the consumer. The new and different has taken the place of one of the supreme values of mankind i.e. beauty (*sundaram*). Aesthetics seems to have shifted its goal of beauty to the goal of 'new' and 'different'. It is this that has produced a crazy society. The lines of Keats, 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever, its loveliness increases, it never passes into nothingness', seem to have themselves passed into nothingness. They have changed into 'A new thing, good or bad, is a joy for the moment'. There is nothing like a 'thing of beauty', and there is nothing like a 'joy for ever' in the present economic set-up. Terms like 'new', 'change', 'modern', 'dynamic' have become cardinal virtues, as

if they offer us salvation through science. On the other hand, 'welfare', 'well being', 'satisfaction', 'happiness' have lost their place in economics; though, they may still embellish literature and poetry, which do not offer much towards the livelihood in the modern sense.

The process by which wants are synthesised is a source of economic instability. Productive energies should serve the whole span of man's wants. This is a step towards greater social balance, as well as mental balance of the individual.

The concept of 'growth' in economics has become a kind of fetish. E. J. Mishan very rightly calls it 'growthomania'. He also points out that there are certain other concepts that have misled society. Unfortunately, these are being used as if they are the most scientific ways of explaining economic well-being, whereas the truth is that neither do they explain well-being, nor do they relate themselves to economic well-being. They push society to a state of illusion, a form of '*māyā*' (though restricted to the economic aspect only). One such concept is Index-economics. Mishan says we are far too preoccupied with Index-economics, - the state of our foreign reserves, export-performance, price-movement and other economic movements - and their bearing on the health of the economy. The topmost issue of social-rationale of highly developed economies is nowhere on the agenda of those in authority. There is a need for a re-examination of the old economic presumptions about competition, about free trade, expanding markets and economic growth. He says, 'my pessimism with economic growth has gone deeper with years'.

There is another hurdle which needs to be overcome at the level of policy-making, and also at the general awareness level that 'there is no choice'. This sense of lack of choice is again a myth, the reason for its acceptance is probably the lack of determination to give it a serious thought.

Areas of Consumerism

There are some glaring examples of dissatisfaction -creating industries such as the fashion industry. Anyone who pauses to think

would realise how futile such ventures are socially, and would perforce ask what we are heading towards? Day-to-day changes in fashion design is a wasteful exploitation of human imagination and at such cost ! How do such choices help mankind ? When one sees a number of things instantly, one experiences instant thrill. Soon, however, this thrill changes into confusion as to what to choose. When the choice is finally made it gives immediate satisfaction, but in no time it changes into an unending dissatisfaction. Is there any link then between 'too much choice' and welfare ?

Though choice is fundamental to human nature, but it means making choices between good and bad, beautiful and ugly, right and wrong. The choices that we are facing now, are between one irrelevant object and another, and from one dissatisfaction to another dissatisfaction. 'Obsolescence is artificially created in otherwise perfectly satisfactory goods'. A critic of this analysis would say that this has always been so, there have always been fashions and changes in fashions, so why do we protest so much about this now? It is the rapidity or rate of change and globalisation of the concept due to hi-tech publicity reaching the masses too soon which is disturbing. It disturbs a large number of people in society for whom these things are absolutely beyond reach. It does not just create ripples but creates a commotion and a storm in the minds of all and sundry. Such a social environment leads to antisocial activities and even crime. This would be accepted as an outcome of economic growth. But does this anywhere match the older definition of economics as a science of human welfare ? Can we afford to be so indifferent to value-based economics ?

Some measure of constraint would improve social welfare. The literal meaning of the term 'economy' is well exemplified in constraint. It means managing one's resources in such a way that one gets maximum satisfaction. It is this alone that will reduce the craving for more and more, and with this a more durable satisfaction will be experienced, a satisfaction much closer to social welfare. The conventional economic growth rationale is not so much for increase in welfare as for the increase in one's relative status in the economic hierarchy. The more affluent the

people the more covetous they need to be. 'An achievement-motivated' person may be kept running hard to the last day of his life. There is continuous restlessness to achieve something better and better. To some, this restlessness itself may be a driving force as a weapon against the dullness of life. Even this dullness is a negative characteristic symptomatic of comparative attitude that one develops in a rich society. So organised pursuit of science and technological advancement is very likely to destroy the essentials of man's well-being. Economic growth tends to lead to lack of social welfare and then to social disintegration.

The principle of competition in economics also needs to be re-examined. How much does it help in economic betterment? How much does it harm social and psychological well-being of people? The spirit of competition is exalted. But very clearly, it puts the 'individual' prior to 'society'. This spirit enters the psyche of the people, making them more and more selfish and self-centred. The organic unity of society gets blurred when too much competition enters the economic field, where it may take a crude turn. Even in non-economic fields, too much of competitive spirit destroys mental peace. Academic institutions of excellence witness the competitive spirit of their alumni leading to suicidal tendencies and other mental disorders. The main cause of this is that they never accept enough, enough would never suffice for them. In fact, enough would never suffice for production-based economies.

Other Areas of Consumerism

Consumerism is not confined to economic goods and objects of luxury such as fashions and automobiles. The advancement of science and technology has made consumerism capture some other fields also. The consumerist psyche in fact is based on the desire for newness, for change or for the 'different'; excessive competition is therefore an essential part of it. It is, therefore, worth noticing that the areas which in appearance are non-economic are governed by consumeristic attitudes. For example, the field of news and views in the electronic media, television etc. is powerfully governed by speed. The aim is that the news and views should reach us as fast as possible. The speed makes it such an expensive item that lakhs and lakhs of rupees are being spent on

grabbing the news items. These items incur such heavy expenses that the resource (funds) for these expenses are to be generated from very high-fi advertisements on the electronic media of such simple items of necessities like *atta* and salt. The source of this huge expenditure on advertisements is the pockets of poor consumers. Simple news items, budget bulletins or election analyses have become such big consumer items that different news agencies on the electronic media, specially television, buy them at whatever cost they deem fit, since they know that the product would sell with its full colourfulness and variety. Objectively speaking, if these news items reach the public a few hours later, what difference would it make? But, still, in our present set-up in the age of speed and glamour it has become imperative to get it as early as possible, with a great deal of fanfare. Essentially, this urgency originated with our very first social or political right, i.e. the right to information. This right to information has however been changed to 'the race to information' with our most modern technology. The agencies spend so much and work so hard to grab the news and systematise it. The question for us to ponder is : is it worth so much money and effort?

These same features are noticed in other programmes of the electronic media. All television channels are flooded with innumerable serials attracting a large number of viewers, with somewhat similar themes trying to feed or over-feed human emotions. Too much material is being served to the viewers, playing with their emotions, and as such may later lead to either a form of emotional disturbance, or emotional immunity or emotional bankruptcy; these are the negative consequences of excessive material. Horror, Terror, Suspense thrillers in bulk supply are readily available to the impressionable minds, that are in need of emotional stimuli. But such material goes far beyond satisfying their emotional hunger and becomes finally a need in itself. The needs for these stimuli are created rather than actual as they are created by the fashion industry. Psychological disorders and crimes of all kinds are well-known consequences of 'too much' in this field. So 'human heart-handle with care' is changing into 'mechanical heart-handle with

technology’.

In the field of sports, the competitive spirit and zeal of the sportsmen of national and international level make them establish newer and newer records of achievements in their respective fields. Their achievements are mesmerising. Weight-lifters, boxers and others requiring unusual physical energy do not confine to their real physical energy and strength; many of them cross the barriers of norms by artificial methods such as intake of harmful drugs. The high aspirations for their goals cost them dearly on their physical health in the long run, but still every new record arouses a higher and higher goal in their minds with a complete neglect of physical and moral health. This, again, is a reflection of the consumerist psyche - ‘grab as much as you can’.

There is another area in which consumerism has free play and that is the area of religion. This is an area which ought to spearhead anti-consumerist movement and be very effective. But ironically, this area too has succumbed to the current trend. We notice that religious functions are celebrated with much pomp and show; wealth and money get the best chance to display themselves, and ostentious decorations and related services for religious functions are as eye-catching as for other social functions like weddings, birthdays etc. Religious gurus say so much on what the scriptures say about supramundane and related concepts, but it is difficult to trace something in their discourses against consumeristic modern behaviour. On the contrary they themselves are trying to become consumeristic and are falling in the same trap. Each religious function has a different taste, colour, and sight, since ‘different’ alone is beautiful. This is the mantra that has pervaded all walks of life; the once - sacred area of religion has also become a prey to consumerist philosophy instead of remaining the stronghold of simplicity, contentment and self-control that it once was.

The Economics of wastage

‘The greater the wealth the thicker will be the dirt’. These lines succinctly throw light on the economics of wastage. Wastage has become an essential aspect of our present day economic system and affluence. It

makes one realise that economics is changing into diseconomics, and instead of affluence helping the society in general, it helps only those who do not need wealth. The concepts of 'economy' and 'wastage' are, opposed to each other. If the term 'economy' refers to 'frugal' 'judicious expenditure of money', 'thrift' or 'saving' or 'the use of money with prudence', then where is the room for wastage. But if an economic system allows and glorifies wastage, then clearly non-economic factors have been introduced in a field, which originally meant to train people for social welfare. A system where more production of random articles of use for a select few and employment opportunities for some who would later deprive many others from similar employment opportunities does not seem to fit in with the social welfare scheme of economics. In such economic thought the concept of human welfare is marginalised and is made to shift to the domain of social service and social work which is thought to have nothing to do with economics.

It has to be understood that the culture of wastage is a consequence of the economic thought which favours 'more and more production.' This is not only ethically wrong but also economically wrong. The developed countries are learning and realizing this, since they are responsible for spreading this culture. The developing countries like India, instead of aping them, should independently work for an economic system in which wastage is not acceptable in the name of economic growth. The central principle of maximizing satisfaction of needs with minimum resources should govern us at all levels, the individual, familial, societal, governmental and administrative. The normative aspect of economics is not deleted from it and ethics (more specifically altruistic ethics) and economics should go together.

Consequences of Consumerism

The spread of consumerism is rooted in a very powerfully publicised thought that more and more production is the panacea for eradicating or atleast reducing poverty, and that this alone will bring about a social and economic change. This theory has however, been seen by thinkers and analysts to be full of limitations, though it got a big boost with science and technology developing at an unexpectedly

superfast speed. The sea-change in economic thought clubbed with science and technology (of post - industrial revolution period) led to newer and newer and more and more attractive things for the consumer. The world of consumer articles has become so over-powering that no average person can remain unaffected by it or indifferent to it. In such a set up indifference to the world of objects is only seen in the present scenario as a psychological abnormality as a result people with limited means are developing such traits that are inimical to the individuals in particular and to the society in general. Disturbance of mental peace, envy, exploitation of others, jealousy, and sharp increase in violence and terrorism are the natural consequences of growing consumerism. Each one of the above-mentioned consequences is making its entry like gushing waters, uncontrollable by law makers, law enforcers, law regulators and even by law-abiders (since they are in such a minority that either they maintain absolute silence or become victims of the net spread by the majority). Everyone in these categories is, after all, part of the same society, so all become victims of the menace afflicting the society. Law-makers, law-enforcers, law-abiders become law-breakers. The crime rate is becoming alarmingly high; newer and newer methods and techniques are devised by criminal to evade the clutches of the law. Society is on the verge of collapse. It may be thought that this is only magnified pessimism and the number of people affected by such moral degeneration is very small. But such assessment of society in terms of numbers is incorrect and misleading. Lack of seriousness on such issues is a reflection of our mental and social state. Consumerism with its hypnotising characteristics makes people blindly imitate others, taking the shape of a kind of hysteria in people. Economic growth thus leads to psychological and moral degeneration. The developed societies have become victims of this degeneration and the developing societies in a subtle way are accepting this, since it brings along with it the so called 'development'. The irony is that instead of accepting them as serious ills, they are accepted as natural outcome of economic growth. It is like accepting heart disease as the disease of the well-to-do or affluent and disclosing it to everyone unhesitatingly - even showing off as indicators of higher economic status. In contrast, people tend to be secretive about

the mental disorder of a member of the family since this has a social stigma attached to it.

One of the most dangerous outcomes of consumerism is corruption at all levels. As desires are on the increase quantitatively (in the economic sense), the means to satisfy these desires have become indiscriminate and arbitrary and even ruthless. The objects of desires have to be procured, whatever be the means. Increased consumption would mean more and more 'under the table' payments for getting different jobs done, which would further accentuate the demand for such money, and the corruption spiral would continue. This would reach a stage that can be expressed as 'If you are caught while taking bribe, then get yourself acquitted by giving another bribe'. This is the state perhaps at the lower level, when there is a desire for something that cannot be satisfied with the given means, but when we look at the state of corruption at a higher level, the process gets reversed. A huge quantity of purchasing power is at the disposal of people at such levels (in the form of money or contacts etc.). They have the means, but they do not have specific objects of desires, but suddenly they start craving for fancy objects of desires, as they have the means. Earlier they did not even know what they would desire. Now, they fully know their means, so 'anything on earth' may crop up as an object of desire now, or in their lifetime or their childrens' lifetime or their childrens' childrens' lifetime and so on. Thus the means to satiate the desires has become the end. The picture of the 'objects of desires' is hazy but the picture of the means is crystal clear. Things which do not exist anywhere in one's mental field are soon created as soon as one has the means to have them. The growing menace of the involvement of top level bureaucrats, politicians etc. in countless scams is a sad commentary of the state of corruption. Even to get justice in the court of law, one has to use unjust means. This is the state of the system in which we are living now. Order has changed into disorder, *ṛta* into *anṛta*. In such an order man is becoming more and more self-centred and individualistic, not only because of the self-interest by which he is governed, but also because he is becoming disinterested in the world or the system of which he is a part. The 'social man' is changing into 'individual man'.

Thus there is a marked change in the social-value system. The aim is just to procure more and more wealth and the means of procuring it is not important. A general moral degradation becomes imminent. Attraction for objects of consumption and urge for imitation become overpowering, so much so that self-control and freedom from temptation become very difficult. When this state of society continues for long it becomes more and more difficult to curb it specially in a democracy (functioning with its vote bank) where drastic reforms cannot be easily brought about on the decisional level itself. Thus, the vicious circle of social imbalance and corruption has become a matter of great social concern.

The problem of population explosion also throws light on the importance of controlling consumerism. Population control is one of the most difficult areas for social reform. The enforcement of a population limitation policy at national and/or international levels is like a dream project. Stringent measures soon become unpopular to the extent of being attacked by the people and become the targets of fanatical opposition; softer measures become ineffective and die a natural death. Maybe, some day some technology could evolve to change man's reproductive behaviour, but as of now, population control programmes are extremely difficult to implement. Discussions on population control between different nations will not be able to spell out the numbers for different countries, they will not be able to establish the limits of various populations, so such discussions will be scuttled even prior to the possibility of a mutual agreement. Nor does there seem much hope for a consensus on this issue since agreements on comparatively easier problems like disarmament have not been possible. However, some self effectual devices like education and female literacy do bear fruit and therefore, are always welcome. The state of Kerala is a remarkable model that has attracted the attention of the world, but the rest of the country is far behind in achieving this goal.

A commonsense approach makes it clear that it is important to have a limited number of possessions and make them last longer, to avoid wastage and maintain the things that we have, so that the total

stock of things lasts longer for the vast population. This factor makes it all the more necessary to control consumerism. A shift from an economy of acquisition to an economy of needs is a necessity for a society which is suffering from a grave problem of over-population.

Ways of controlling consumerism

At the outset, it needs to be said that the arbitrary growth concept has to be given up in favour of a selective growth concept. We have to create conditions for work and a general spirit in which not only material gains but psychological satisfaction becomes an effective motivating factor. The control of consumerism is a multi-faceted exercise, neither easy, nor quickly accomplishable. It has to be handled intelligently, carefully and with dedication and concerted effort at all levels -at the social, state, religious, and individual levels.

