

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF 'TRIRATNA' IDEAL OF JAINISM

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Jainism, as we know, is famous for its ethical teachings being consequent upon the attainment of liberation. A kevalin (liberated one), free from all 'ghātin' karmas, enjoys infinite bliss, knowledge, faith and power. In order to attain liberation, Jainism lays down certain disciplines. The very first Sūtra of 'Tattvārthasūtra' suggests right faith, right knowledge and right conduct together as path to liberation.¹ These are known as three jewels (triratna) in Jainism.

Now, the belief in the padārthas² (tattvas) such as soul etc. is right faith or intuition. 'Faith in the predicaments is right intuition.'³ To elaborate it another definition follows : 'Acquiescence in the predicaments declared by a jaina is called right faith, it is produced either by natural character or by the guru's instruction.'⁴ This right vision appears to be eight fold viz. (a) niṣaṅkatā (b) niḥkāṅkṣitā (c) nirvikitsā (d) amūḍhadṛṣṭi (e) upabṛhaṇa (f) sthitikaraṇa (g) vātsalya (h) prabhāvanā. Right knowledge is the knowledge of the predicaments and c., according to their real nature, undisturbed by any illusion or doubt. 'That knowledge which embraces concisely or in detail the predicaments as they actually are is called right knowledge by the wise.'⁵ This knowledge is said to be five fold viz. (a) mati (b) śruta (c) avadhi (d) manahparyāya (e) kevala. Right conduct is the abstaining from all actions tending to evil courses by one who possesses faith and knowledge. Right conduct is described as the entire relinquishment of blamable impulses.⁶

1. Samyagadarśanajñāna Cāritāṇi mokṣa mārgaḥ, cf. T. S. I/1.
2. Jainism recognizes the following tattvas viz. soul, non-soul, inflow, bondage, stoppage, shedding of karmic matter and liberation; Ibid 1/4.
3. Ibid.
4. Cf. 'The Sarvadarśanasamgraha' by Madhavacarya, The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi 1961 p. 46.
5. Cf. T. S. I/9 also cf. Svaparāntaram jñātiyaḥ sah jñāti—Istopadesh-33.
6. Cf. 'Samayasāra,' IV/155 also cf. S. D. S. by Madhacarya, pp. 47-48.

Right conduct has been subjected to a five fold division viz. (a) *ahiṃsā* (b) *satya* (c) *asteya* (d) *brahmacarya* (e) *aparigraha*. These five are called 'five vows'¹ in Jainism. These are prescribed for both monks and householders to prepare the ground for attaining 'anantacatuṣṭaya'.² In the case of former, they are termed as great vows (*mahāvratā*); while in case of the latter they are called small vows (*aṇuvratā*). Monks should practise them according to the highest and strictest standard. Householders have been given due considerations. The vow of *ahiṃsā* is the avoidance of injuring life by any act of thoughtless in any morable or immovable thing. To householders it would mean abstinence from killing any animal. Truthfulness is understood as truth in thought, word and deed. *Asteya* means not taking anything in thought, word or action for which one is not entitled. *Brahmacarya* means chastity in word, thought and deed. For a householder it would mean mere cessation from adultery. *Aparigraha* is understood as renunciation of all worldly interests by thought, word and deed.

A pertinent question arises in this context : Why does Jainism not cling to right knowledge alone as the path of liberation ? The cause is obvious. Bondage, here, is the result of perverted vision, knowledge and conduct and hence the above three means, together, are suggested. Moreover, these three are spoken of as interdependent and if any of them is missing, liberation becomes impossible. The text runs thus : 'without right faith there is no right knowledge, without right knowledge there is no virtuous conduct, without virtues there is no deliverance (*mokṣa*) and without deliverance there is no perfection *nirvāṇa*'.³ Thus we see that when these three are united, they become conducive to liberation. They should not be practised severally. As a patient does not recover his disease with the knowledge of medicine alone but by his constant use with a conviction that he will be cured soon; similarly, liberation in life is possible with the practice of these three means mentioned above.⁴

From the discussion made so far, we come to a conclusion that though all the three are equally important for the attainment of liberation

1. Cf. Five yamas in the 'Yoga-Sutra' ii/30.

2. Cf. T. S. VII/2.

3. Uttarādhyayna Sutra XXVIII/30.

4. Akalanka Deva's 'Tattvārtha Vārtika', 1/1, p. 14.

Jainism seems to lay more stress on right action or conduct. Right knowledge and right vision are the theoretical aspects whereas right conduct forms the practical one. It is the right conduct which perfects knowledge, since theory without practice is empty. Right knowledge dawns when all the karmas are destroyed by right conduct. S. Radhakrishnan rightly remarks : ' The materialistic view of karma leads the Jainas to attribute more importance than the Buddhists to the outer act in contrast to the inner motive.'¹

