

CONTRIBUTION OF JAINISM TO PHILOSOPHY

Jaina means a follower of Jina, which is a generic term applied to those persons (men and women) who conquer their lower nature (passion, hatred and the like) and bring into prominence the highest. There lived many such Jinās in the past and many will doubtless yet be born. Of such Jinās those who become spiritual heads and regenerators of the community are called Arhats (the deserving ones), or Tīrthaṅkaras (bridgemakers in the figurative sense—that is those by the practice of whose teaching we can cross the ocean of mundane life and reach the perfect state). Hence the Jainas are also called Arhats. In each half-cycle of many millions of years twenty-four Arhats are born. In the present half-cycle the last Arhat, Mahāvīra, was born in 598 B.C., in Kuṇḍagrāma, in the territory of Videha. He lived seventy-two years and attained Mokṣa (liberation) in 526 B.C.

When European scholars first began to investigate the history of Jainism, they were struck with the similarities between its ethical code and institutions and those of Buddhism; hence they thought that Jainism must be a branch of Buddhism. But thanks to the labours of Jacobi, Bühler and Leumann, it is now conclusively proved that Jainism is much older than Buddhism. At the advent of the Buddha the Jaina sect had already attained a prominent position in the religious world of India.

We may now turn our attention to the contributions made by Jainism to Philosophy. In India, as

elsewhere, philosophy became possible when the struggles for existence were followed by its enjoyment, when the spirit of conquest gave way to a life of peace and industry. The early effusions of the Aryan people, when we find them on the march of conquest of the aboriginal races of India, are invocations of prosperity on themselves and their flocks: adoration of the dawn, celebration of the struggle between the god who wields the lightning and the power of darkness, and the rendering of thanks to the heavenly beings for preservation in battle. When they settle down, we see them engaged in a high degree of reflection. Reflection is the moving spirit of philosophy. But all primitive philosophy concerns itself with searching for the origin of the world. It postulates, after naive analysis, an original simple substance, from which it attempts to explain the multiplicity of the complex world. Philosophy in this sense assumes various forms. All of them attempt to interpret or rather formulate the law of causation. The Sāṅkhya Philosophy, for instance, tries to explain evolution and even "cosmic" consciousness, and the growth of organs, etc., as proceeding from a simple substance called Prakṛti, or primordial matter. Orthodox philosophical systems of India—that is, those based on the Vedas and the Upaniṣads—adopt either the theory of creation or of evolution, or of illusion to explain the origin of the world. Whatever theory they resort to, a simple substance or substances, intelligent, or unintelligent, is or are postulated as the origin or cause of whatever there exists. Of the primal substance or

substances there is no cause or origin. Early Greek Philosophers—Thales and others—considered the riddle of existence solved when the original material had been stated, out of the modifications of which all things consist. How the original simple substance converted itself into complex substances no philosopher explains. The Jaina position in this matter being peculiar, it will be necessary to take a more extended survey of philosophy.

In the view of Jaina Philosophy, the measure of truth is Samyag-jñāna, that is, knowledge purged of all infatuating elements. The constitution of man is such that as soon as he removes moral vices, his intellectual processes flow into a pure channel. I may add that knowledge as knowledge or morality as morality is not the ideal of the Jainas. In fact, some kind of action always goes with knowledge without action, or action without knowledge. True advancement consists in both being right and consistent.

Coming back to the question of the first beginning of philosophy, we say that primitive systems, in search of reality, are satisfied when they postulate a simple substance for the explanation of the complexity of the universe. This kind of reflection, though primitive, is an improvement on the spirit of conquest, devastation, and extirpation. Centuries of peace, industry, and reflection develop better culture and higher civilization. The history of all nations bears ample testimony to this fact. India is no exception to this rule. The day on which the Aryan ancestors of modern Hindus first began to reflect on

the origin of the universe must be celebrated by them as a national holiday. Unfortunately, such a day cannot be fixed and the Hindus have never had a national spirit.