Education is the first priority at the social level. It is a broad term covering a number of aspects. It includes everything such as awareness of social causes, academic learning and moral upliftment of all human beings. The contribution of parents and other family members, the peer group, the teachers, all have their role as educators. Children are so impressionable, that if they are handled with care, the next generation becomes enlightened and aware of the need for social betterment and the importance of their own contribution to the society. At this age, give and take from the society, betterment of the future, clear norms of healthy consumption can be brought home to their minds, and the use and misuse of things can become clear to them. Glossy and glitzy advertisements of consumption goods should not carry them away, positive and negative sides should be made clear to the children by the elders in the family. They should be made to see both sides of the picture, their questioning faculty on these issues should be aroused, they should be able to make connections between environmental degradation and consumeristic wastage. Children of all age groups should be made aware of the significance of control on wasteful expenditure. The craze for novelty and newer and newer things needs to be checked by judicious guidance by the parents. At the school level teachers sometimes play even a more effective role than the parents, since young children often

idealise their teachers, who become their role-models. If, for example, they are told by the teachers not to waste the stationery, they develop a psychology of being cautious against unmindful consumption and related expenditure; therein lies the beginning or formation of a good habit, which will play a significant role in their adult life. Children are often pampered with attractive goods, but it is more important that they should be given love, affection and care and sharing of quality time. The spirit of sharing and caring by all the members of the family with the spirit of equality has a more significant role in making the child a good human being or a better citizen, than does the equating of goods with pleasure or joy. Thus child psychology is one of the most important aspects of education in the family as well as at the school. This is where this task begins. Gandhiji stressed the need for character-formation. At the higher level of education the distinction between 'use and 'consume', environmental protection, the meaning of simplicity, the future of the human race, depletion of resources etc. could be made clear to them, thus their link with normative learning gets strengthened, and they also learn that blind imitation is not healthy. As a result they are able to develop control on their imitational faculties. The popular concepts of higher economic growth, increase in per capita income etc. should be understood with their limitations and not just as true indices of social growth. If these things become a part of the curriculum, children will be able to distinguish between true or false, real or apparent progress. Even education in science and technology should include this kind of education, since it relates to the survival or future of mankind. This would function as the right foundation for education, since the basis of education is the promotion of human welfare. An individual so educated is able to have a wider perspective on everything. A humanistic science rather than just a technological science would be the solution. We have almost reached a technological utopia and now a shift is required towards a human utopia. Thus investment in human beings is needed. But this investment again may just mean training human beings in the field of science and technology, turning them into technological experts rather than better human beings. In the modern sense education and training are equated only to technological training so true education is just left as

a secondary item, (as if it is an object of consumption) and therefore, it is taken as an unprofitable investment. Investment in a good industry boosts production and if it does not boost production it goes waste and therefore is a loss to the economy. By the same logic, investment in human beings is viewed as an investment in machines-i.e. it should be productive. But truly speaking, this is not the purpose of education; education is not just technological expertise. Education without humanistic values is no education at all. The situation becomes grim when education itself loses its importance in the affluent society, when money in contrast to education becomes more important, and where only, Lakshmi is revered and Saraswati is neglected. But this attitudinal catastrophe can be averted by education alone. The skill in the field of natural sciences needs to be diverted towards the social sciences, where human beings are at the centre. If all this enters into our educational system the preliminary background for a better and more durable future for mankind would be prepared.

True education or investment in true education alone can bring about a fall in consumption level with the lowering of the spirit of admiration and emulation of the objects of consumption, leading thereby to a reduction in creating demands for them. Thus consumerism will be contained. The focus then would be on production of objects that are related to man's basic wants rather than on created wants for a fraction of the society. It is education alone that can give a holistic view of human needs and their satisfaction. Education refines our tastes and sharpens our senses and ability to discriminate and thus controls the tendency towards imitation in display of wealth and encourages a more independent and objective attitude to control wants-creation. Further, education enables us to see that technology should not control us, but that on the contrary, we should control technology. Thus the obsession with more and more production can be streamlined and contained by education alone.

This suggests that the ray of hope lies in education. It may not impress many of us, since the meaning of the term education has developed a number of ramifications, but in the long history of human

civilisation education, and educators have contributed a lot in this field. Vedas, Brahmanas and Upaniṣads, *gurus*, philosophical thinkers, progressive religious reformers, Buddha, Mahāvīra, Christ, Mohammad, Gandhi, all genuine moral preceptors have helped in this cause. The goal becomes clear and the message becomes loud only by education, educator and the educated.

Thus, the vicious circle of desires and created desires needs to be broken. Even though sudden and drastic changes may not appear feasible in the near future, they are not so remote either. After all, things have completed a full circle in the developed West where people have realised that one can buy everything but one can not buy happiness. It is not clear, whether science will be fought with more science or by abandoning science; what is clear is that an attitudinal change is a must.

The state level handling of society against consumeristic philosophy can also be very effective for two important reasons. (1) Consumeristic philosophy is based mainly on imitation, which is more of an external reason, so it has superficial foundation for itself. (2) The state has the entire administrative machinery in its hand and the most important part of this machinery is the making and implementing of policy. In fact, the state dances to the tune of policy makers. The making of laws, implementing them, and watching them function smoothly is the job which is handled by the state. So some kind of a state control in accordance with the special conditions of the country could also give positive results. If everything is left to the individuals, self-interest is likely to predominate. Things are better if on issues of social relevance, the state acts with objective alertness rather than inertia or apathy; this holds the key to change. One simple example can be given here. In India, traffic jams are a common sight and the plight of every one. Is it impossible for the state to stop the manufacture of bigger cars? Why should they be allowed to be manufactured at least for domestic use and flood the markets? Three big cars take the place of four small cars, when the seating capacity is almost the same. Is it impossible to take a decision on such an issue considering the worsening situation of traffic? There can, of course, be less expensive and more expensive small cars,

since status consciousness, an aspect that has to be fought, can be dealt with in a graduated manner rather than as an immediate priority. If smaller cars become more expensive than the bigger cars, the rich will have their egos satisfied by owning these expensive cars, which will help to some extent in reducing traffic jams. Though the problem of consumerism remains, atleast, the problem of traffic jam could be solved to some extent. Similar ways could be discovered to fight consumerism in other areas at the state level.

Increase in production and decrease in variety of things produced is perhaps best handled at the state level. The concept of economic growth could also mean horizontal growth rather than vertical growth, the suggestion here is therefore not an economy without growth, but one that caters to much wider section of society. Further some form of internationalism in areas of global concern is also desirable, where rigid nationalism may not provide sufficient solutions. But this is possible only if there is a sincerity of purpose in the international community. There is a big 'if' here. Nor is the suggestion new, having been made by several thinkers at least for the last forty or fifty years.

At the religious level, practical ways to contain consumerism can be worked out. As is well known, religious sentiments are very fragile. Many religious teachers have an intoxicating appeal for the masses. They can use their important status to streamline the thoughts, wishes or desires of their disciples. Masses may not be moved and changed so much by intellectuals, as by religious gurus. So instead of using their platforms for preaching religious fundamentalism, they can use them for preaching the anti-consumeristic philosophy and way of life. Unfortunately religious gurus are themselves entrapped in their own style of consumerism. Religious functions are becoming big consumeristic exercises. If the emotions of the masses must be played upon, they should be played upon for a more sensible cause which can help bring about a great social change. With somewhat common ethical principles of religion, religious gurus can thus help to curb the consumeristic behaviour of people. They can also use a common platform, if their egos do not come in the way, to reach the masses.

Thus, it is suggested that religion and religious gurus can do a lot in curbing consumerism. Though religion is generally understood as merely ritualist, it has a more important characteristic aspect - ethics. In fact ethics is central to life and social life. Environmental protection, simplicity in life, containing consumerism, concern for human existence and survival- all these issues are essentially ethical concerns. The lasting solutions for all these problems lie in ethics and its universal principles, where social responsibility and commitment are much more important than personal success, and where we have to realise that a healthy economy cannot be bought with unhealthy human beings. This would require a fundamental change in man's contemporary character, his attitudes and his ways of living. This awareness implies a revival of his conscience or a realisation of the fact that prolonged anesthesia of his conscience would be harmful or rather fatal to his existence.

A permanent solution therefore lies in what can be called a change of heart and mind. We all know that there is a dire need to change ourselves. But the question remains : How is one to do this ? Many plausible answers can be given to this 'how.' But the most redeeming fact is that change has already taken place and with much faster speed in these last two centuries, and we are noticing the negative aspects of changes with great concern. If science has led to the changes that were unimaginable earlier, maybe a 'thinking man' brings about changes in which may lie the solution to save earth and mankind. If science can produce and invent weapons of disaster perhaps science can also invent such human regulators or governors for the human mind which are ethics oriented. Human optimism should not be blurred by the reflections of pessimism that we can only make a downward journey and that an upward journey is impossible. If robots can think and help the human race for intellectual activities, similar devices may be in our store for moral activities for making man more socially acceptable and to make the earth more livable. Dedicated scientists may be able to explore this field of research and may be able to identify some area in human body where a governor or a pace-maker like thing can be implanted. This is purely in the realm of imagination, but at least it is in a positive direction.

Voluntary simplicity

One major step in simplifying our lives for our peace of mind is to overhaul our attitudes towards possessions. We know that quite often the things we hanker after are not of much value and are frivolous, yet, we are unable to resist ourselves or our desires. This means that our intellectual capacities are not failing us, but that we are too weak emotionally to overcome our frivolous desires. The ability to overcome our desires comes from reducing the gap between intellectual understanding and emotional strength. This is possible by the practice of yoga, which includes withdrawal of senses from sense-objects. Yogic exercises are training methods for not running away from our possessions as such, but for controlling our desires to have more and more possessions. The *Gītā* aptly says, ‘abstinents run away from what they desire, but they carry their desires with them; when a man enters Reality he leaves his desires behind him.’ (Chap. 2). If few or no possessions make us peaceful then people below the poverty line should be the most peaceful and contented people. But this is not so, clearly it is not possessions that are real obstacles; the real obstacles are the importance we give to possessions in our minds. So a man whose heart has reached fulfilment through knowledge and inner experience would automatically remain unmoved by the objects of senses even if they are around him. This is true detachment, which gives a man both time and energy for more satisfying pursuits; and if we find intrinsic value in our pursuits, career, hobby or household duties, we are indeed making our lives, though simpler, rich in our fulfilment. In this simplification drive, we gradually make our needs fewer than our desires and our demand for things fewer than our needs. This is an intensive journey. It is like driving a vehicle in reverse gear, and objectively speaking reverse driving is never purposeless, though difficult, it is meaningful. This in present day economic sense would be equivalent to situation where we move from production to less production and finally to detachment by creating conditions, one after the other, such that the goal is attained. Since, everything is conditional and nothing is unconditional the process has to start as follows : (1) From more variety of production catering to only few in the society to (2) less variety in production catering to more, to

(3) less attraction for newer and newer things, to (4) less desire for aimless, conspicuous consumption, to (5) less or controlled conspicuous consumption, to (6) less variety of things in the markets, to (7) less competition among producers, to (8) less consumption of things, to (9) less wastage, to (10) less burden on the environment, to (11) less environmental degradation, to (12) less disturbance of mental peace, in other words more detachment, or more peace of mind. This is like a chain of causation for peace of mind like Buddha's twelve fold chain of causation *dvādaśanidāna* that explains suffering as ultimately caused by *Avidyā*. '*Avidyā*' is the root cause of suffering. It is time to understand the root cause of present day restlessness and to understand that genuine pursuit of well being or happiness of society is necessary.

"At present none of us do anything, we look away, we remain calm, we are silent, we take refuge in the hope that the holocaust won't happen and turn back to our individual concerns, we deny the truth that is all around. Indifference to the future, we grow indifferent to one another, we drift apart, we grow cold, we drowse our way to the end of the world." (Jonathan Schell- *The fate of the Earth*) This apathy or indifference is leading to 'too much stress' of 'too much and too fast' further leaving incalculable damage on ourselves and on earth.

If we wish to simplify our life-style we have to begin reflecting on these lines- 'how foolish it is to run from leisure by working too much'. By over working, we find ourselves not working for a living but working for a dying. The concept of simplicity is the only thing which combines altruism (well-being of all) and egoism (happiness for oneself) in our life style. Indian classical literature, the *Gītā* and the Greek literature of the great masters is full of such messages. Modern thinkers, economic analysts and futurists, also give similar messages with equal force. It is for us to take the cue for right direction and begin to act accordingly. The principles of (voluntary) simplicity and self control have a very important role to play. To give them practical pragmatic shape, policy makers have to be judicious and effective. This is difficult but not impossible. Gandhian effectiveness is not a thing of the remote past, we have very clear picture of his ability to mobilise the masses, but

this was possible only because there was a Gandhi incorruptible, transparent, zealous with a fundamental mission.

Simplicity - not an extreme

Simplicity is not just a slogan to attract people, it is a way of life, but too much of simplicity may take the form of excess and may degenerate into a kind of eccentricity which defeats its own purpose. Simplicity is different from renunciation or asceticism. It should not be a craze for giving up the things that we have. Nor should it become another race for disowning things that one has, or a fad of living on mud or rags. Simplicity is a natural habit of being with oneself so that material abundance loses its attraction. If it turns into a fad or fashion it will lose its spirit altogether. To understand simplicity is to accept it as a means and not as an end. It means only a simple life or a simplified life for better goals or pursuits, that are fulfilling and enriching. Religious devotion, humanitarian service, artistic creation, environmental activism, social change, political revolution are some such goals. Albert Schweitzer, Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa are some illustrious examples of people having such goals, who were both thinkers and doers. Every individual has his conviction and has to find his own way to simplify his life to attain the goal. The individual himself has to know and ascertain what are his true necessities in contrast to diversions; when the goal is clear to the individual and 'absorbing to the core' together with the means, his common sense is his guide, sitting on a tangent he would not be able to judge his goal nor his means. It should be clear that means are just the means not the end. If one finds it too difficult to detach himself from something, it would be sensible on his part not to exert himself too much on this fronts'. If it is a source of emotional or psychological strength, it is better to be with it than without it and the strain of detachment may harm him in the sense that his contribution towards the achievement of the goal may slow down and thus will delay the achievement. It is better for him not to be burdened and strained with too much sense of duty; even if it is there, it should be done with ease rather than with tension. In an ideal mental state duty takes the form of habit, and ethics changes into psychology. This is the

stage when one achieves one's mission. Thus simplicity begins with (1) riddance from totally irrelevant, and continues to (2) riddance from less relevant, to (3) focus on necessities associated with mental peace. This is the state of happiness with oneself and riddance from the business of material over-abundance, and removal of the obscuring paraphernalia. It is thus, the discovery of one's true self.

Practical solution in *icchā-parimāṇa*

The main problems taken up in this essay have their permanent cure in one significant principle of Indian ethics which needs intellectual awareness, practical revival, and social implementation, that is the principle of *icchā-parimāṇa* (limitation of one's desires)/ and *aparigraha* (non-possession). Indian classical tradition has offered a very systematic social system of economic growth and distribution. This system does not impose 'equality' from the outside as in communism but it brings about orderliness and acceptable equality from within, with a human consideration for others and for oneself. As *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* are the best medicines for physical fitness of the body, *icchā-parimāṇa* is the best medicine for social fitness of the individual. The solution is that science, technology and economics have to orient themselves with ethics, without this nothing is possible. We cannot afford to have science, technology and economics sans mankind.



Chapter-II

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION - RISK TO HUMAN SURVIVAL

Need for environmental concern

In the name of growing more food and providing more comforts our forests are being denuded; in the name of industrial growth we have polluted our rivers and seas, heated up the globe and depleted the ozone layer that shields the planet from harmful radiation. Environmental degradation is a grim reality that affects all our lives. Environmental concern is the common talk of every civilised citizen all over the world. But is this only an intellectual exercise of the urban elite, a topic to be discussed at international seminars, or is it somewhere close to its practical implementation?

Perhaps these issues are still more intellectual than practical. Still intellectual awareness is the first step to practical implementation. Hence it is certainly not a wrong start. Right attitude and right knowledge are definitely prior to right action for the attainment of the goal. Jaina scriptures throw light on this order of knowledge and action where right attitude and right knowledge come first and right action come later. (*Tattvārtha Sūtra* 1.1.) However, in all genuineness and honesty, we should not stop ourselves only at intellectual understanding of environmental degradation. We should practically work for controlling this. Environmental degradation is man's own creation. He is fully responsible for having generated this environmental crisis. He is suddenly becoming aware of this self made situation, a riddle-like situation from which he wants to come out. Scientists, technologists, economists, industrialists and politicians and thinkers have all realised the problem of environmental hazards and pollution- a problem that threatens man's very existence on the planet earth. This has made us more conscious than ever before of the interrelation of man and nature. Environmental pollution is simply a symptom of a grave maladjustment between man and nature. The close relation of man and nature since the prehistoric days in the sense of 'made for each other' as *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* has taken an about turn. The relation now is that of exploiter and exploited.

Having come full circle, it seems that the exploited would emerge again as a giant using his full force, and would destroy the exploiter unless the latter learns to behave.

Historically man's attitude to nature has passed through several stages. In the beginning, natural forces or the elements, such as air, water, fire, earth etc. appeared all- powerful and man always considered them as superior, so he felt the need to worship them, till he was unable to control them. He translated these natural gifts as dieties, and he could do nothing but show reverence to them. Thus religion was born out of fear (though this is only one view), so man had nothing else to do but to take nature and its elements as 'venerables'.

Gradually, man as a being gifted with reason, understood the natural forces (the elements) as causes and effects, and his attitude towards them changed. Instead of remaining a mute spectator to the phenomena of nature he became curious to know its intricacies. His religious fear changed into scientific enquiry. As he proceeded systematically with greater and greater understanding of natural phenomena, he felt his knowledge as not just passive, but as powerful. And, here began the reversal of roles, he now wanted nature to submit to his demands, euphemistically called his needs. Here emerged man the conqueror! Man became the master and nature just an obedient servant. Later, with scientific discoveries and inventions, technology developed leading to rapid industrial progress, which led to man's economic progress. His basic wants which were difficult to be satisfied earlier due to a number of hurdles, now got more than satisfied; his wants increased manifold; and a system evolved which not only satisfied wants but created more and more wants to be satisfied- the more the wants, the more the pace of created wants, the better the society, economically. This went on and is going on with dramatic changes brought about after the Industrial Revolution. More and more control on nature disturbed its equilibrium, further leading to environmental crisis and endangering man's own existence.