Now let us turn our face to the modern society and observe how the well known triad called the three jewel (right intuition etc.) bear contemporary relevance. A consideration of the temper of the modern world leads us to believe that the most important fact that every social, political or religious thinker has to face not only in India but in any part of the world (so called developed and advanced), is that the social milieu in which he lives, is in a very high degree hostile to the spiritual life. Modern world claims to be progressive for certain reasons. The rapid growth (development) of science and technology has been threatening religions values of life for a considerably long time. It is said to have brought to us prosperity, convenience, sophistication and novelty. That is undoubtedly true. This world teems with objects of comforts provided by science. We are very lavishly enjoying the blessings of science in respect of automobiles, ships and what not. Our cosmonauts have already reached the Moon and think now, to migrate on that. Various discoveries and inventions in the field of medicine and surgery have prolonged the span of human life. The greatness of a nation is measured today by the quality and amount of destructive weapons it possesses. Fabulous sums of money are spent for equipping the nation with sophisticated modern weapons. No one knows what will be the consequence of all this in future, but what it has resulted in something good or bad, is visible to every keen eye. The technological revolution liberates man from his servitude to Nature but it has also the dreadful possibility of man's self-destruction.

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1. 'Indian Philosophy', vol, I, by Radhakrishnan, S. p. 325. George Allen and Unwin Ltd. London, 1929, also cf. 'A History of Indian Philosophy', Vol. I, by Dasgupta, S. N. p. 200, Cambridge University Press, 1969.

The secularised man of today is restless, full of doubts, relentlessly questioning and experimenting. He is sceptical regarding the existence of God, Soul, life after death and liberation. Religion, for him, is the cause of intellectual bondage, failure and lack of vitality, because it believes that all needful truth, is given to man and there is no need for further enquiry and search.¹ It is supposed to be a failure to promote the best life. Overall, its vitality and usefulness is being questioned in this age.

Change is the inexorable law of Nature, I admit. Everything undergoes a change and this is its life. Our present sensibility is the outcome of the same law of Nature. Of course the modern mind wants novelty. Wonderful is the change that has made man forgetful of himself. Behind this present unrest of man of today, there lies a fact that he is not living a fuller life. The hippy movement all over the world, is a clear indication of spiritual unrest. The fact is that the Man is not only a biological entity or even a social animal, but also something more. There is a hidden core of the human personality which lends meaning to life and which gives man no rest till he discovers it. Now, what is it that most of us are seeking? Especially in this world, everybody is trying to find some kind of peace, happiness, a refuge. Surely it is important to find out, is not it? Probably most of us are seeking some kind of happiness in a world that is ridden with turmoil, wars, contention, conflict and strife. That is why, we 'pursue, go from one leader to another, from one religious organisation to another, from one teacher to another.'²

The destructive potentiality of increased scientific power and technological skill can be neutralised only by the development of world community. If human life is to be bearable, such a community must come into existence. This requires a change in human nature, a great wave of generosity. The world cannot be better than the individuals who compose it. Changes of government or economical systems do not help

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1. cf. 'Idealist view of Life', Radhakrishnan, S., p. 43, G. A. U. Ltd. London, 1957.
 2. 'The First and Last Freedom', by Krishnamurti, J. p. 28. London Victor Gallan Ltd. 1967.

us to raise the quality of human beings. We must get rid of our Self-centredness and develop world loyalty. In other words, the crisis of man could only be solved by realizing his spiritual potentialities and his true mission in life, which would spontaneously result in non-injury, non-appropriation, desirelessness, freedom from fear selfless service, Self-realization and Self-knowledge.

The necessity for us is to realize our own selves. After all that is the main issue, is not it ? So long as we do not understand ourselves, we have no basis for thought, we can escape into illusions, can flee away from contention and strife, can look for our salvation through somebody else; but so long as we are ignorant of ourselves, the total process of ourselves, we have no basis for thought, for affection and action. The ideal of 'Triratna' is particularly relevant at the present time marked by spiritual unrest and crisis. The modern mind may not find it possible to believe in God, Soul and immortality but he can not be indifferent to the prospects of peace promised by this ideal. It puts before us the ideal of a perfect human being. Thus Triratna ideal, if put into practice, will establish permanent peace and all selfishness, enmity and malice will disappear. All our conflicts, all our contentions and clashes will come to an end. The life will be harmonious and worth living. Now What else is required by man than to live a heavenly life on the earth ?