The Jaina view is that the "realization" of the primal substance, out of which the universe has manifested, is no advancement or progress. The Jainas are the advocates of the development theory; hence their ideal is physical, mental, moral and spiritual perfection. The very idea of a simple substance, without qualities, character and activities, finds no place in the Jaina philosophy, and is regarded as irrelevant and illogical; a characterless cause manifesting as a qualitative effect is a misunderstanding of the law of causation. Cause and effect, substance and manifestation, noumenon and phenomenon, are really identical. Cause is a cause when it is operating, and operating cause is itself the effect. Hydrogen and Oxygen, in their ordinary condition, are not water; vibrating in a peculiar electrical way, they are not only the cause and water the effect, but water is what they are in this relation. Any object, divested of all relations, could not be called by any other name than Being or Ens. As an abstraction or generalization, the process has its use. In order to study the various aspects of things and ideas, this method of analysis is invaluable. But to call Being or "Eternal Ens" the cause or the noumenon, or the absolute, and distinguish it from the effect, calling it the unreal, phenomenon, or relative, is pseudo-analysis. The Jaina process of acquiring knowledge may be described as follows:

First, there is the indefinite cognition as an isolated object or idea; it is the state of the mind prior to analysis, that condition of things to which analysis is to be applied. This is what is really meant by unity, or identity, of the universe with the real which many philosophers proclaim. It makes no difference whether this unity or identity finds its home in a sensuous object or a subjective idea, the process is the same. Next comes analysis—the dissolving, separating, or differencing of the parts, elements, properties, or aspects. Last comes the synthesis, which is putting together the primitive indefinite cognition—synthesis—with the subsequent analysis; so that the primitive cognition shall not be a complete annihilation or disappearance by the condensation of all differences, and so that, on the other hand, the analysis shall not be an absolute diffusiveness, isolation, or abstraction, destructive of all unity, which is not the primitive unity but the relational unity of a variety of aspects. The analytical method is known in the Jaina literature as *Naya-vāda* (consideration of aspects). The synthetical method is known as *Syād-vāda* (doctrine of the inexpugnability of the inextricably combined properties and relations) or *Anekānta-vāda* (doctrine of non-isolation). Voluminous works on this subject have been written by Jaina scholars, all in manuscripts still unpublished.

In illustration of what I have thus stated, I may remark that to a person in whom the first germ of reflection is just born the universe is a vague something, an utter mystery—at the most, a unity with-

out differentiation; analysis leads him to consider its various aspects. He is struck with the change he sees everywhere. The constantly-running waters of decaying plants and vegetables, dying animals and human beings strongly impress him that nothing is permanent. His first generalization, therefore, will be that the world is transitory. After years of research and reflection, he may learn that the things that pass away still exist in an altered condition somewhere. He may now generalize that nothing is annihilated; that notwithstanding the changes that are visible everywhere, the world, taken as a whole, is permanent. Both generalizations are true from different points of view ; each by itself is an abstraction. When one learns to synthesize, he puts together the various aspects he has found of the world, and realizes that the integrality of truth consists in the indissoluble combination of all the possible aspects. The inherence of contrary aspects in a single idea or object seems impossible to the unsynthetic mind. . . . The Jainas do not teach that a thing can be hot and cold at the same moment, but they do teach that a thing cannot be hot absolutely, and cannot be cold absolutely; it is hot under certain definite circumstances, and cold under others. The Jainas do not teach that being and non-being (of itself) should at the same time belong to one and the same thing. What they teach is that in a thing there is being of itself, and non-being of other things, which means that a thing can be fully known only by knowing what it is and what it is *not*. . . .

I shall now state a few of the first principles of

the Jaina philosophy. Its first teaching is that the universe is not merely a congeries of substances, heaped together and set in activity by an extra-cosmic creator, but is a system by itself, governed by laws inherent in its very constitution. Law is not to be understood in the sense of a rule of action prescribed by authority, but as a proposition which expresses the constant mode of action of things or beings under certain definite circumstances. It is not a command, but a formula to which things or beings conform precisely and without exception under definite relations, internal and external. Jainism, therefore, is not a theistic system in the sense of belief in the existence of a God as the Creator and Ruler of the universe; and still the highest being in the Jaina view is a person, and not impersonal, characterless, quality-less being. All that there is in or of the universe may be classified under two heads: (1) Sentient, animate or conscious beings: (a) liberated beings, (b) embodied beings; and (2) Insentient, inanimate or unconscious things or substances. There is not an inch of space in the universe where there are not innumerable minute living beings. They are smaller than the minutest things we can see with the aid of a microscope. Weapons and fire are too gross to destroy them. Their life and death depend on their vital forces, which are, of course, related to the surroundings. Clay, stones, etc., as they came fresh from the earth, have life. Water, besides being the home of many living beings, is itself an assemblage of minute animate creatures.