This state reminds one of the story of four young boys travelling together in a forest. They saw a dead lion lying under a tree. The boys

had learnt the art of 'filling' or 'stuffing' life in a dead animal just as a taxidermist would. Since they had learnt this art, three of them got very excited as they got a chance to use the knowledge they had, so that they would show the world that they had such special, high-quality knowledge. Thus they decided to 'fill' life in the dead animal. The fourth boy, though he had also learnt this art, tried to discourage the other boys from doing this since he was very scared and apprehensive as to what would happen after the dead lion came to life. But the other three boys did not pay heed to what this fourth boy was saying and just turned down his suggestion. So the fourth boy climbed the nearest tree terror-stricken, and watched what his companions were doing. The three boys went ahead with the job according to their own specialisations; one of them worked on 'filling' life, the second one gave the lion the ability to move around, and the third one gave him a roaring voice. With their effort, acumen and precision they succeeded in replacing the dead lion with a living one. As soon as the lion came alive he, like the king of the forest, started moving about roaring, and in no time, crushed and finished all the three boys and satiated his hunger. The only one who survived this was the fourth, the 'coward,' who had foreseen the consequences. This piece of fiction has a high moral to preach and throws light on how one should try to foresee and judge the consequences of one's own actions. It is here, that we are able to see that there is a world of difference between knowledge and wisdom. It is our arrogance about our knowledge without knowing its limits that is leading us to disaster.

Man continues to damage nature in the process of his attempt to control it through technology. This leads to environmental suffocation and his own strangulation. In spite of his advanced knowledge of nature, he has created reasons for frustration and is also fighting a losing battle, since he has delinked knowledge from wisdom. By too much intervention in the process of nature he has disturbed his smooth relationship with it. He has completely ignored the fact that he is a part of nature, just one drop in the ocean. On the contrary he has out of his own self-interest devised a social system which strongly favours man as the centre of all creations with everything else made for him. Instead of God telling him that he is the best of all creations he has made God pronounce that he is

the best of all creations. With his selfish anthropocentric approach he has made his life full of riches, with a great jump in his standard of living. His short-sightedness has made him indiscriminately ruin the environment of which he himself is a part. In doing so he has turned into a destructor of environment. Thus the unity of man and nature and the harmony between the two has become a myth.

The advancement of science and technology comes from the western world, which happens to be the Christian world. According to Christianity, in the hierarchy of God's creations, man occupies the highest place; everything is meant for him and he can do anything out of the lower creations of the universe to satisfy himself. Ironically this metaphysical world-view has been a kind of support-system for this ever encroaching attitude towards nature, similarly there seems a silence in respect to animal world, their status in God's creations seems to have been over looked. On the other hand, if there had been a religion which promulgates a philosophy that the entire living world is equal and all life is equally worth living even if differing in physical psychological and other forms of development¹, there would have been a kind of check on arbitrary 'expansion', 'growth' and 'development'. This does not suggest that this kind of world-view or this metaphysical or religious approach which is the essence of Indian philosophical thought would in some way stop the process of 'growth' or 'development' even in India and it would not be any less if there are sufficient opportunities to exploit the environment, but this, in India has emerged more out of competition or following a rat-race than out of original, innovative ideas as they have taken a lead in the West.

Meaning of Environment

The term 'environment' strictly refers to the physical surroundings or regional settings of the earth. It may be defined as the aggregation of forces and influences acting upon an organism and in relation to which the organism is capable of reacting and in turn influencing. In relation to man, however the environment is not just one, but of several kinds and it may mean many things. It means the air we breathe, the water we drink, it means the rivers, the forests, the

1. *Daśavaikālika*. 6,10.

countless things or forms of life which inhabit the land, air and waters of the world. In the broadest sense, it also means the culture, ethos and the customs and traditions and all other related factors for human beings which range from the tribals to little known communities with unique life styles of their own. "Apart from the phenomenal, physical or real environment "there is operational environment which constitutes of many things as political, technological, cultural, social, ethical and economic aspects or institutions and the behavioural or virtual environment. This is the outcome of perceptions and preferences of men and human groups."¹ Social, ethical and economic environments are becoming even more powerful and influential than the physical environment. In fact it is to these latter kinds that attention needs to be drawn. It is of greater interest for the present study to see how the latter types of environment need to be changed to preserve the former. This is really messing up the physical environment, which is simply trying to tolerate the forces of the latter kinds passively on itself.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of environment (1) man's external environment (2) man's internal environment. It is the internal environment that has the capacity to survive with the changing external environment, and it is only the internal environment which can change the external environment. This, however, is a vicious circle, one influencing the other and then the other influencing the first. The influencer and the influenced are complicatedly intertwined. It is a healthy situation if there is a balance between the two but if the balance is disturbed the situation causes concern.

Regarding the physical environment, we should have a broad outline of what needs to be preserved. The areas of disturbed or polluted environment need immediate attention, these are air pollution, water pollution, vehicular pollution, atomic pollution and sound pollution. In addition, there is social and moral pollution in different walks of life. The sources of these pollutions are well-known - rapid industrialisation,

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1. As quoted in Environmental Degradation and Global Awakening. - B. P. Chaurasia p.37

urbanisation, over-population; here again, moral degeneration tops the list.

Solutions, if any

Some of the known solutions to these problems of pollution are the use of non-conventional energy resources like biogas, solar energy, wind energy, conversion of solid wastes or waste recycling etc. This could be promoted by agencies or institutions. National and international Conservation Trusts could be established which could play an effective role in the preservation and development of environmental resources. Environmental education beginning at primary school level could be very effective, since a child learns at his early age the preciousness of environment. Governments can effectively contribute as over all in-charge of voluntary and semi-voluntary agencies. These are, undoubtedly, a great significance; but more lasting solutions lie in social, ethical and cultural awakening. Culture is not to be restricted to objects of culture or pieces of art having historical or even mythological significance. It is our moral status that has lasting impact in the solving of environmental problems. Though a detailed discussion on voluntary self-control is taken up in chapter 3, it should be mentioned here that no other solution would work unless one eschews corruption and self-interest of low quality. In fact, all environmental problems are moral issues and we need moral solutions to tackle them. Truly speaking, environmental concern in itself is purely conscientious issue. Otherwise nobody living in a most comfortable today would think of an uncertain bleak tomorrow. A 'concern for tomorrow' is a familiar ethical paradigm.

This issue assumes importance since it has global relevance. Ethical principles are significant if they are universal, and if they can be addressed to all of mankind. If on the other hand they refer only to a group or community or a state they remain only in the fold of a tradition or a convention and they cannot assume the universal applicability of high ethical principles. However, environmental issues have to be thought of at global level and applied at the national level. Thus the catchphrase is 'think globally and act locally'.

The task for those who are concerned about environmental degeneration is to inculcate the idea that sustainable development is the only answer so that natural eco systems that support life on earth are not endangered.

Meaning of development

The term 'development' is used very injudiciously in the modern context. The concept of industrialisation has become so hypnotising that we are not able to see anything other than this as development, even if this leads to more destruction than construction. Industrialisation has put us in a kind of 'dogmatic slumber' from which we are unable to awake. This is true about the western world and seems equally true in the Indian context.

This term as it is understood at present does not occur in early Indian classical literature, it is not seen even in Gandhian literature. In the west also it does not have a very old history. All over the world it is just taken as a synonym for industrialisation. The rest of the things that are related with development such as building roads, schools, education, health etc. have become secondary aspects. It is industrialisation that gets priority, and it alone continues at a speedy rate.

Actually 'development' should mean an effort on the part of the society, where its members work for each other, so that its members can live a contented life within their own life style. It does not mean the life style should be static and not permit any change. Changes do take place but within a system of tradition, where much weightage is not given to the idea that one life-style is better than the other or a western life-style is superior to the Indian way of life. Changes or development should emerge from within the environment of the country and should not be borrowed from somewhere else if these do not fit in the given surroundings.

Our concern for environment in India

The first international conference on environment was held in 1972 in Stockholm, it was attended by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, our then

Prime Minister. Therafter she formed a Ministry of Environment in India. Since then, India has shown concern about environment protection, but we are playing a double game simultaneously. On the one hand we are carrying on with indiscreet industrialisation and on the other hand we want to keep the environment clean and want to preserve it. The question is how far is this possible? Does it make sense to pollute the Ganga with tons and tons of waste thrown into it, and simultaneously plan a campaign to clean the river spending crores of Rupees? Expanding industrialisation and preserving the environment - can the two go together? Unless we are very discreet and selective in setting up industries, the answer is no.

Western countries have adopted a very clever approach towards environment protection. They enact laws to ban certain industries in their own countries in view of the environmental hazards they entail, but cleverly set up those very industries in some remote corner of India by arguing that these industries will generate employment for the rural people, the danger of this is increasing in a situation where India is going ahead with a policy of economic liberalisation and with state-control taking a back-seat. In view of our corrupt political, and administrative scenario, when anything harmful can be projected as useful or useful as harmful, where self-interest is the only guiding factor for those who are important and are in seats of power, environment-protection thus remains words on paper or just an ornamental concept to prove that India can be as concerned about such issues as the West. With continuance of economic inequalities and increasing acceptance of the philosophy of liberalisation how would it be possible to save the environment and save those who are directly affected by its destruction. The whole scenario looks bleak.

We have to think of an alternative life-style, where the first thing that needs to be dropped is blind imitation, with the top priority of saving mankind and nature.

Village-culture or ethnic-culture has come into vogue in urban India. Every house seems to be a mini-village-home. This superficially exhibits our love for rural India and its culture, and love for the

environment. This is the latest elitist fad that only satisfies the desire for change of the upper middle class and the rich, rather than reflecting any true love for rural India and village culture. It simply looks like a commemoration of village-culture than a sincere acceptance of a life style.

For effective implementation of environmental programmes attitudinal change is of great importance; we have to recognise the significance of environmental issues as manifested in the problems of day-to-day life. Environmentally unsound decisions affect the quality of our life at the most basic level. At another level Environment Impact Assessment (E.I.A.), process which is meant to assess the viability of a project in a particular site also has some significance. Though such a process may have its limitations as the reports prepared could be inconclusive due to the fluctuating nature of the subject examined and changing conditions of environmental site, the bureaucratic delays or politicians' self-interest could also make the reports mere formalities rather than a genuine action plan. In some cases preparing such reports may be more expensive than the project itself. Further, even though, there is legislation in India regarding environmental matters, yet like everything else, it is not effectively implemented, so the enforcement necessitates a change in the status quo. This, again, takes us to the solution in an ethical manner.

Environmental issues have been reduced to fashionable catch-words instead of being treated seriously. Lack of seriousness or indifference on the part of the influential, educated, intelligent people is one of the reasons. Their attitude is 'why bother about a remote' future. In science and technology serious, dedicated, brilliant people work and the society gets the benefit or otherwise from their work. This has to function in the opposite manner, the environmentalists lobby has to be alert and dedicated so that the anti-environment science and technology does not get a free hand.

Conservation is not the concern of the elite, it is the concern of the masses. The masses have to work together dedicatedly with one strong point in their favour, that is, the strength of their numbers. It is

undoubtedly a great task but it is not a utopian idea. India's freedom movement with Gandhiji as its leader has shown this to be a reality and if it is given an emotional colour as the freedom movement had it can pay dividends. The ray of hope lies in the fact that the environment affects all of us, and it should be handled by all. An equitable distribution of nature's wealth is the necessary foundation for this. If the world is for all then the above seems the only alternative, otherwise, the rich and not the meek shall inherit the earth.

It is often said that the environmentalists are against development. The question simply is, 'Is development for a living human race or a dead human race?' or 'Is it only for the urban rich?' If it is for a living human race then development cannot afford to be arbitrary. Development, technology cannot just be in the hands of a few, who are motivated by short-term gains, notwithstanding the harm it causes.

Environment and Diseases

Rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and over-population all over India are resulting in an alarming resurgence of many diseases such as plague, tuberculosis, malaria, kala azar, cholera, typhoid, dengue and many others. Too many people live too close to one another, thus infection spreads like wildfire. Experts blame environmental changes for such outbreak of diseases and their re-emergence, resulting in a breakdown of our health system. Massive deforestation has resulted in unknown viruses and bacterias getting disturbed from the safe haven of the flora and fauna of these forests. This has become a new threat to human beings. Before these forests were cut, these viruses were fully settled in their own eco-system, where they were not harmful. But with deforestation these viruses found new victims and new abodes, thus they are becoming a cause of concern. They may not immediately cause epidemics but we cannot ignore the fact that the conditions for their spread are favourable. Virulent strains of microbes, many of them are immune to antibiotics are attacking our country in a rapid force. Urbanisation of small towns and growth of large cities has also created nurseries for old and new microbes. After the seventies we felt relaxed and heaved a sigh

of relief that many diseases had been eradicated but the factors mentioned above have made us rethink about our views and make us realise that our complacency is misplaced. Tuberculosis which was thought to have been eradicated, is coming back in a big way. The treatment of this disease is very expensive specially for the poor, they discontinue taking the drugs thinking that they have recovered as the symptoms have reduced considerably, but they do not realise that millions of tubercular bacteria are still surviving within their bodies, that now become immune to the drugs. These surviving bacteria come out when the patient coughs occasionally and then these nasty drug resistant bacteria find new victims. Thus the victims multiply. Similar problems are being noticed regarding other diseases also; malaria parasites are learning to build up molecular defences and resistance to drugs which is alarmingly harmful. "We seem to be more happy about the declining trend of incidence but are least concerned about the rising trend of the drug resistant parasites" says Dr. Amitabh Nandy of the Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine. "A drug resistant parasite is automatically more virulent and robust" he says further. This resistance of parasites can make many control programmes almost futile. The doctors and health workers feel helpless and even frustrated with such a situation. Who could have imagined the Surat plague tragedy taking place almost at the end of 20th century! when plague had been completely eradicated in India long back. All this is said with the intention that neglect of environment means only self-destruction through the forms of diseases in addition to other forms.

In a thought provoking article Dr. Ramashraya Sharma expresses the view, that in the depth of sea, bosom of earth and infinite space of sky man seems to have reached the mystery of nature in an unprecedented manner. The objects of use and those of consumption have been produced equally unprecedentedly. The fast means of transport in water, surface and air have come up beyond one's imagination. The world has become surprisingly small, but in spite of this all-round development in this age of science in a short span of two hundred years, man has been pushed to his original state of loneliness, when he used to live in the jungle and worry about nothing but himself.

Environment and Tourism

Tourism today represents around six per cent of the world trade and almost 13 per cent of the total consumer spending. The economic significance of these two factors cannot be contradicted. All discussions on environmental issues and tourism have to take into account these two realities which cannot be ignored. We have to take the realistic aspect of this into account. Tourism is an industry that has its pros and cons, its profits and losses in terms of money and environment both. It depends greatly on the actual socio-cultural environment and an unspoilt natural environment.

An environment-friendly tourism should be such that it preserves the beauty of the lakes, rivers, islands, mountains, historical monuments, wild-life etc. And at the same time a tourist should be able to enjoy it fully and mentally distance himself from his busy hectic life and be able to relax in peaceful surroundings. As tourists we should be able to see the beauties of nature, admire them and should not think of possessing them or acquiring them, keeping in mind that we have a long chain of such admirers to follow us. We should not also try to carry our city comforts to the places of natural beauty or a heritage monument. Tourists should learn to leave these comforts behind. In this area tourism education is a must.

Unrestrained construction activity and commercialisation has eroded the stability of our coastline, interference with natural sand-dunes undermines the eco-system of the entire region thus environment controls on tourism and development projects in India are necessary. Such checks, can trace their roots to a letter written by Mrs. Indira Gandhi to the State Chief Ministers, directing them to prevent constructions beyond a certain point in the coastal areas, so that the area does not suffer environmental degradation. Hotel construction, energy consumption, water consumption and all such things require great caution and alertness. This does not mean that tourism should be discouraged or that there should be a complete embargo on adventure tourism; it only means caution against misuse. On the contrary, tourism should be encouraged, since,

apart from the positive economic angle, it increases public awareness about nature, its beauties, floral and faunal, and also about man-made marvels. In fact, a greater awareness and sensitivity to the charms of nature and its beauty rather than total ignorance would boost conservation. The well-to-do make the mistake of confusing wild-life and adventure tourism with picnics. We should guard against the combination of money and arrogance, with the sole objective of the pursuit of pleasure. The pursuit of pleasure to a certain degree is not objectionable in itself but it should be combined with the desire to know and the 'desire to preserve'. Eco-friendliness should become a fashion or fad just as ethnic has become a craze with the urban elite in India. Environmental protection should become a catchword to evoke a sense of pride and dignity in the upper class and the haves. "Tourism has to be understood as a vehicle of culture, prosperity and peace, which teaches that we must conserve without damaging, protect without plundering, create without destroying our environment.

Lack of concern for environment or apathy for this cause is simply a betrayal of our future; an alert society will not let this happen if it has determination and commitment. For this, we will have to accept the principle of partnership and equity to be able to overcome whatever obstacles are there. Self-imposed inner discipline in the form of contentment or limitation of one's possessions (*icchā-parimāṇa*) is the permanent solution.

Sustained spirituality for environment

All those who share the concern for the environment and the depletion of resources due to the rise in consumerism and more and more advanced technology are thinking together of the ways non-renewable resources should be very carefully used, since the harmful effects on nature due to indiscriminate use of technology are becoming very obvious in rural as well as urban areas. The key phrase, now is 'sustainable development' which means a 'development required to meet our needs and not our greeds' without harming the ability of other people and even future generations to meet their needs.

