

THE CONCEPT OF SAMATA AND ITS RELEVANCE IN THE MODERN WORLD

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Man turns to philosophy to have a better understanding of his life, his place in this vast universe and to understand his relationship with the society he lives in. It is the expectation that an understanding of philosophy would enhance his understanding of life in its social context. This is the very criterion on which a common man interested in philosophy evaluates any new line of thought presented before the world.

Jainism emerged as a school of philosophy against the excesses of the Brahminic school. It showed a path of osterity and self control that could return the values of co-existence to a society fragmented into a number of sections. But gradually contradictions grew within its fold and inspite of the fact that Jainism as a religion followed by people has expanded, its true followers have grown less, it lost its impact as a philosophy governing the lives of people. It so happened, perhaps, due to the fact that it did not mould itself to the requirements of the rapidly changing world. The values which it upheld, the puritanic life it dictated and the abstract end which demanded sacrifice even of the many necessities of life were perhaps too much for the modern man.

In this context the philosophy of samata emerged as a practical concept. Scholars debate whether it is a mere theory or an entire philosophy of life. But keeping that apart if one looks at it he would undoubtedly find it a practicable way of conducting one's life and enabling the construction of society based on equity. It has been possible to incorporate issues related to practical problems of our life simply because the philosophy does not overlook the political, economic and social responsibilities of an individual in the modern society. It is not merely a product of intellectual gymnastics but is a concrete method of uplifting the life style of individuals to attain a higher social end. The seeds of this philosophy were implicit in the teachings of the Teerthankars :

समियाए धम्मे ।

Equity is the highest religion, it is said.

In a society ridden with the extreme diversity as is found all over the world today (excluding a few communist countries), this philosophy is a redeeming concept. More so because it complements the Marxian philosophy of an ideal communism. It adds the spiritual aspect lacking in the former. It is very close to the concept of a stateless

society where people are self-governed by the value of self-control, co-operation and discipline. It provides for a society where people get their reward on the basis of their merit and performance :

“यह सिद्धान्त मानव - मात्र को गुण, कर्म, योग्यता एवं प्रतिभा के अनुसार समानता की व्यवस्था करता है ।

The philosophy of samata aims at developing equity as a thought, a point of view in the mind of man. It is not anything to be exercised by a system of administration over the masses. Equity in thought, speech, attitude and action will ultimately make a society based on it :

“समता दर्शन का लक्ष्य है कि समता विचार में हो, दृष्टि और वाणी में हो तथा समता आचरण के प्रत्येक चरण में हो ।”

This concept is concretised in terms of the steps against individual or party ownership of wealth and power, provision of equal opportunities to all, establishing a code of conduct to be strictly followed by all individuals. It says :

“वर्तमान विषमता के मूल में सत्ता संपत्ति पर व्यक्तिगत या पाटीगत लिप्सा की प्रबलता ही विशेष रूप से कारणभूत है और यही कारण सच्ची मानवता के विकास में बाधक । समता ही इसका स्थाई और सर्वजनहितकारी निराकरण है । — जो समता जीवन के अवसरों की प्राप्ति में होगी सत्ता व संपत्ति के अधिकार में होगी. वह व्यवहार के समूचे दृष्टिकोण में होगी ।”

The Samata Darshan (the philosophy of equity) has been divided into the theoretical aspect, philosophy of life, self realization and divine revelation. It lays down a code of conduct consisting of twenty one points. These have been prepared keeping in view its adoption by average human beings. The philosophy preaches a feeling of 'all for one and one for all'. The greatest emphasis is on a socially desirable way of life with money and power having a lower importance than dutifulness and consciousness. It also emphasizes the independent existence of all organisms and believes in equitable distribution of all the essentials of life.

The philosophy of Equity maintains that the root of inequality lies in the heart of man in the form of desire. This desire has no limits. People are engaged in a ceaseless effort to accumulate more and more of material wealth. Mad in the pursuit of property and power they do all sorts of undesirable things.

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