Air, fire, and even lightning, have life. Strictly speaking, the physical substance of clay, water, stone etc., is a multitude of bodies of living beings. Dry clay, dry stone, boiled water, are pure matter, and have no life. Vegetables, trees, fruits, have life. When dried or cooked there is no life in them. Worms, insects, fishes, birds, animals, human beings, are all living beings. There are living beings on stars and planets, and even beyond the starry region. "Life" is only an abstraction. It is not something concrete, superadded to the constituent elements of living beings. It is a generalization, derived from our observation of varying modes of behaviour of such living beings. The stage of actual development of one living being being different from that of another, living beings are classified in many ways in the Jaina philosophy. The simplest classification is based on the number of organs of sense they have developed.

Besides this category of living beings, there is one of inanimate substances. These are matter, two kinds of ether (one, the fulcrum of motion, the other, the fulcrum of rest), and space. We must bear in mind that ether and space are not matter in the Jaina view. Matter has various qualities and relationships which the former do not possess. Time is also called a substance in a figurative sense, a generalization of the moving activities of things and beings.

Every living being, from the minutest to the highest embodied one, is the centre of innumerable potential and actual energies, which are called

Karmas in the Jaina philosophy. The word "Karma" has an interesting history. In the Vedas it means the performance of sacrifices, offering of oblations to nature-gods and manes or deceased ancestors. Karma-mārga—the path of works—is nothing but ritualistic Brahmanism. In the words of Sir Monier Williams: "Not even Jewish literature contains so many words relating to sacrifice as the literature of the Brahmins. The due presentation of sacrificial offerings formed the very kernel of all religious service. Hymn, praise and prayer, preaching, teaching, and repetition of the sacred words of scripture were only subsidiary to this act. Every man throughout his whole life rested all his hopes on continually offering oblations of some kind to the gods; and the burning of his body at death was held to be the last offering of himself in fire (antyeṣṭi)." In later literature, *Karma*, in addition to the above meaning, also meant duty and good and bad actions. In the Jaina literature we have a fuller meaning. It is any energy which an embodied being generates—be it vital, mental, or moral—and which keeps him in the mundane world—the Samsāra. Karma, in short, is the whole Samsāric make-up of an embodied being. It is entirely divested of the sacrifice idea. Karmas which keep the individual in a backward condition are known as Pāpa, those which help him in advancement are Puṇya. The Jaina philosophy gives a detailed enumeration of Karma, and explains, how they are attracted (Āsrava), how they are assimilated with the individual (Bandha), how their inflow

can be stopped (Samvara), how they can be entirely worked out (Nirjara), and what the ultimate state of a perfected individual is (Mokṣa). This particular branch of philosophy, therefore, includes topics like sensations, perceptions, consciousness, pains and pleasures, moralities of life, moral depravities, building of the bodies and all factors of the individuality. No other philosophical system in India has gone into so many details of life-building as Jainism has done. Like other systems, Jainism teaches the doctrine of rebirth, the nature of which depends on the nature of the Karmas that are just ripe to manifest themselves soon after death.

It will be seen from the foregoing remarks that the ideal of the Jaina philosophy is the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual perfection and (after death or rebirth if necessary) attainment of perfect spiritual individuality, which does not disappear, is not dissolved, is not merged into a supreme being, is not a state of unconsciousness, but persists for ever and consists of perfected consciousness and highest rectitude. This being the goal of every living being, life in every form is highly respected by the Jainas. The universe is not for man alone, but is a theatre of evolution for all living beings. Live and let live is their guiding principle. *Ahiṃsā paramo dharmaḥ* —Non-injury is the highest religion. Their ceremonial worship, institutions, manners and customs (purely Jaina) all rest on this grand fulcrum of *Ahiṃsā*. Man, in his desire to continue his life forces, so that he may do the highest good while living here, is obliged to destroy life; but the less

and lower form of life he destroys, the less harmful Karmas he generates. This is the basis of the strict vegetarianism of the Jainas. Acting on that idea, they have built homes for maimed or old animals in many cities and towns of India, where they are fed and taken care of until they die a natural death. The preaching of that grand principle has almost entirely superseded Brahmanical sacrifices of animals.

In conclusion, I may observe that the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, in reply to an address by the Jainas of Calcutta, made the following remarks :

“Among the various communities which have addressed me since my arrival, in India, there is none whose words of welcome awaken a more responsive echo in my breast than the Jainas. I am aware of the high ideas embodied in your religion, of the scrupulous conception of humanity which you entertain, of your great mercantile influence and activity, and of the ample charities that have characterized your public and private dispensations. Previous travels in India have also familiarized me with many of your temples, in whose architectural features I have observed a refinement that reminds me of the great days of Asiatic art.”