Fortunately, environmental concern has a secular colour so far, and both religious and non-religious people are responding to environmental problems. If however, the ecological issue is viewed from a spiritualistic angle, it can be more appealing and can reach the masses. People should be made to understand that the rape of nature should be resisted with spiritual strength and our spirituality should not permit us to exploit nature for our self-chosen purposes. Selfish patterns of life revolving only around our egos need to be abjured once and for all. Egoism in the sense of short-lived selfishness pertaining to this life only, has to be replaced by altruism not only in the sense of 'the greatest number of people' but also in the sense of the 'greatest number of years' but "without spiritual regeneration and global political unification man's greed released from traditional restraint of law, custom and conscience would result in suicide of homosapiens through his murder of mother earth". (*Man and Mother-Earth*, Arnold Toynbee).

When man felt weak and helpless he attributed divinity to nature and he worshipped it, and this prevented him from assaulting it. When the view that nature is no more an object of worship but an object of study got popularised the craving and selfishness of humanity led to irresponsible attitude and indiscriminate exploitation of it. Viewing nature as a mass of raw material to be exploited is unjust both to man and nature, and denying God as the creator could also be a reason of deepening ecological crisis. God and nature have been substituted by our self-seeking desires, and the temptation to use it more and more for our selfish ends has become more and more predominant.

The task of maintaining environmental balance requires a revival of spirituality. Our perspective has to change since whatever our achievements in various forms, we know we are far from being happy. The mental state of happiness is one of the most difficult things to be understood or defined. It may come to us when we do not expect it. Its complexity cannot be better explained than in a passage from J.S. Mill's autobiography where he says, 'In this state of mind it occurred to me to put the question directly to myself, "suppose all your projects in life were realised, that all the changes in institutions and opinions which

you are looking forward to, completely effected at this very instant. Would this be great joy or happiness to you ?” And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, “No”. ‘At this my heart sank within me; the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down.’ However, without going into the metaphysical or psychological nuances of happiness it does come to us when we do not expect it as said earlier, and also it does not come to us with the standard forms of our achievements which we ordinarily think as the sources of happiness. This brings forth the need of reviewing our relationships, such as man-God relationship (the spiritual dimension), man-man relationship (societal or familial dimension), man-himself relationship (the psychological dimension) and lastly but no less important, the man-nature relationship (ecological dimension).

In bringing about changes in these relationships, ethical or spiritual principles like value of life (not only human life but all life), significance of interdependence, humility and responsibility are significant. Indian spiritualism helps us realise that after all our life on the planet earth is like a ‘probationary period’, when we have to be on our best behaviour. In this probationary period we can learn to control our desires so that our lives become somewhat meaningful for others as well. The notion of this life as one small dot in innumerable lives till the individual attains the ultimate goal of *mokṣa*, can be greatly helpful in making earth livable not only for us but also for future generations. The present ecological crisis can be an opportunity to rediscover our spiritual strength of ourselves and thereby discover new ways of solving the energy crisis, pollution crisis and conservation of non-renewable resources.

However, the future alone will tell us whether we will fight these odds with more science and technology or with ethics and spirituality. The latter may be difficult but definitely the safer and more durable way.

This can be taken as a prelude to a brief sketch of classical Indian philosophy showing what type of relationship existed between man and nature or environment in contrast to what exists at present.

The place of nature in classical Sanskrit literature : (Co-operation and Co-ordination of man and nature)

To take up the task of discussing the place of 'nature' in ancient Indian literature is stupendous, covering volumes. The aim at present is just to take a few examples from ancient literature where nature is greatly revered by man and where man shows himself as a being who knows he will not survive without nature's help. Although for his survival man has always approached nature and got his needs fulfilled by its help, but never with a feeling that he was the master and could exploit nature whichever way he wanted. His approach to nature had always been that of a worshipper to the worshipped. It can be argued that when a person is absolutely ignorant and knows nothing about the depth and profundity of something, one would naturally behave with similar reverence or respect as man did in those times. But to say that man knows a lot about nature today is one of the grossest mistakes that one can commit. So man as the master and nature as the servant is a kind of relationship which is the cause of concern.

The term '*ṛta*' in the *Rgveda* in its brevity suggests meaningfully the order or divine law, harmony in nature. It is a sin to disturb this harmony. Nature in ancient literature like Vedas and later texts means the entire living and non-living world, the world of animals and the world of plants, trees, water, rivers, etc. "Animals play a considerable role in mythological and religious conceptions of the Vedas. Horse is conspicuous as driving the cars of the gods and in particular as representing the sun under various names. In the vedic rituals horse is symbolic of sun and fire..... the cow, however is an animal which figures greatly in the *Rgveda*. This is undoubtedly due to its prominent position resulting from the pre-eminent utility occupied by the animal in the remotest period of Indian life. The beams of dawn and the clouds are cowsthe earth itself is often spoken of by the poets of *Rgveda* as a cow."¹

This animal possesses a sacred character, no sight gladdened the eye of the Vedic Indian more than the sight of a cow licking her calf.

1. *History of Sanskrit Literature* - A.A. Macdonell p.119.

One *R̥ṣi* addresses a cow as *aditi* and a goddess impressing upon his hearer that she should not be slain. *Aghneya* (not to be killed) is a frequent designation of cow in the *R̥gveda*. Cows were the chief forms of wealth in the vedic period. *Atharvaveda* and *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* often talk of worshipping of cows and the evil consequences of beef eating. In general cattle occupy an important place in the Vedas.

Plants are frequently invoked as divinities along with waters, rivers, mountains, heaven and earth. 'One entire hymn is however devoted to the praise of plants (*oṣadhi*) alone mainly with regard to their healing powers".¹ Some later Vedic texts mention the offerings made to plants and adorations paid to large trees. One hymn of *R̥gveda* celebrates the 'forest as a whole personified as *āranyani*' (the forest nymph). The sights and sounds of forests are described with a fine perception of nature.

Interestingly, in the religion of Parsis respect for nature and its elements is expressed by the devotees on the day of repentance, when they say 'I repent for the offence I have committed to metal, submetal, earth, air and water'. (Patet Irani - The Prayer of Repentance of Parsis as quoted in *The Teaching of Zoraster and Parsi Religion* - Kālīdāsa's '*Abhijñāna Śākuntalam*' is a Sanskrit drama second to none. Love and reverence for nature is beautifully expressed in this master piece, with its entire background of *prakṛti* or nature. The inanimate *prakṛti* becomes a living human being with its ways it is shown to interact with humans. The relation of *prakṛti* with humans is beautifully depicted with its delicate nuances. Even though, it is a piece of extraordinary imagination of the poet, but the imagination cannot completely be separated from life, time, and surroundings of the poet. The cooperation of nature and man is so well-knit and it is marvelously expressed by the poet. Ancient India has been described by great Indian thinkers as a culture of forest (*āranya saṁskṛti*). The life of the inmates of *āśramas* of ancient India used to be nurtured in the sanctity of the natural physical environment, which was expected to be responsible for the spiritual development of the *āśramaites*. These *āśramas* or *tapovanas* were habitats for their

1. *History of Sanskrit Literature* - A.A. Macdonell p.119.

2. S.A. Kapadia, London, 1905 page 43.

spiritual and ethical development and also to develop their sensitivities not only towards one another but also towards nature. Śakuntalā is called 'vanalatā' by the poet; she is called the daughter of *prakṛti* who without any artificial grooming grows with absolute freshness and fragrance. She is shown by the poet as an example of classic love for nature of which she herself is a part; she does not drink water till she waters the trees in the *āśrama*; though she is so fond of decorating herself, yet does not pluck a flower to decorate herself. *Tapovanas* are the sanctuaries for the inhabitants, and these sanctuaries were strongly protected and preserved by the kings. Nobody could disturb life in these *tapovanas*. King Duṣyanta takes the security of the *āśrama* in his own hands, so that demons do not disturb or destroy them, as the *āśramas* are considered the foundations of ethics and culture. They epitomise the peaceful, *sāttvika* environment of ancient India and were promoters of the fragrance of its culture. Nature and man and its unique friendship and the immortal love for each other has been amazingly depicted by Kālidāsa. Nature participates and actively involves itself and shares its experiences of solidarity with man. The laws of nature are laws of man and laws of man are laws of nature; nature takes full care of the interests of man and man never thinks of himself as the master but only a devotee of nature.

Kālidāsa's other works such as *Kumārasambhava* and *RituSamhāra* also show his love and environmental consciousness. Kālidāsa is truly an environmental philosopher and poet.

Man and Nature in Sāṃkhya System of Indian Philosophy

Sāṃkhya philosophy is dualistic realism. It believes in two ultimate realities of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. There is no better equivalent of *prakṛti* in English than 'nature'. It is also translated as matter sometimes, but matter does not convey the meanings of realities like 'ego', 'intellect' and the 'senses', which *prakṛti* contains, and later produces them from itself. Moreover, there are some other products of *prakṛti* which clearly convey the meaning of material substances that matter does, these are the five gross elements, the '*pañca māhabhūtas*' - ether, air, water, fire, and earth. Thus, if *prakṛti* includes evolutes like 'intellect', 'ego', and

the 'senses', it is certainly more than matter. *Puruṣa*, on the other hand is spirit or consciousness. So, in common parlance, these are man and nature (*puruṣa* and *prakṛti*). *Prakṛti* is unconscious but active, *puruṣa* is conscious but inactive. It looks active because of its close proximity to intellect and ego, which are only the products of *prakṛti*.

The process of evolution, as Sāṃkhya explains, takes place because of the mere presence of *puruṣa* (*sannidhi matra*), that makes *prakṛti* to evolve itself. *Puruṣa* does not have to exert himself nor does he meddle with *prakṛti* to make *prakṛti* evolve or produce various evolutes or products. *Prakṛti* on its own, knowing the needs of *puruṣa* gives whatever *puruṣa* needs, for his enjoyment and for his ultimate goal of liberation or *mokṣa*. *Prakṛti* is fully equipped to produce whatever *puruṣa* needs the most. With its own constituents (the *guṇas*), the *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, it brings forth qualitatively different products to give variety in a unified system of universe. *Puruṣa* being totally inactive is in no position to move; it is *prakṛti* which is so competent, that it starts working on its own to satisfy the needs of *puruṣa*. Thus evolution begins with intellect, ego and senses etc. and ends with the gross elements, the *mahabhūtas*. *Puruṣa* is inactive and intelligent. This has a very meaningful message that it does not have the power to destroy nature. The inactivity of *puruṣa* in the Sāṃkhya shows the limits that *puruṣa* has. Thus man is under no circumstances allowed to destroy nature, according to the classical literature of India; *puruṣa* does not enjoy the right to exploit nature. When the balanced evolution is disturbed it turns into dissolution or *pralaya* after which a new cycle would begin. Thus the evolution of classical Sāṃkhya is not in any way close to 'development' in modern sense of the word.

According to Sāṃkhya, *puruṣa* never interferes with *prakṛti* and the rich and profound store of things that it contains in its bosom. *Prakṛti* on its own like a mother, creates the things that *puruṣa* requires. It seems to know unknowingly (though it is unintelligent) fully well the needs of *puruṣa* and thus *puruṣa* realises his mundane and extra-mundane goals, none of which remain unfulfilled. Thus so much *prakṛti* does with its profoundness. The creation or evaluation takes place because

the constituents of *prakṛti* viz. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, undergo *virūpa-pariṇāma* i.e. *sattva* changes into *rajas* or *tamas*, *tamas* into *sattva* or *rajas*, and *rajas* into *sattva* or *tamas*; that is *gunas* do not transform into their own nature, like *sattva* into *sattva* or *tamas* into *tamas*, but, into the nature of others. This is *visādraśa pariṇāma*. This shows the dynamic ability of the constituents that they are able to transform themselves in such a remarkable manner; This ability comes from within and is not imposed on them from without. It is this which is real evolution or creation. If this dynamic quality gets disturbed, somehow, *prakṛti* would stop evolving, and on the contrary the process of dissolution (*pralaya*) would begin. This process is called *Svarūpa pariṇāma* or *sādraśa pariṇāma*. When the inner dynamism of *prakṛti* gets stalled, *purusa* is in no position to enjoy the gifts of *prakṛti* which it releases from its store. The process of evolution and dissolution are beautifully explained in Sāṃkhya metaphysics. *Prakṛti* in Sāṃkhya is unintelligent and unconscious but the way it behaves, shows that it has remarkable wisdom unique to itself, which far exceeds the collective scientific knowledge that man has at his disposal which is called 'unconscious teleology' or to put it more contextually it is 'teleology unknown to man'. What man knows of nature is so little that it is wrong to say that he knows a substantial portion of it. When we try to think of this we are left with a sense of bewilderment as to how nature makes the strong to survive and how it makes the weak to die.

This only provokes us to ask whether the so called process of 'development' is taking us anywhere near evolution in any true sense, or is it just stopping or limiting the dynamic quality of nature which will suddenly say 'no more' and 'enough is enough' and 'I have nothing else to offer to you'. This 'development' is getting closer to *pralaya* than to evolution or creation. It is time for us to ponder over the state of things in the present day world. True, the west may be blamed for being the pioneer but those who are blindly trying to ape them are no less to be blamed.

A new light is thrown in a book, '*Staying' Alive* by Vandana Shiva to the preservation of nature, in which she says *prakṛti* is a symbol

of woman or the feminine principle from which all life arises (though this analogy is not new and is pretty well-known and that *prakṛti* - *purusa* or man-woman relationship is central to life), and death of nature (*prakṛti*) is the central threat to survival of mankind. "Earth is rapidly dying, forests are dying, her air and water are dying, soils are dying, tropical forests, the creators of the world's climate, the cradle of the world's vegetational wealth are being bull-dozed, burnt and ruined and submerged. the concept of progress is threatening the survival itself. It is, she says 'violence to nature and women'.¹ She describes how Indian rural women, who are still embedded in nature, experience and perceive ecological destruction. With her strong convictions of feminism she interestingly dwells upon the deeper meaning of femininity and *Prakṛti*. She goes to the extent of saying that all women by nature are conservationists and life-enhancing and equality seeking.

How far does the analogy of scriptural *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* to nature and man takes us, it gives us a point to ponder over the classical philosophers' stand on the relation of coordination and conflict between the two leading towards evolution (*śṛṣṭi*) and dissolution (*pralaya*).

The Cārvāka View

Cārvāka materialism, though totally different from all other systems of Indian philosophy, specially in its metaphysical and ethical approach, believes only in one reality, i.e. matter or *jada*. That has four forms : air, water, fire and earth; since only these are perceptible and nothing imperceptible is real or true for them. 'Life' or 'consciousness' is a product of these material substances alone, therefore its independent existence is not accepted by them. Instead of going into the logical strength of their view or the self-contradictions involved, *Cārvākās*, indubitably, show that nature with its different components is so powerful that it can create life or consciousness, nature is primary and 'life' or consciousness or in other words 'man' is secondary. This is not to take analogies too far; but this philosophy does show the significance of nature as a 'unity' or as a 'whole'. Thus instead of 'man' being a separate reality it is a part of nature or rather it is a creation or product of nature.

1. (Vandana Shiva - *Staying Alive* pp. 198 Kali for Women, New Delhi).

So, is there any justification of the product (man) destroying the original source (nature), or the created destroying the creator?

The Jaina view

Jaina ethics, though known for its rigorous, stringent asceticism has a very wide ethical perspective for the householders or laity. In its twelve-fold scheme of vows of lesser stridency (*aṇuvratas*) for the householders; five are primary and the remaining seven are secondary. These first five *aṇuvratas*-non-violence, truth, non-stealing, chastity and non-possession if understood clearly can cover the remaining seven. In the seventh vow, known as '*upabhoga-paribhoga-parimaṇavratā* (control of desire for too much consumption), there is a broad guideline for the householders to control his business ventures, hinting at environmental preservation. '*vaṇakamme*' and '*fodikamme*', out of the fifteen *karmadanas* suggest that a good householder should avoid indulging in cutting of forests and spoiling of land.

Gandhiji's approach

Gandhiji was an environmentalist of the first order. He was a man of great principles and conviction. Indian spiritualism, *Gita* and *anāsakti* were not just intellectual convictions for him, but his way of life. He did not find attraction in western materialism. He viewed man and universe or nature as interwoven, and very prophetically foresaw and warned the world of the monstrous consequences of the so-called 'development' which ignored the essential balance in the relation of man and nature. Every action of Gandhiji showed that he was a practising environmentalist, much before environment protection assumed importance in western world. Gandhiji's environmentalism was a product of his basic humanism. He was against large scale industrialisation, since he felt that it would create many expected and unexpected problems. He could foresee the problems of India and the entire world. He could foresee the exhaustion of scarce natural resources as the outcome of development. Gandhiji did not express his views on environmental protection formally, as he did not live in the situation of fifty years hence, so he could not lead a crusade to save rivers and forests for the future generations. The problems and challenges that are being faced in India

now, were not realised and understood as grave then. But his prophetic vision did notice the alarm signal, and he was very clear in his approach to the future which he did not ignore for the present, the future was not secondary for him. He was convinced that not to worry about the health of future generations was a form of violence. He not only preached this philosophy but also lived the life of a person who valued humans as well as non-humans.

Gandhiji's respect for nature was evident from the argument he used to give that tree worship would serve as a symbol of true reverence for the entire vegetable kingdom. He could have, as a man of reason, ignored the poetic beauty in tree worship, even though he did not believe in idol-worship. His reverence for nature and the prevalent customs came from his *Vaiṣṇava* philosophy, which was his way of life. He could see the positive side of customs and traditions of the masses rather than just condemn them as futile. Similarly, he respected cow-worship and cow-protection as it represented the entire sub-human and animal world. It was not just cow-worship for the 'sacred cow', it meant much more than this. In fact for Gandhiji theory and practice coincided so strongly that he would say 'A man is ethical only when life as such is sacred to him,' and 'The life in animals and even in plants is like that of his fellow man.' In that sense he was more than a humanist. Environment for Gandhiji also meant love for the poor and destitute.

Gandhiji was not against machines, but he was against the craze for machines, since, he believed that machines may dehumanise and depersonalise human and institutional relationships. He could sense that human greed would increase and multiply by machines. His philosophy was visionary, and was essentially rural-based. Thus he believed in sustainable development much earlier than the term became popular with the environmentalists. His emphasis on simplicity on the avoidance of a luxurious life style, and his views against the 'throw away' attitude or consumerism and his reliance on simple food, vegetarianism, etc. are all indicators of his eco-friendliness and conviction of sustainable development. His simple mathematics was 'the less you consume from your stock more will it last'.

Thus, to conclude, the path the world has traversed till now, specially in the last two hundred years beginning with the industrial revolution in the pursuit of technological advancement has led us only to things which have not given us what they were initially meant for such as eradication of poverty and peace. In fact we have badly failed to provide peace, to eradicate poverty, to provide equality (economic and social both). Though prosperity has been provided and is being provided more and more, but this is only to a select few. Prosperity is definitely increasing but only the prosperous ones are getting more and more prosperous. In addition to this what the world has unfailingly gained is environmental degradation which poses the greatest threat to our lives. The choice is now between a prosperous, technologically advanced life and no life at all. The first alternative seems a happy dream and the second looks like a bleak reality. Looking at the future, there is genuine threat to the lives of many species including the human species. The statistics of the environmental loss is alarmingly expressed in the following lines, which deserve notice. "Each year six million hectares of productive land turns into worthless desert. Over three decades this would amount to an area roughly as large as Saudi-Arabia. More than eleven million hectares of forests are destroyed yearly, and this over three decades would be equal to an area about the size of India." It seems, as according to the Jaina view of cycle of time (*ārā* the sixth stage i.e. last stage would arrive which is the stage of suffering and only suffering (*dukham dukham*) It may not just remain a piece of imagination of imaginative thinkers *pralaya* of Indian philosophy is visualised in the above analysis of environmental experts. Thus, it looks that the futuristic concern is not just a fad with the environmental analysts, it has been the sensible approach of Indian thinkers down the history.

Finally, to say a word on ethics and environment, there are three universal notions of practical ethics noticeable in environmental concern. (1) the concept of coexistence, or live and let live, (2) the concept of contentment or finding happiness from within rather than from without, and (3) the concept of making the best use of whatever is available in making happiness a lasting process. It is this that makes environmental concern an ethical endeavour.



Chapter-III

APARIGRAHA- THE HUMANE SOLUTION

Importance

Consumerism and environmental degradation, discussed in the previous two essays, raise the question : 'Is it better not to think and be comfortable with a myopic view of futuristic issues or is it better to think seriously and be farsighted about the future of mankind?' A farsighted view presents a bleak future with no easy solution. Perhaps, there is no solution in the context of what is euphemistically called 'development,' 'progress' and 'material advancement'. This path and the speed of man's journey on it are unable to give him peace and happiness. On the other hand, journeying inward, at a controlled pace, with self-discipline have a lasting solution. The problems of consumerism and environmental degradation can be tackled only by an attitude of mind, not just at the individual level but at the social level. More important people, for instance, the policy makers who have a greater role to play, have to change the prevailing atmosphere which is detrimental to the human race and its future. The solution lies in the limiting of desires pertaining to personal material achievements and focussing on social betterment. It is in this light and spirit that *aparigraha* has to be understood and studied, where mankind in general is primary and the individual in particular is secondary. This further implies that the individual and his moral growth can not be ignored, since the individual is the chief organ of the society. Limiting or controlling one's desires (*icchā-parimāṇa*), one of the five ethical precepts of morality (*pañcaśīla*) provides an answer to the crisis that mankind is facing. In the present day world the gulf between the rich and the poor is widening. This is endangering world peace and drastically deteriorating humaneness. This makes *aparigraha* very pertinent today. *Aparigraha* does not mean renunciation from the world for the achievement of a purely spiritual goal; it is a social goal with a social mission.

The principle of *aparigraha*, (*icchā-parimāṇa*, *parigraha-parimāṇa*, *parimita-parigraha*) is not a rigorous principle of self control or an ascetic way of life that may entail self-torture of some kind. Such

an approach is associated with religious rigorous practices and its fundamentalism. *Aparigraha* is a realistic, practical and rational principle with a solid foundation in the social system. It has individual moral growth as its basis, with direct relevance for the society of which the individual is a part. Its main thrust is on a balanced society consisting of balanced individuals. In fact, all ethical principles have evolved for individuals in and through the society to which they belong. The importance of *aparigraha* and its universal acceptance lies in its social basis. It is a principle which not only has a place in Jaina ethics or Indian ethics but it occupies a place in Christianity and Islam also as we shall see later.

Meaning of the term

The meaning of *aparigraha* and other similar terms mentioned earlier would be understood clearly only after the term, '*parigraha*' is understood and analysed in all its aspects and their completeness. The term '*aparigraha*' -non-possession, non-grasping - has its root in the term '*parigraha*' which means to amass, to grasp, to accumulate, to compile, to seize, to hold, to fence in and to receive or accept possessions or property. Etymologically, it consists of two terms : '*pari*' and '*graha*'; '*graha*' is rooted in '*grahana*' meaning to take hold of, to accept or to receive or to possess something; '*pari*' means round, round about, abundant, rich or fullness. Thus, *parigraha* means acceptance or taking or receiving gifts or other possessions. It is also defined as that which entangles one from all sides.¹ *Aparigraha*, which is recognised as one of the five ethical principles, is just the opposite of this. *Ichhā-parimāṇa*, *parimita-parigraha*, *parigraha-parimāṇa* are essentially Jaina terms but in some form they exist in other systems of Indian ethical thought. The above-mentioned terms reveal a practical or realistic implication rather than being too abstract for a 'man in the society'. It has both outer implication of limitations of possessions, and inner implications of non-attachment, detachment, *anāsakti* or *amūrchā*, - the finer nuances of *aparigraha*. These gross and subtle implications together imply an attitude,

1. *parigrahaṇam parigrahaḥ*- Aṣṭādhyāyī- Pāṇini

a state of mind, a way of life in the material world of objects both for the individual and the society.

Parigraha, thus means the wordly objects around us and our attachment to them. Thus to understand *parigraha* only in the sense of accepting worldly objects would be incomplete; likewise to understand it only in the sense of attachment or '*āśakti*' would also be incomplete. However, in the finer analysis of this term, thinkers have emphasised the '*mūrchā*' or '*āśakti*' aspect, rather than the possession of objects as such.¹ But a comprehensive view of the two implications of '*parigraha*' would show that the two are intertwined and have a kind of circular relation. As the abundance of material objects arouses attachments or '*āśakti*' (*mūrchā*) which in turn disturbs the mental peace, likewise inner craving, attachment or *mūrchā* makes one long for and acquire more and more material possessions.

These two implications of *parigraha*, as objects or possessions, and as a psychological state of attachment, are the two sides of *parigraha* - the objective or the outer side and subjective or the inner side. The former, i.e., the objective side of the world of possessions or collections in the external world is rightly called '*bāhya parigraha*' in Jainism, and *mūrchā*, attachment subsisting in man's mind is called '*ābhyantara parigraha*'; these are not really two kinds or two varieties of *parigraha* as is often understood but two components or parts of *parigraha*. A complete view of '*aparigraha*' for fighting the menace of present day problems would require clear understanding of both these components. Ignoring either of these would blur our aim of finding a solution. Understanding these two, (i.e. *bāhya* and *ābhyantara*) as components of *parigraha* is a slight deviation from the accepted views of the celebrated thinkers like *Umāsvāti*, who emphasise only the subjective side, and like *Paninni* who emphasises the objective side. The meaning of '*mūrchā*' is clearly expressed as attachment or mental clinging to the objects; it has to be understood in a broader sense. From such a perspective, *parigraha* is understood as meaning not only material or physical objects but also

1. *mūrchā prigrahaḥ- Tattvārtha sūtra- Umāsvāti, P.V. 1985, 7/12.*

such, attachments like sticking rigorously to one's thoughts and not trying to understand the point of view of others, and also influencing others to such an extent that they are deprived of an independent thought. Communalism can also become a form of *parigraha* in such a sense. In other words, *parigraha* is not just possessions but it is possessiveness. The term '*icchā*' is also closely associated with *parigraha* which means the desire to possess. This is perhaps a stage even prior to *mūrchā*. '*icchā*' materialises in possessions, and possessions then propel or drive the individual to attachment or *mūrchā*.

The opposite of '*parigraha*', understood in its wider implications is *aparigraha* which is not just a negative concept or an idea of denial as it may appear because of the prefix of 'a' meaning 'not'. It is a positive virtue for the man in society thus meaning *icchā-parimāṇa*, *parigraha-parimāṇa*, and *parimita-parigraha*. Its obvious and subtle, outer and inner implications make it a comprehensive precept or an ethical principle for a good social system.

Fundamental postulates of aparigraha

For all ethical ideals there are certain fundamental presumptions without which the edifice of ethics will not exist. Kant talks of three fundamental principles of ethics : (1) freedom of will (2) immortality of soul (3) God. Similarly for *aparigraha* there are certain presumptions essentially psychological than metaphysical or religious in any traditional sense. These are :

- (1) The source of happiness and peace lies in the human individual within him and not outside him.
- (2) External possessions are only meant to be used and not to be owned. The ownership of everything of the world lies with nature (*prakṛti*) which is the true caretaker of everything, ownership as 'mine' and 'yours' is meaningless and can be a source of conflict.
- (3) The human individual has tremendous energies and potentialities which are not based on external possessions. Thus the role of possessions is limited in the life of the individual.

- (4) All human passions, such as anger, conceit, crookedness, attachment, ego, etc. have their root in external objects or possessions which create disturbance in the mind of the individual. Therefore, self-control of one's possessions and consumptions is necessary.

The above presumptions are different from the conventionally accepted basis of ethics as belief in God, transmigration of soul, rebirth, *karma* etc. They can, however, become helping conditions to establish oneself in *aparigraha* at a time when one is losing inner strength of firmly adhering to the ethical principle he has accepted.

Thus, related with these postulates there are certain conditions which help the individual in seeing the importance of *aparigraha* in his life; these are :

- (1) Awareness about self and its destiny; the perishable nature of the material world, the changing nature of the universe, the smallness of our entity as a person in the world, realisation of the truth, that 'even if I am the richest man of the world today, I may discover somebody richer than me tomorrow'.
- (2) The confidence of our self-dependence, our competence to handle difficult situations and our fearlessness to face exigencies or emergencies to help cultivate the attitude of *aparigraha* would be another condition. With our possessions and belongings and our attachments to them we try to find some excuses to live and so we lean on to them; these are only superficial sources of our strength; the real strength lies in our inner capacities so that we do not need external things to depend on. The psychology of ownership is based on the false assumption that whatever belongs to me will continue to belong to me for ever. It is theoretically known to everyone, not only to saints and philosophers but to the common man, the man on street, the literate and the illiterate, even a '*suśikṣita*' *Cārvāka* would also accept it. But unfortunately it is not practically realised.
- (3) Another condition of *aparigraha* which is often mentioned in the Jaina scriptures is non-violence. Without non-violence *aparigraha*

is impossible to be practised. Essentially *aparigraha* is a form of social expression of non-violence, and would also include non-stealing and chastity in its ambit.

Aparigraha in Indian classical texts

Aparigraha as a precept or vow finds occurrence in Brahmanical texts. In *Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtras*, it means abstention from taking possessions or refusal to master or overpower. The *sūtras* speak of the five vows of a *śaṁnyāsina* and *aparigraha* is one of them.¹ It occurs in *Manusmṛti*, where Manu says that a *śaṁnyasin* should establish himself in non-possession, live in a secluded place and observe the vow of silence.² In *Mahābhārata* also, non-possession is considered a quality of a recluse.³ *Vaikhāṇasa Dharmapraśna* includes *aparigraha* as one of the essential duties of a recluse. In some of the later *Upanisads* such as *Paramahansa Upanisad* the term *aparigraha* is available showing that this is a necessary quality of a recluse. At once place in one of the later *Upanisads* it is said that no *śaṁnyāsina* is supposed to show any attachment to gold; he should not even see it since that may arouse in him a greed for this substance.

These instances show that for the life of a recluse, *aparigraha* is almost mandatory. They do not, however, establish that a lay person or a householder is also required to practise *aparigraha* or limitation of desires for his ethical development, which is spelled out in the Jaina scriptures and which is the main subject of this study at present. The purpose of mentioning this is just to show that *aparigraha* has significant place in the Brahmanical literature.

Taking the historical sequence of *R̥gveda*, *Brāhmaṇas* etc. one may notice the conspicuous absence of this precept of *aparigraha* because their main emphasis is on the life of a householder and not on the life of a recluse and, therefore, all possessions are understood as valuable and

1. *Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtras*- 2.

2. *Manusmṛti* - 6.

3. *Mahābhārata* - Śāntiparva.

renunciation is not regarded as the supreme goal or most desirable; however, some *Upanisads*, which are in a way the synthesis of *Brahmanical* and *Sramanical* thoughts are exceptions to the above statement. It is noteworthy that *Brahmanical* literature is replete with references to *dāna* (charity, donations and giving gifts). *Dāna* may have something in common with *aparigraha*; however, the two also express some difference in the approach of the two persons; i.e. one who gives gifts¹ and one who does not take gifts.²

The concepts of *dāna*, *tyāga* and *santoṣa* in relation to *aparigraha* will be discussed shortly to understand the similarities and differences in these notions, their relation to the social system which promotes them, and consequently what effects these virtues have on the social system. The importance of *aparigraha* is given in both *Brahmanical* and *Sramanical* literature. It is given a very special place in the *Upaniṣadic* literature. *Īśāvāśyā* says that one should not covet and be greedy for the wealth of others. On the other hand, the best use of wealth lies in renouncing it for others, and not coveting what belongs to others. It means that all that there is in the Universe, great or small, is pervaded by God. In one of his talks at a meeting in Quilon, Mahatma Gandhi said that the whole of Hinduism could be summed up in one single verse of *Īśopaniṣad*: 'The reward of renunciation is *bhūñjitha* i.e. enjoyment of all that you need. but there is a meaning in the word translated as 'enjoy'. Which may as well be translated as 'use' and 'eat' etc. It signifies, therefore, that you may not take more than necessary for your growth. Hence the enjoyment or use is limited by two conditions: One is the act of renunciation Therefore, take it as you like, either in the sense that enjoyment or use is the reward of renunciation or that renunciation is the condition of enjoyment, renunciation is essential for our very existence for the soul.'³

1. *Dāna* is referred to

2. *Aparigraha* is referred to

3. *What is Hinduism* - Mahatma Gandhi National Book Trust, New-Delhi. 1995 p. 42.

The celebrated conversation between *Yājñavalkya* and his wife *Maitreyī* that occurs in *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* shows that possessions and wealth do not help in attaining immortality. When *Yājñavalkya* wanted to distribute his estate between his two wives, *Maitreyī* chose the spiritual portion of his estate. She said, 'Supposing I obtain possession of the whole earth full of wealth, by that I shall not attain immortality.' 'Certainly not', *Yājñavalkya* replied. 'Such a life will be only like the life of those who have all kinds of conveniences; there is no hope for immortality by mere possessions of wealth. It is not for its own sake that everything is held dear but for the sake of atman that everything is precious.' This conversation shows that possessions may become hindrances to the attainment of the goal. Similar examples can be quoted from other *Upaniṣads* on the importance of *aparigraha* as a necessary step to the attainment of the ideal. *Brhadāranyaka* also talks of the renunciation of the very desire for wealth.¹ These examples reveal that *aparigraha* is a celebrated virtue in *Upaniṣads*, which is not so evident in the Vedas and the *Brāhmanas*. This is the marked difference that one sees in *Upaniṣadic* thought. The contribution of *Upaniṣads* towards philosophical and ethical notions is clearly noticeable.

Following the historical sequence, the *Sūtra* period follows the *Upaniṣadic* period. The *Yogasūtras* of *Patañjali* enunciate the eight-fold path of yoga - *aṣṭāṅgika yoga* - as the spiritual exercise for the cessation of mental modifications.² The first step of this eight fold-yogic path is the adopting of the five moral principles known as *yamas*. *Aparigraha* is clearly mentioned as one of the five *yamas*. The five *yamas* are known in Jainism as the five *vratas* and in Buddhism as the five *śīlas*. According to *Patañjali*, the five *yamas* are (1) abstinence from violence, (2) from falsehood, (3) from stealing, (4) from adultery and (5) from possessions or taking gifts. But whereas *aparigraha* is usually translated as non-possession especially in Jaina and Buddhist systems, J. H. Woods translates *aparigraha* as the concept appears in *Patañjala* Yoga system as abstinence from acceptance of gifts. Wood's translation

1. *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* - 3,5,1.

2. *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* - 1,2.

is quite acceptable in the context of Yoga system of *Pātañjali*; as non-acceptance of gifts is the basic attitude and a definite move to curb the desire for possessions at a time when in *Brahmanical* tradition, the giving gifts to and accepting gifts by Brahmanas was a regular practice. This translation appears more in tune with the Brahmanical trend and also, throws light on the new trend emerging in Brahmanical thought as a confluence of Brahmanical and Sramanical thought. The Sramanical systems especially of the Jainas highlight the subtle, abstract features of *aparigraha* that are related to the individual mental state rather than just to the social system, ie. the internal and subjective aspects of *aparigraha* and not only the external or behavioural. Non-acceptance of gifts as *parigraha* in the *Pātañjala*-yoga system means non-possession or non-attachment for something which is not one's own. This moral principle, therefore, obviously discourages the custom of acceptance of gifts prevalent in the Brahmanical system. Another noticeable point is that *Pātañjala* Sūtras seem to question the supremacy of one of the three cardinal virtues i.e *dāna*, and appear to take the individual on an inward journey by establishing the supremacy of Yoga. For a yogin, acceptance of gifts would be more of a hindrance than a help, for him, the right path begins with avoidance of acceptance of gifts. In this sense it means non-possession or non-attachment to possessions.

Vyāsa in his commentary on *Pātañjala Sūtras* says : 'Abstinence from acceptance of gifts is abstinence from appropriating objects, because one sees the disadvantages of acquiring them, keeping them, losing them or in being attached to them or in having them'.¹ The same idea is elaborated in *Vācaspati Miśra*'s explanation. He says : 'Since passions increase because of the application to the enjoyments, the skill of the organs also increases. Although obtained without effort, objects, if unauthorised, have disadvantages when one acquires them, since the acquisition of such things is censured. And even authorised objects, when acquired, are evidently disadvantageous because they are needed to be looked after etc. Therefore, abstinence from acceptance of gifts is the refusal to appropriate them'. (*Vācaspati Miśra*'s explanation of the same).

1. *Pātañjala Yoga Sūtra* - *Vyāsa*'s commentary 2, 30.

In another *Sūtra* Pātañjali sets out a clear picture of the spiritual state one is in after one establishes oneself in *aparigraha*. He says : ‘As soon as the yogin is established in abstinence from acceptance of gifts, he gets a thorough illumination upon the conditions of birth’. Vyāsa points out that the yogin who has established himself in *aparigraha* would get a clear picture of ‘who he was’ and ‘what he would become’. And his desire to know all this, would be fulfilled only after establishing himself in this abstention. Though it is, not easy so to accept this on logical grounds, it cannot simply be rejected as mere imagination since it is incapable of being tested. The climax of yogic practices may bring about extraordinary super human powers.

In another *Sūtra*, Pātañjali mentions the technique of cultivating the opposites (*pratipakṣa bhāvanā*) for strengthening the abstention of *aparigraha*.

There is, however, one point that needs notice in the context of *Pātañjali*’s expositions of *aparigraha*. That is the cultivation of this abstention means a gradual increase in acquisition of yogic powers and adaptation to unusual negative circumstances. This may not have much relevance to the social context for which this moral principle is being studied but shows emphatically that for spiritual progress ‘*aparigraha*’ is a great step.

The Jaina View

Aparigraha is the fifth vow of the monks and nuns in the Jaina code of ethics (*mahāvratā*); likewise it occupies the fifth place in the code of ethics for the householders or laity (*anuvratā*). Its importance can be noticed by the very fact that it occupies a place in the four-fold scheme of pre-Mahāvīra ethics, i.e. in the ethics of Pārśvānātha (the twenty third *Tīrthaṅkara* of the Jainas) where it is called *cāturyāma dharma*. The vow of celibacy was introduced by Mahāvīra in his five fold scheme. In the Jaina scriptures (*āgamas*) it is technically called ‘*bahiddhādāna veramaṇam*’¹, ‘*Bahiddha*’ in Prakṛta means external,

1. *Sthānāṅga* 4,1,266.

‘*ādana*’ means acceptance and *vermaṇam*’ means abstinence. Thus, literally it means abstinence from the acceptance of something external. The term ‘*bahiddha*’ is very wide in its implications. While discussing the types of *parigraha*, its wide ranging implications will be made clear. In Pārśvanātha’s code it is even more extensive as it includes also the vow of celibacy and chastity, which is given the fourth place in *Mahāvīra*’s five-fold scheme. *Aparigraha* or non-possession as the fifth vow restricts its meaning to abstinence from the acceptance of external objects. ‘*Bahiddhadānao*’ confines itself to the external object but the Jaina scriptures do not restrict themselves only to this implication. They have also introduced the finer or subtle implication to this. They point out that sheer non acceptance of something external is meaningless unless non-acceptance is accompanied by detachment, control of desire or cleaving - *mūrchā* or *mamatva*. In *Daśvaikālika Sūtra*, *parigraha* is identified with *mūrchā* or attachment.¹ In the *Tattvārtha Sūtra* Umāswāti has emphatically pointed out that *parigraha* is nothing but ‘*mūrchā*’ or attachment or desire.² Desire being the root of *parigraha*, is the root of suffering³. As soon as desire is overpowered, suffering comes to an end. The *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* tells that desires are as endless as the sky⁴. Hence instead of trying to satisfy them over and over again, they should be destroyed from the roots. Thus mere non-acceptance of external objects is meaningless, if the desire persists. Addition of this finer and subjective implication makes the Jaina vow of *aparigraha* both socially and individually significant. Amṛtacandra points out that he who is unable to root out *mūrchā* or attachment to his belongings cannot establish himself in the vow of non-possession, even if he gives up all his belongings including clothes. It is only *mūrchā* which is the true essence of *parigraha*. Thus anything may become *parigraha* if one has attachment to it, be it living or non-living (*jaḍa* or *cetana*), visible or invisible (*rupi* or *arupi*), big or small (*sthūla* or *sūkṣma*).

1. *Daśavaikālika* 6,21.

2. *Tattvārtha sūtra* 7,21.

3. *Daśavaikālika* 2,5.

4. *Uttarādhyayana* 9,48.

As already mentioned earlier, Jaina scriptures emphasise both aspects of *parigraha*; *bāhya* and *ābhayantara*. These include all external objects of attachment which hinder liberation and all inner attitudes in different forms and stages such as wrong notions (*mithyātva*), lack of self-control or reluctance to accept moral principles (*avirati*), negligence (*pramāda*) etc.

The in-depth study of *parigraha* made by Jaina thinkers can be seen in the different classifications and sub-classifications of *parigraha* discussed in various texts. The broad classes of *bāhya* and *ābhayantara* *parigraha* have been further sub-classified; such as *bāhya* or external objects of *parigraha* are divided into two: *Cetana* (living) and *jaḍa* (non-living). *Cetana parigraha* means attachment to all living beings such as wife, children, servant etc, *jaḍa parigraha* means attachment to all lifeless objects such as clothes, house, money, jewellery etc. *Ābhayantara* or real *parigraha* is subdivided into fourteen types which are wrong notions, attachment for sex, laughter, affliction, fear, disgust etc. *Sthāṇaga Sūtra* cites another classification where it is said to be of three kinds : (1) *kārmaṇa parigraha* (2) *śarīra parigraha* (3) *bhaṇḍopakaraṇa parigraha*. *Kārmaṇa parigraha* can be called *ābhayantara parigraha* while *śarīra parigraha* and *bhaṇḍopakaraṇa parigraha* can be called *bāhya parigraha*. These classes and sub-classes show that *parigraha* is as exhaustive as *himsā*, as a matter of fact many of these sub-classes are just other names for *himsā*. All human vices pertaining to the individual himself, and to society have become *parigraha* or part of *parigraha* in these classifications. Positively speaking they show that *parigraha* has very extensive ramifications, and negatively speaking, they show vagueness and redundancy. However, it is made very clear that in Jainism, *parigraha*, having such wide ranging implications, needs to be curbed and controlled. Without such control social and individual progress is impossible.

The Mahāvratā for monks and nuns

It would not be out of place here to discuss the code of conduct of monks and nuns and also of lay people to throw light on the practical side, that is, how this moral principle is practised.

In the five-fold scheme of *mahāvratas* the fifth vow is ‘*sabbāo parigghao vermaṇaṃ*’ or abstention from all kinds of possessions. The monk vows to give up even the slightest form of attachment to things around him ranging from trivial lifeless objects to human beings the vow demands not only renouncing property, but all sorts of family ties and dependence on family members. The monk becomes a total recluse. Even present-day Jaina monks and nuns are expected, as per scriptural injunctions, to observe this vow in the strict sense. The Digambara monks travel on foot (*pada-yātra*) all over without even clothes and begging bowls; the Śvetāmbara monks too travel with minimum clothes and other requisites. They do not accept anything except what they require at a given time for the fulfillment of their basic necessities. This *mahāvratā* enjoins the monks to abstain from all kinds of possessions, small or large, living or non-living. They should not only abstain themselves from all kinds of possessions, they should not make others keep them, nor should they appreciate such possessions being kept by others. They should abstain from them physically, mentally and verbally.¹ Further, in the text of *Daśvaikālika*, possessions are described as of fifty four kinds which refer mainly to *bāhya parigraha*. The monks are not supposed to be equipped with any such belongings; though both Digambara and Śvetāmbara monks do possess some essential requisites for their daily use. Digambara monks are even more rigid in their basic requisites since they do not even possess clothes and begging bowls, they only possess one or two articles for their daily use, and for maintaining their fundamental vows. Such restriction on possessions is justified in the Jaina scriptures on the ground of a distinction between necessity and desire.² The outcome of desire satisfied is attachment but of necessity satisfied is relief, which is just the physical need related with life itself. Necessities can be fulfilled even without attachment; this, therefore helps in safeguarding the other vows which the monks and nuns undertake. This is the scientific reason for the monks to keep their requisites to the bare minimum. They are, therefore, not included

1. *Daśvaikālika* - 4,11.

2. *Śramaṇa - Sūtra* - Upadhyaya Amarmuni p. 64.

in the class of *parigraha*. In fact, some later texts as *Niryuktis* and *Vimśativimśikā* define *aparigraha* as *svalpa parigraha* (minimum *parigraha*) meaning articles necessary for religious purposes and maintaining good code of conduct¹. Similarly, the list of articles which the monks may use is also given in *Bṛhatkalpa bhāṣya* and *Ācāraṅga*. This detail of articles used by monks assumes importance in the context of their vow of total *aparigraha*. It is to emphasise the fact that in spite of a few possessions for daily use the monks are total '*aparigrahis*' since they do not have any attachment to the object they have.

The five Bhāvanās (sources of inspiration)

Samvāyāṅga Sūtra, another Jaina scripture systematically discusses five kinds of thoughts that help one sustain the vow of *aparigraha*. As it discusses five helpful thoughts (*bhāvanās*) for each of the other vows that the monk undertakes. These bhavanas underline the same idea that the root of *parigraha* lies in attachment to objects of the senses. They, therefore, stress that the monk should have strong inducing forces for abstaining from attachments to the objects (*viśayas*) of sound, colour, taste, smell and touch (*śabda, rūpa, rasa, gandha, and sparśa*) related to the five senses, i.e. ears, eyes, tongue, nose and body. The thoughts that help in gaining control on all objects of senses are the helping thoughts for the observance of the vow.

The details discussed above regarding the vow of the monks (the *mahāvratā* of *aparigraha*) show how the psychological and practical aspects are given due consideration and are dealt with in a balanced manner in the Jaina texts, and also how, under normal circumstances, the monk observes his vow of complete *aparigraha* with minimal use of requisites. These requisites are restricted to fourteen according to some other texts,² and include his clothes, and begging bowls as well. This is the Śvetāmbara view. Digambaras are even more stringent and have further reduced the number of requisites.

1. *History of Jaina Monachism* - S.B. Deo : P. 485
2. *Praśnavyākaraṇa Sūtra, Pañcavimśatikā - Aparigraha Nirūpaṇa*, 771-779.

The apavādas (exceptions)

Under normal circumstances, the Jaina monks and nuns of both Digambara and Śvetāmbara sects are supposed to have only a restricted number of requisites. The monks are allowed noticeable relaxations in the vow in unusual or exceptional circumstances regarding the prescribed number of requisites. They are permitted to extend the number of requisites in such exceptional circumstances. This relaxation is obviously an expression of the pragmatic approach of the Jainas. Thus for instance, *Vyavahāra Sūtra* says that a capable monk should keep only one begging bowl but if he has to serve and help other monks he is allowed to possess more than the prescribed number of begging bowls and other requisites. Likewise, he is allowed to keep the necessary medicines for the ailing monks. These are termed only as relaxations in exceptional circumstances. They are not to be seen as transgressions of the vow. This is a separate and interesting study in the Jaina monastic code. Transgressions or violations of the vow of *aparigraha* entails punishment and atonement for the monks, whereas for permitted exceptions to the rule, no such punishment or atonement is required.

Transgressions and punishments

Regarding transgressions of this precept, S.B. Deo remarks: "Even though literary evidence is scanty to prove the violation of this vow by the monks, inscriptions refer to a number of instances in which the monks were given gifts of land by royal patrons in connection with the temples. It is a moot point what kind of ownership was implied by such dedication of lands"¹. Dr. S.B. Deo also refers to the studies of Mrs. Stevenson² and others who have found some Jaina monks using gold spectacles and possessing currency-notes etc. These are obviously instances of transgressions of the precept. It is also worth noting that many such transgressions went unnoticed by the head of the order. However, we also read that for accepting a piece of cloth worth eighteen Pātaliputra rupees the monk had to undergo a punishment called

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1. *History of Jaina Monachism* - S.B. Deo - P. 435.
 2. *Heart of Jainism* - Mrs. Stevenson.

'*caturguru*' and the like¹. Harsher and harsher punishments are given as the objects become costlier and costlier. It is interesting to note that the punishment depends on the material or economic worth of the object that has been kept in transgression of the established code and not on the intensity of attachment to the object. For example, if a monk accepts an object costing Rs.50,000/- he is awarded *anāvasthāpya* punishment and for accepting an object of the cost of Rs.1,00,000/- the punishment awarded is *pārāncika*.² Even for the use of requisites etc. proper rules were framed and violations of these rules, i.e., using the requisites negligently or without permission from the order are also understood as transgressions of the vow.³ *Niśītha Sūtra* and its *bhāṣya* deal in detail with these violations and transgressions.

The vow of the householder (aṇuvrata)

The householder's vow of *aparigraha* is referred to by various terms some of which have already been mentioned earlier. These are: *aparigrahāṇuvrata* (the smaller vow of non-possession) *parigraha-parimāṇa-vrata* (the vow of limiting one's possessions) *sthūla parigraha viramaṇavrata* (abstinence from major kind of possessions), and *icchā-parimāṇa-vrata* (vow limiting of desires). These terms help in giving us a clear picture of a householder's vow which is of great interest in the present study. In fact, out of the twelve vows of the householder many of them are somehow related to *icchā-parimāṇa*. These are, third, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, tenth and twelfth vows. However, *icchā-parimāṇa-vrata* (limitation of desires) is the most appropriate term since it depicts the true essence of the vow which is the savior of the future of man. This term emphasises the controlling of desires themselves and not merely our physical possessions. This contains the true meaning of the vow. 'Possessions' and 'the desire to possess' are interrelated, that is why in the detailed account of this precept for the householder, limitations of his wordly possessions are categorised into five classes.⁴ These are

1. *Jaina Monastic Jurisprudence* - S.B. Deo P.77.
2. *Bṛhatkalpa Bhāṣya* - 4 - 3893-98.
3. *Jaina Monastic Jurisprudence* - S. B. Deo, P. 75.
4. *Upāsakadaśāṅga Sūtra* 1, 17-20;

farms and houses, (*kṣhetravastu*), gold and silver (*hiranya-suvarṇa*), wealth and corn (*dhana-dhānya*), bipeds and quadrupeds (*dvipada* and *catuṣpada*) and other requisites such as utensils and household articles (*kupya-dhātu*).¹ This list includes almost everything a householder needs for himself and his family for normal living in a society. The duty of the householder lies in limiting all his possessions and consequently curbing his limitless desires to consume and possess, otherwise his possessions and his desires would be endless. In this sense of limitation of these possessions the vow of the householder is called *aṇuvrata* (partial limitation of possessions) as against the *mahāvratā* of the monks - complete abstention from possessions.

The householder is enjoined not to keep possessions beyond a certain limit which he himself has vowed to keep, and he is supposed to observe this vow truly through mind, speech and body. At the same time he is not enjoined to ask others to abstain from keeping similar possessions, i.e., the vow of limitations of possessions is only for himself and not necessarily for making others follow this. This simply implies that the vows of the householders are less stringent as compared to those of the monks. The *Upāsakadaśāṅga sūtra* cites examples of limiting of possessions by the prominent *upāsakas* (householders) as *Upāsaka Ānanda* one of the most well known disciples of *Mahāvīra*. There is no reference of *Ananda*, asking others to curb their possessions. This is the *Svetāmbara* version of this vow. The *Digāmbara* version also is quite the same in essence. According to *Ratnakaraṇḍaśrāvaka-cāra* of *Śubhacandra parigraha-parimāṇa vrata* enjoins the householder to limit his possessions of cash, grain etc., and adopt complete detachment from all that crosses the boundary line of the limits imposed by himself.

Transgressions (aticarās) of the vow

Aticāras are also called *pramāṇātikramas*, meaning crossing the boundary line of possessions. Jain texts, specially *Pratikramaṇa Sūtra*, mention five types of violations of the self-imposed limits of possessions of five categories which are mentioned above. For example *Upāsaka*

1. *Śrāvaka Pratikramaṇa Sūtra* - 5th vow

Ānanda limited his possessions of cattle only to forty thousand.¹ Similarly he limited his possessions of other kinds such as household requisites in size, quality, and quantity. The five transgressions or *pramāṇātikramas* are crossing the limits of (1) farms and houses (*kṣetra-vastu*) (2) gold and silver (*hiraṇya-suvarṇa*) (3) wealth and corn (*dhana-dhānya*) (4) servants, children and animals (*dvipada* and *catuspada*) (5) household goods, utensils and other requisites (*kupyadhātu*). There are two salient points in these five transgressions of this vow. These are: (1) The possessions should be limited. (2) The householder should try to reduce even the limited possessions. In these two features lies the true spirit of *aparigraha* for the householder.

The five transgressions discussed in the Digambara text of *Ratnakaraṇḍaśrāvaka-cāra* have almost the same theme. These are (1) keeping much larger number of vehicles than required, (2) accumulating unnecessary articles in large quantity. (3) expressing temptation or excitement on the large property of others (4) excessive greed (5) overloading animals. Here, the fifth transgression of overloading animals is more a violation of the vow of non-violence than of non-possession. Thus in other words, *aparigraha* of the laity permits the possession of items that fulfill human needs and necessities and perhaps also some comforts, but it does not permit indulging in luxuries or unlimited desires. The spirit of this vow is that accumulation for the sake of accumulation is undesirable and a good householder should cultivate the habit of limiting both his possessions and desires. Here lies the seed of detachment, the essence of Indian ethics. The Gita also repeatedly talks about *anāsakti* (detachment) as central to the moral path. It should be noted that the spirit of limited possessions as shown in the fifth vow of the householder is also enunciated in the sixth, seventh, and eighth vow of the householder in the twelve-fold scheme of the *aṇuvratas* of the householder. These are *diśāparimāṇa vrata*, *upabhoga - paribhoga-parimāṇa vrata* and *anarthandaṇḍa viramaṇa vrata* respectively. *Diśāparimāṇa vrata* refers to the limitation of desires related to mobility or aimless travelling from place to place. This hints at restriction on

1. *Upāsakadaśāṅga Sūtra* 1, 18.

It is interesting to note that he limited number of cattle is as large as forty thousand.

travel which may be favourable for environment-protection. *Upabhoga-paribhoga-parimāṇa vrata* means limiting conspicuous consumption - in other words consumerism. If *icchā-parimāṇa* is determination, *upabhoga-paribhoga-parimāṇa* is its implementation, *anarthādaṇḍa viramaṇvrata* also refers to the limitation of mindless accumulation of things and other articles of consumption that are instrumental in provoking a violent attitude.

Strangely, violation of the vow of non-possession does not degrade the individual in the eyes of the society; on the contrary he gets respect and place in the society whereas for violation of other vows such as non-violence, truth, non-stealing and chastity the individual is downgraded and in some cases ostracised. A murderer or a thief or an adulterous person would not be given a place in society, but a different treatment is meted out to a '*parigrahi*'. A person having too much wealth is seen as a *puṇyātmā* who has done good deeds in his past life. Thus, society needs to check its strange behaviour more objectively and ethically.

The Buddhist view

Unlike Jainism and the Pātañjal yoga system where it holds the fifth place, *aparigraha* is not included in the five fold scheme of principles of morality (*pancaśīlas*) as it has the fifth place in Jainism and Pātañjala yogasystem. The fifth śīla in Buddhism is avoidance of intoxicants (*Sūra mereya-madya pramādatthāna virati*). But it occupies a significant place in Buddhist morality and in the code of conduct of the Buddhist monks and nuns. Buddhism and Jainism are the back bone of Śramaṇic culture. No Śramaṇic culture would survive without giving due importance to *aparigraha*, since it is a culture of renunciation. *Aparigraha* is thus included in the ten *sikkhāpadas* or ten śīlas for the monks in Buddhism, where it is called *jāta-rūpa-rajat-paṭiggahanavirati*¹ meaning that the monk is to abstain from accepting gold, silver and money. If he does not abstain from accepting these, or if he asks others to do so or even uses that which has been accumulated by him or others, he is accused of

1. *Khu. Pātha - Dasasikkhāpadas.*

an offence called *nissaggiya pācittiya* as prescribed in the Vinaya code of conduct for the monks and nuns.¹ Monks are not supposed to have any attachment to worldly possessions such as gold, silver, money, wife, children, servants i.e., to all worldly objects, which could be obstacles to his spiritual growth.²

However, in Buddhism *aparigraha* as a vow for the laity does not exist the way it occurs as *aparigraha anuvrata* for the householders in Jainism. The code of conduct for the householders in Buddhism is not discussed as systematically as in Jainism; though *pañcasīla* mainly refers to the code of conduct of the laity and *daśaśīlas* for the monks and nuns. It becomes, therefore, necessary to collect stray references for *aparigraha* for the householders in Buddhist texts. For the laity too, attachment to possessions is denounced and it is said that one who has attachment to land, money, gold, silver, cattle, horses, servants, wife and relatives and is disturbed by such desires and attachment, and faces disaster just as a boat with a small hole in it ultimately faces disaster.³ *Suttanipāta* clearly says that *parigraha* is an obstacle to *dharma*.⁴ *Dhammapada* emphatically pronounces that one who establishes himself in *aparigraha* and *tyāga* is called a *Brāhmaṇa*.⁵ However, the term *parigraha* as it often occurs in the Buddhist texts refers more to attachment and cleaving towards the objects than the objects themselves. In his exhortation to *Anāthapīṇḍika*, Buddha said : 'It is not life and wealth and power that enslaves man but the cleaving towards them.' He who possesses wealth and uses it rightly will be a blessing to his fellow beings. This point however, is closer to *dāna* than to *aparigraha* as will be seen. There are other references in the Buddhist texts which highlight a modest living as important for spiritual and moral life; there are some *śīlas* meant for monks which denounce involvement in worldly life, such as attending

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1. *Parajika* - p 339.
 2. *S.N. Kuma Sutta* - 4, 5.
 3. *S. N. Kuma Sutta* - 4, 5
 4. *S. N. Sundarikabhāradvāja Sutta* - 16.
 5. *Dhammapada*, 396.

worldly amusements, music, dance, use of perfumes, sleeping on luxurious beds, etc.¹ All these are comparable to Jaina *aparigraha*. Further, the code of conduct of the monks for mindful living suggests the *aparigrahi* way of life. Monks are advised to limit their possessions, and to keep only three *cīvaras* (sets of clothes) and one begging bowl. They are further advised not to keep any such possession to which they may develop attachment later. For their rainy season retreat they are allowed to reside only in a monastery meant for monks and not in any private house belonging to a householder.

After the rainy season of four months the monk should again start his continuous journey for the remaining period of eight months of the year. Monks were initially not allowed to own the monastery, but during king Aśoka's time things changed completely and the small modest housings for monks changed into big monasteries and the ownership of these monasteries too changed from the laity to the monks themselves. Thus monks started living permanently in these monasteries, and the Buddhist *saṃgha* started owning much more than it was initially supposed to.

Dāna, tyāga, santoṣa vis-a-vis aparigraha

Having understood *aparigraha* and its different facets as control of desire (*icchā*) attachment, cleaving (*mūrchā*) and possessions of external objects, it becomes important to understand some other concepts which are seemingly similar to *aparigraha*. Classical texts also discuss them in detail and sometimes use them interchangeably as in the social context they have similar consequential value. They may appear as somewhat similar moral virtues, but on finer analysis they reveal basic differences.

Essentially *aparigraha* is not founded on *tyāga* or renunciation, it is founded on non-acceptance of possessions or curbing or controlling desires and attachment. The stage of '*tyāga*' comes after one has already accumulated possessions. These differences in the source of these

1. Khu. Patha, Dasasikkhapadas.

different virtues leads to different kinds of social systems, or perhaps the different virtues emerge from different kinds of social systems, revealing the psyche of the individual members of the society. *Aparigraha* does not mean renunciation of accepted possessions, it means non-acceptance of possessions not required or needed. *Dāna* means a gift or donation which is closer to the concept of *tyāga* than to *aparigraha*. *Dāna* is a feudalistic virtue whereas *aparigraha* is a socialistic virtue. If *aparigraha* becomes a social reality then *dāna* as a virtue will become meaningless. A believer in *dāna* may justify limitless accumulation first and then give in charity to the needy later; not only this, he may even justify disparities in society, since this would help him to be 'virtuous.' In fact, limitless accumulation of goods may become a virtue in a consumeristic affluent society where aimless production and consumption continues. The donor will always feel great after having given donations. On the other hand, the donee would continue to feel weak and indebted, and would never imagine himself as equal to others. *Dāna* may lead to an attitude of superiority in the donor and inferiority in the donee. The virtues of equality, fraternity and justice would take a back seat. Thus, *dāna* should be understood and practised as an interim or intermediate virtue in a good society. It is a virtue in an unequal society or a developing society. It can be used as a way of atonement. It cannot, however, be taken as equal or at par with *aparigraha*, which puts human dignity at the highest level. *Aparigraha* is eco-friendly and anti-consumeristic, whereas *dāna* may not provide a permanent solution for environmental degradation nor would be able to curb consumerism.

The virtue of *santoṣa* (contentment) as one of the *niyamas* (with *śauca*, *svādhyāya* etc.) and one of the second *yogāṅga* in the Pātañjala yoga system is closer to *aparigraha*, than to *dāna*. It is an observance, a form of practice which the individual has to adopt. It is more than an abstention as the *yamas* are. Thus *aparigraha* is an abstention, but *santoṣa* is a step further than *aparigraha*; it involves the continuous practice and adaptation of *aparigraha*, and is a stage when *aparigraha* sets in or is fully established. It is the stable psychological state of *aparigraha*; it is not temporary and transient, but durable and lasting.

Contentment, however, may have another dimension of the individual in the society, which may lead to a form of dullness or lethargy in the individual and loss of thrill or excitement in society. This would simply mean that the pace of change in society would slow down, not that the change will not take place at all. And very soon individuals and society would adjust themselves comfortably to a slower pace of change. The positive side of this would be that the members of society would be less susceptible to mental depression and anxiety caused by the phenomenon of the constant rat race in a consumeristic society. Consumeristic society, objectively speaking, is making a mockery of *aparigraha*. Accumulation of wealth and other material riches are only giving a false assurance of security to the individual and continuously overpowering him, but truly speaking the individual feels more and more insecure from within. This insecurity further leads to more and more accumulation and possessions and the vicious cycle goes on.

Dāna in classical texts

Dāna means gift of donation. In spite of the basic difference in *dāna* and *aparigraha* in their source or origin both these virtues have, to some extent, the same basic intention behind the action of the person, i.e., human welfare. While comparing the two concepts of *dāna* and *aparigraha* it may be noted that what is explicit in *dāna* is implicit in *aparigraha* and what is explicit in *aparigraha* is implicit in *dāna*. This means that in *dāna* detachment from objects of the world is implicit or secondary, whereas the well-being of others is explicit or primary. In *aparigraha* on the other hand, detachment from the world of objects is explicit, and well-being of others is implicit. *Dāna* makes human welfare obvious and *aparigraha* makes the individual's moral or spiritual upliftment obvious. *Dāna* emphasises the act of giving something; *aparigraha* relates to detachment and initial self-control. Thus *dāna* and *aparigraha* explicate the Brahmanic and Śramanic ideals and also explicate their difference between the two ideals. Further, while *dāna* and *aparigraha* for the laity (*aṇuvrata* of the householder) have something in common, *dāna* and *mahāvratā*, or complete *aparigraha* of the monks have little in common.

The term 'dāna' occurs quite often in Brahmanical literature and is regarded as immensely valuable. Every householder is expected to perform the ritual of dāna. The *dānāstutis* of *Rgveda*¹ reveal that the poets and purohitas were generously gifted by their patrons and the kings were the greatest donors to their priests, gifts being made out of their personal property. Dānāstutis are compilations of the praises of the gifts made by the kings to the priestly class and which commemorate the liberality of the princes. It is worth noticing that *dāna* meant a return gift or reward for faithful services by the priest or any other employed servant. The receipt of gifts formed the principal source of income of the priest (*brāhmaṇas*). "What has once been promised to a Brāhmaṇa may be claimed by him as an outstanding debt. Their greatest means of support consisted in grants of land including sometimes houses, gardens, tanks etc. given in perpetuity to gods or priests²." Thus according to *Rgveda* dāna is rated as a virtue of supreme importance.³

In the *Brāhmaṇas*, dāna is regarded as one of the three important duties - those of *yajña*, *dāna*, and *svādhyāya*. Though, the concept mainly emphasises the material act of donation as having social value, but the liberality in doing so however, implies giving up of attachment to possessions by the donors. In this sense it has some resemblance to *aparigraha*.

In the Upanisads also dāna is given an important place. It is considered the primary virtue for all men. A parable from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* throws light on the meaning of 'da' as dāna. While communicating the knowledge which Prajapati possessed, said that he meant dāna by the syllable 'da' which should be practiced by all men, whereas he meant *dayā* (compassion) to be practised by demons, and *damana* or self control to be practised by gods.⁴ This shows that dāna is a particularly human virtue and is recognised as such by Prajapati, since

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1. *Cambridge History of India* - Vol. I, P. 85.
 2. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* Vol. 6, P. 214.
 3. *Rgveda* - 10, 107, 2
 4. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* - 5,2,3,

love and charity would help in cultivating equality among all human beings. In *Chāndogya* also *dāna* is given the foremost place in the three cardinal virtues.¹ *Mahānārāyaṇa* also regards *dāna* as equal to *yajña* which is praised by every living being.²

Upaniṣadic thought makes a noticeable development by speaking not only of the value of *dāna* but also of *aparigraha*. The distinction occupied by worldly possessions in the *Vedas* and *Brahmaṇas* seems to become less significant, and non-attachment for such possessions starts gaining importance. Deeper, abstract concepts gained ground in Upaniṣads. Thus consequently *aparigraha* assumes importance in Upaniṣads beside *dāna*.

As mentioned earlier, *aparigraha* is interpreted as abstention from acceptance of gifts in *Pātañjala-yoga Sūtra*, as a abstention from acceptance of gifts. So in the process of development of ethical thought in classical literature up to the *Yoga sūtras* two virtues come to the forefront : (1) giving gifts (*dāna*), and (2) non-acceptance of gifts (*aparigraha*). It may appear that the two do not go together but it is not really so, as both these implications essentially refer to non-attachment either in the form of giving gifts or in the form of non-acceptance of gifts.

In Jainism also *dāna* is recognised as an important duty of a householder. The twelve-fold list of vows of the householder, includes the twelfth vow of *atithisamvibhāga*, i.e., keeping an equal share of food and other necessary requisites for the guests. The term '*atithi*' refers specially to monks and nuns who visit the households of the laity without prior appointments. The householders gladly offer the monks whatever they require for their living. This is clearly the practice of *dāna*. *Dāna* to monks and nuns is specially rewarding according to Jainas. It is one of the four religious practices.³ The *Tirthankaras* start giving in charity

1. *Chāndogyopaniṣad* - 2,23.
2. *Mahānārāyaṇa* - 8, 1 and 21, 2.
3. *Saptatisasthāna Prakaraṇa* 96.
4. *Ācārāṅga*, 2, 23, 112.

one year in advance, before they are ordained.⁴ *Daśvaikālika* makes a significant remark: one who gives in charity without thinking of reward and one who takes something without attachment reaps good fruit in the next life.¹ Thus *dāna* has a considerable importance in Jainism. But the key point, which, should be borne in mind is that *dāna* gives importance to the donee - i.e the object, and the centre for *aparigraha* is the subject, the essence of which is *icchā-parimāṇa*.

Buddhist ethics also accept *dāna* as an important moral principle, more so in Mahayana sect, where it is the first stepping stone to *bodhi*². For a Mahayani aspirant of *bodhi* the observance of *pāramitās* is fundamental. *Jātaka* stories relate some of the previous births of the Buddha; during these births the *Bodhisattva* was preparing himself to attain enlightenment and was gradually cultivating certain perfections. It is these perfections that are called the *pāramitās* which are six in number. Some texts, however speak of ten *pāramitās*. Among these six *pāramitās*, *dāna pāramitā* occupies the first place. It means perfection in generosity for all living beings. The texts say, that one attains perfection in this *pāramitā* only when he is prepared to give away everything he has. He should not be interested even in knowing who gets the donation, nor should he think of getting any reward out of this. He should care only for the well-being of the one who is given the donation. After achieving this *pāramitā* (perfection) others such as *śīla*, *prajñā* etc. will follow. This shows that *dāna pāramitā* is the stepping stone to moral development. One *Jātaka* story relates the previous birth of *Bodhisattva* when he is born as a wise hare and tell his friends : 'Gifts should be given, moral conduct guarded and the formal acts of observance carried out.'³ He further says : 'A gift given by one standing fast in moral conduct is of great value. Therefore if any beggar comes to you give him the food that would have been eaten by you.'⁴

1. *Daśavaikālika*, 5, 100.

2. *Sikṣā Samuccaya* - P. 34.

3. *Jātaka Story* No. 316 - *Jātaka Stories* Vol. 3.

4. *Jātaka Stories* (Compare - *Jaina aṣṭvavratā of atithi sarhivbhāga*).

In *Nidānakathā*, which is an introduction to *Jātaka Kathā*, the stories of Buddha's past lives are related, from his life as Sumedha up to his life in the monastery of Jetavana. Buddha is said to have searched the entire cosmic order to discover the conditions helpful for enlightenment.¹ While meditating on them Buddha realised that *dāna-pāramitā* (perfection of generosity) is the first and foremost condition to enlightenment, a condition that was preached and practised by former Bodhisattvas. And he admonished himself thus : 'O wise Sumedha, from now onwards you fulfill the first perfection of *dāna*, just as an overturned water pot discharges whole of water and holds back nothing, without regard to wealth, wife, fame, child or one limb or the other of the body, you will become a Buddha seated at the foot of bodhi tree.'² Thus Buddha laid emphasis on the perfection of *dāna*, as the great highway followed by mighty sages of the past. *Dāna*, thus, hints at non-attachment of possessions that one has, but its importance is pronounced more for the laity than for the monks, who, as it is, have limited possessions, and therefore have little to offer as *dāna*. Thus, though analytically *aparigraha* and *dāna* are different in their meanings, both imply the limitation of desires, at the personal level, and the spirit of generosity at the social level. It follows therefore, that without control of desires as our foundation of social well-being we may be heading towards a form of collective insanity. *Aparigraha* along with *ahimsā* is the solution to check this and to move towards collective social life.

Aparigraha in different faiths

Christian view

In Christianity the principle of non-possession is evident in the Ten Commandments as the injunctions against covetousness along with others. 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house', and 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox nor his ass nor anything that is thy neighbour's'.³

1. *Jātaka Nidānakathā* - Jayawickrama - Introduction p. 31.
2. *Ibid*
3. Exdus - 20.

The commandments on covetousness may not appear abstruse or philosophical, but the ethical implication is clear and straight, and brings home to the people what they should abstain from : abstinence from covetuousness is the main theme. Possessions and richness are obstructions in reaching God. A greedy person becomes restless in accumulating wealth, but he does not know that he invites his own downfall.¹ However this does not preach inactivity or laziness. It is simply a kind of caution suggesting that psychologically wealth is a source of distraction; it is a form of attachment since wherever you have your treasure you have your heart.² Jesus Christ stressed that 'it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. 'He who lays up treasures for himself is not rich towards God.'³ The New Testament repeatedly points out that one should be rich in doing good deeds rather than in laying up treasures upon earth where moth and rust spoil and corrupt everything and where thieves break in and steal. The faithful should accumulate for themselves in heaven, where nothing gets spoilt.⁴ The disciples of Jesus Christ also said that greed for money and wealth is the root cause of innumerable evils and which may lead to going astray from right faith and action. Perhaps it is because of these strong exhortations that love and service for mankind has become a very pronounced theme of Christianity. Late Mother Teresa's extraordinary service to mankind and her congregation of 'Sisters of Charity' is a living example.

Aparigraha in Islam

Prophet Mohammad preached that the next world is as important in our life as this world which is brief and temporary, and where everything is perishable. His own life was an example of *aparigraha*. He had so much wealth around him but he always wore old clothes and torn shoes, since he discouraged the accumulation of wealth. Islam

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1. *Book of Sirach* - 23, 4
 2. St. Luke - 34.
 3. St. Luke - 12, 21.
 4. St. Mathew - 6, 19, 20.

recommends five important principles as the duties of every Muslim, these are : *tauheed* (belief in one God), *namaz* (prayer), *roza* (fasting) *zakat* (voluntary donation), and *haj* (pilgrimage). Voluntary donation is the fourth duty. It is said that it is the duty of every muslim to spend his money for good causes; he should voluntarily donate 2.5 per cent of his income for the service of the poor, orphans and handicapped. This is like voluntary income tax. Just as prayer and fasting are the duties of a muslim, voluntary donation is also a duty of good muslim. The reason behind this is obvious - that the gap between the haves and the have-nots should be reduced, and everyone should get the basic needs and necessities fulfilled for survival. According to Islam these duties not only have relevance for social orderliness and justice in this world but also for next world. 'Those who do their daily prayer and give their voluntary donations have true faith in me.'¹ Zakat is essentially an Arabic term which literally means spiritual growth and purification. It has come to mean that a part of one's income should be spent on good deeds recommended by God (Allāh) such as helping the poor, sick and needy. It is a way of self-purification and self-development and most importantly curbing one's worldly attachments for human welfare. It is way of returning one's debt taken from God. 'If a man does not return God's gifts to men who are His creatures, his wealth and self both become impure.'² Similarly *sadqa* (sacrifice) is also mentioned in the Quran *sadqa* relieves a man of many of his faults so that he becomes pure from within. If *sadqa* is given openly, it is good; but if it is given secretly to the poor and needy it is even better for you.'³ Islam condemns consumerism and extravagance. 'Extravagants are only devil's companions.' These habits are decried in Islam as they would lead to corruption, violence and criminalisation of society. There is also a set code for tax collection in Islam suggesting humane treatment to tax-payers.

Thus the Islamic economic system is based on social justice and balance. It seems there is a form of voluntary socialism in Islam,

1. *Surah An- Naml* - 3.
2. Quran Rampur, P. 1230.
3. *Surah Al Bakr* - 271.

that condemns too much accumulation of wealth, indicating that Islam has its own principle and its practice of 'iccha-parimana'.

Mahatma Gandhi's aparigraha and trusteeship

Mahatma Gandhi's faith in *aparigraha* is well-known and shown by his reverence for two important lines of *Iśo-paniṣad*.¹ But his uniqueness in this area is because he had a detailed human agenda, and a practical mission for mankind. To him ethics meant virtues or values to be absorbed in life for which he made his own life a living example. His commitment to simplicity in life is the essence of his practical ethics. Because of this ethical strength he could present his programme of trusteeship. He suggested to the eminent industrialists and wealthy people of his time that they voluntarily become trustees of the movable and immovable property which was more than their requirement, and vow to use this properly for the welfare of the under-privileged sections of the society, whatever they own is because of the labour and hard work of those who have helped them in accumulating it. In other words their possessions also belong to the people who have been instrumental in producing them. This ideology, Gandhiji felt, would completely overhaul the social structure. Thus in his later years Gandhiji very vehemently started propagating his views on trusteeship, where the owner becomes the trustee, and does not assert his ownership. Gandhiji said he would not discourage them from increasing their accumulations or possessions if they could do so by their acumen and intelligence, but they should refrain from asserting their ownership to these accumulations, and dedicate it to the society. The underlying principle behind this philosophy is, 'Whatever God has given me is being finally handed over to God.' Accordingly owner will change into a caretaker. Gandhiji later extended this philosophy to the body, mind and intellect too, of which the individual is not really the owner. It seems, in the broad outline of 'trusteeship' of Gandhiji, there is a combination of both *dāna* and *aparigraha* implying that the benefits of our possessions should go directly to the deserving class and also absence of attachment (*mūrchā*) or non-acceptance of

1. *Iśopaniṣad* - 1.

more and more possessions by the owner.

Whatever may be the philosophical and practical implications of trusteeship and the difficulties in implementation of this principle, but it cannot be denied that the moral principle of *icchā-parimāṇa* is fully reflected in trusteeship and it seems extremely difficult to doubt the moral basis of this principle. And as it often happens the zeal and the intention of the pioneer unfortunately is not carried forward by the followers with the same enthusiasm. It is possible that Gandhiji's trusteeship may not offer a final solution, but it is certainly a good transitional solution for a society involved in continuous growth of riches and the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.

Aparigraha, socialism and communism

Socialism and communism are political philosophies that arose as a reaction to the individualistic thought, which implied state intervention in the affairs of the members of the state for the good of society as a whole. A chain of theories developed in this direction with major or minor changes as utopian socialism, democratic socialism, nationalist socialism, fabianism, scientific socialism etc. It is not important here to go into the details of these philosophies and their differences. Our aim here is only to understand a powerful philosophy which tries scientifically to propagate economic equality for the welfare of all. The essence of these philosophies is that state intervention will help reduce economic disparity among the members of the state, and social and economic exploitation of the less privileged becomes extinct. In other words a 'classless society' is the ideal. Thus this philosophy is essentially based on the economic restructuring of society for human development. It is not wealth or property alone, but every material thing required for human living, which is necessary for man's physical needs. In this broad sense economics is the basis of socialism.

Marx became the most outstanding thinker and the promulgator of socialism or communism, in addition to many other thinkers of this philosophy. His aim was to establish a classless society where everyone works according to his ability and gets his economic share according to

his needs. He visualised human society like an undivided family, where exploitation of one individual by another, of one class by another is not possible. With this objective he devised a programme in which the means of production and distribution become the property of the state, and no individual person, family or class could claim ownership rights over it. The profits of production would then not go to the select few, but would be used for the entire society and its members for the satisfaction of their needs. The state does not tolerate any idle and unemployed person. Everyone should work, not only for himself but for the society as a whole. The result of this programme would be the creation of a society that would continue on its own without any interference of the state, and thus become a 'stateless society' or in other words the state would 'wither away'. This is an ideal dream-world. Who could object to such an ideal society? What more could '*aparigraha*' offer for a social system? Thus far it looks as if Mahavira is reincarnated in the pioneers of socialism or communism. The philosophy of the 'the entire world as a family' as advocated in Indian classical literature is given a fresh rejuvenation, the individual becomes a very modest entity and 'society' and 'social welfare' and 'all the members of society' take the key role. However, the picture of similarity drawn between this dream world and *aparigraha* should not outweigh the differences. The enthusiasm and the zeal to bring about a drastic change in the social system made Marx overlook the importance of the means used to achieve the end and only concentrate on the end, that is economic equality. The oppressed becoming the ruling class meaning the rule of the proletariat and then a classless society, and then a stateless society would become a reality. This end, he emphatically repeated, would be achieved by a revolution which he defined as a class-struggle carried to its ultimate conclusion, which is inevitable but he did not want to wait for its coming on its own. It has to be brought about, which alone would give the working class its birthright. Revolution and a bloody revolution was the only solution for Marx. It is here, with the concept of revolution as bloody revolution, that *aparigraha* and socialism or communism fundamentally differ. The end ignoring the means will not be entertained by the exponents of *aparigraha*. How can such an ethical/

social goal be achieved by arousing and provoking the devil in us, how would the devil look after our ethical goal; it looks like a self-contradiction. Thus even though the goal for both socialism and *aparigraha* is the same but the ways to achieve it are in direct contrast to each other, even before the goal is attained it would get a jolt at the interim stage such as a stage of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. How can a dictator be expected to look after the freedom and dignity of mankind be it in the form of a monarch or a proletariat. Hence, it seems clear that the ways and means of attaining the ideal through 'voluntary socialism' of *aparigraha* and through the bloody revolution of Marxism would be fundamentally different, since one provokes the devil in man and the other constantly weakens him to keep the angel strong and alive in him.

Thus, to conclude, *aparigraha*, *icchā parimāna* is not an abstract philosophy, it is a vision of life with the solution to a number of problems that society is facing - economic, social, political, familial and personal. For social reconstruction, in fact, for survival of society voluntary limitation of desires and personal possessions is the only solution. Environmental degeneration due to too much spread of consumeristic ways of life can be checked only by the self-imposed discipline of limited desires and limited possessions. Amassing of wealth for the sake of amassing it will not help the individual nor the society; it is harmful for both, with increase in disparities leading to consequent evils of mental restlessness, jealousy, envy, corruption. The middle path of *icchā-parimāna* would check both poverty and luxury with the motto that 'possessions are only a means and not the ends in themselves'.



EPILOGUE

The terrain of ideas in the three essays makes two extremes clearly visible in whatever pairs of terms they may appear; as the individual versus society, materialism versus spiritualism, present versus future, short-term gains versus long-term gains, instant pleasure versus durable lasting happiness, glitzy present day world of goods versus real Good, man's existence in the glossy present day world of advanced science and technology catering to the needs of select few versus the survival of the entire human race and finally arbitrary, thoughtless purposeless consumption versus contentment or limitation of desires. And it is evident that there is a positively clear tilt and conviction towards the latter extremes than towards the former ones.

The essay on consumerism in no uncertain terms shows that it is a social evil making more and more firm base in our society leading to a sick society. If the sickness is not cured at the right time it will take a malignant form, rather than remaining ordinarily curable. This has entered into a very broad area of man's day-to-day life. It does not confine to markets, Departmental Stores or Malls of the Western world but has reached, with a volcanic force, the under-developed countries. 'Development' has been assigned a very wrong connotation unfortunately. Even when we are sitting contentedly at home and trying to give ourselves peace of mind, the idiot box (rightly christened) gives more than a bearable amount of restlessness to make us vote for conspicuous consumerism and the peace of mind changes into piece of mind or rather pieces of mind. Whereas this medium can work wonders in eradicating the pollution of our mind infected by the craze for conspicuous consumption and philosophy of profits at all costs. Picasso's definition, 'Art is the elimination of the unnecessary' has been thrown into the junk box. Plato's lines, 'Beauty of style and harmony and grace and good rhythm depend on simplicity' are comfortably forgotten.

This essay, thus, comprehensively dwells on what consumerism means in present day society and how greatly it affects our psyche, and the areas which have been engulfed by it. What drastic consequences it

might lead to ? The situation is gloomy. To substantiate this thesis, the views of authentic, knowledgeable thinkers and writers are cited to throw light on the dire need for putting a brake on consumerism. The practice of blind imitation or aping the West, wastage as a sign of affluence, the craze for newer and newer things and the uncontrolled spirit of competition are becoming so predominant that restlessness has become a regular routine of our life specially for the younger generation since their need to survive in such a world is much greater.

When the British came to India, the task of 'civilising Indians' was the 'white man's burden', the civilising institution then was imperialism; now, it is the market or consumption that has become the sole teacher. Civilising ability is characterised as material consumption by those who can afford it, by their elegant life style, their long retinue, they alone can teach the rest of the society what civilisation means; and if for some reason they are unable to learn the art of civilisation, out of their restlessness they take to anti-social activities and thus a parallel society of antisocials would emerge.

In the euphemism of 'growth', 'development' advancement and 'modernity' insane values are being nurtured, wrong notions of economics have been supplied to regularise the ethically questionable notion of self-interest, (that too, purely material self-interest). The philosophy of consumerism is given approval, even though there are clear indications of its drastic consequences. As a result consumerism is damaging the very foundation of society.

Environmental degradation is seen here as the logical outcome of consumerism rather than as an outcome of the population explosion as is often wrongly assumed. Factors known as causes of environmental loss are the obvious pollutants such as water pollutants, vehicular pollutants, atomic pollutants, sound pollutants all of which are creating havoc. Some solutions are offered but they are neither fully effective nor is there the zealous will to implement them. Interestingly, a double game is being played, which in actual reality is superficial eco-friendliness and real ecological-degradation. Thus environmental awareness only exists at the intellectual or outer level and is nothing

more than this; though there is a lot of lip-service paid to the enhancement of respectability of environment and its protection.

The crux of this ironic situation is that consumerism is flourishing in reality and environmental-protection is only a pious slogan. It seems that the former would not let it go beyond this point since the edifice of economics and the grandeur of science and technology would not survive.

In this context of the parallel movement of the two contradictory (consumerism and environment-protection) *aparigraha* or *icchā-parimāṇa*, meaning limitation of desires, and corresponding limitation of possessions, with a very systematic code of conduct for monks as well as for the laity, has a very strong intellectual conviction and humane appeal. This must be realised, as this is the only humane solution. However, it would be too optimistic to see it as a readily implementable solution, in a world where sheep are known for their herd-instinct but men are no less. There is a natural scepticism about its feasibility.

At this point, it seems necessary to list the difficulties likely to be faced in the actual implementation of *aparigraha*. Undoubtedly *aparigraha* has a very strong case for mental, spiritual and social environment, for the prolongation of life and peace for mankind. This can be corroborated by the fact that solutions have been offered from time to time, beginning with classical ethico-religious traditions to political theories such as socialism/communism, to Mahatma Gandhi's concept of trusteeship and *sarvodaya*. Earlier pages show the confidence in practicability of '*aparigraha*' but doubts about its practical implementation in the present-day scenario keep bothering us off and on. Thus we may ask : (1) How do we determine the limits of our possessions and desires as individuals and as a society ? (2) What are the principles of justification of limits set? (3) Who will be the final authority to demarcate the limits? Where the individual is too weak as a force and where the society which functions arbitrarily rather than on the basis of a strong solid principle, and where the majority of people just follow others and what is in vogue. These questions make the serious-minded even more serious and even those having good intentions find themselves in a blind alley.

There is however, one thing that the majority of people in the society can do relatively easily, and that is to develop a spirit of appreciation for those who practice *aparigraha* or *icchā-parimāṇa*. If they want to be extravagant they should be extravagant in their spirit of appreciation for them. To like *aparigrahīs* would be more effective than to 'despise *parigrahīs*'. This would indeed set the ball rolling. It may be said that the voice of conscience is the ultimate answer. This may work at the individual level but could it work at the social level ? This is a difficult question to answer. Another pertinent question is : how will *aparigraha* or *icchā-parimāṇa* deal with the human curiosity to know more and more in the world of science and technology and its progress, since the craze for the new is not new to human nature and human civilization.

This much, however, is certain. A lame or a wounded society of lost and bewildered people will always need the crutches or healing touch of an ethical principle like *aparigraha* or *icchā-parimāṇa*.

'There are voices which we hear in
solitude, but they grow faint and
inaudible as we enter the world'.

-Emerson



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