

DEFINITION OF RELIGION AND JAINISM

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Hue Shermann¹ writes that the 'virus' of problems infected the men since the days of materialisation of the divine will of "I am alone, let me be many" and the origination of the world. This virus has taken many forms and there is no limit about its complexity. How best it could have been that man might have remained alone and single. His world itself became a problem for him.

The problem has many facets, physical, psychological, social, and modern. In fact, religion is the only cure of these problems. The scientists presume that the world is with beginning and without the end and gradually developing. Their opinion is in contrast with that of the religionists. There are many such differing points of view with the scientists. However, with the development of the creation and man, he lost the freedom of being alone and thus originated the idea about social and personal duties and obligations. This was the origin of religion. Despite the enquirer's attitude of pan-theism of Vedic age, the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*² mentions indirectly that religiosity develops due to ignorance and fear for sins, etc. The same fact is presented by the intellectuals today by interpolatory technique. The Bible also indicates the origin of religion due to plucking the fruits of the tree of ignorance.

According to Jainism the world is a never-ending cycle of creation and destruction. Every destruction-period follows a creation-period where many types of living beings come into existence. This state also leads towards the idea of self-protection and alien welfare. One's activity towards this objective is also called religion. With the development of human race, villages and towns, cities and countries were gradually developed. This led progressively to better crystallisation of concepts of function and duties of men, leading as it did to newer and modified definitions of religion.

Period of Definitions of Religion :

The *Uttarādhyayana*⁴ mentions that Lord Ṛṣabhdeva was the first (teacher) to promulgate religion. Since then, the history of religions indicates that the definition of religion has passed through many epochs, out of which the following four are important :

1. Pantheonic and Ritualistic age;
2. Intellectualistic age.
3. Devotionalistic age; and
4. Modern scientific age.

It is an observable fact of history that the ritualistic and devotionalistic periods have shown statusquoism while the other two ages have been able to contribute globally to the growth and extension of knowledge and culture. The nature of these epochs indicates that the human tendencies have been as dynamic as the world itself.

Meaning of the word 'Dharma' (Religion) and its definition :

The sanskrit term 'dharma' is generally translated as 'religion' in English. Though this term does not seem to represent the whole essence of 'dharma' according to some scholars, it has none the less gained currency. Apte⁵ has given 17 meanings to the word 'dharma'. Nevertheless, the term has become mostly conventional to have a specified meaning representing a set of good actions, behaviours, conducts, tendencies, intentions, and sacred activities. The resultants of these processes are also termed as religion, on the basis of formulation of cause-effect relationship. Thus, there might not be any living being who does not possess a religion. At least, he holds an idea of 'let me be happy.' He might be thinking about the 'welfare of all' while being at a little developed state of his consciousness. That is why the author of the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* has said, "Religion is the welfare of the public."⁶ Every individual tries to increase his happiness like a tradesman does for his wealth. It may, however, be possible that the definition of happiness may be different for different people. Some may go for worldly happiness, others may go for inner or psychical happiness. This definitional difference has also led to defining religion differently in different periods. However, as is seen currently, the individualistic trend of religion is developing into public-oriented religion.

The definitions of religion as found in the Jaina canon and canon-like texts are given in Table 1. It also includes derivative, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*⁷, and some non-Jaina philosophical definitions. These can be classified into four categories, nearly equivalent to four definitional period as above and as shown below.

Canonical Period :

The Jaina canonical works have an important place in post-Vedic and post-Upaniṣadic literature. Looking into their definition of religion, it is noticed that they are inclined more towards conduct that was to the welfare of public and society as is also expressed in pre-Jaina systems. Their expressions do not have high inclination on individual or self. Their definitions are aimed at universal welfare rather than self-welfare alone. An ideology of compassion and protection of all living beings is advocated by them. This ideal is developed out of 'good or right' conduct. Its definition involves the societal instinct of the religion. It should not be taken to mean that this general definition has negligible place for the individual. Of course, it is not as important as it was in the later periods.

Jaina system has always been against ritualism. That is why, it has devised conduct-based principles of non-violence, equality, restraint, and austerities in contrast with ritualist Mīmāṃsakas. The duties of the votaries and ascetics have been propounded. Kundakunda also follows this concept.

The canonical age has seeds of philosophy and logic. This has, however, a clear bent toward the common man's welfare.

Philosophical Age :

With the passage of time, every philosophic or behavioural system develops a tendency

towards statusquoism, inertia, and denaturation. Though the canonical age gave a new turn to ritualistic religion, it was modified and nurtured properly only in the philosophical age. This age created the concepts of heavens, salvation, and the concept of soul different-from-body. This age also supported the processes of austerities and meditation based on individualistic purification. Besides, many intellectualistic concepts like theory of knowledge and ford-builderism etc. were also developed. This age gave a little more general definition of religion. It somewhat sided more with individualistic welfare along with social welfare. The author of the *Sūtrkṛtāṅga-cūrṇi*⁸ indicated the worldly as well as other-worldly prosperity as the form of religion like the *Vaiśeṣika*⁹. The great scholar-philosopher Samantabhadra also defined religion as one which raises one to the position of highest bliss from the worldly displeasures¹⁰. Pūjyapāda Devanandi and Akalaṅka also defined religion as that which leads one to the cherished position¹¹. Though Pūjyapāda kept silence over the mention of these positions, Akalaṅka pointed them out clearly in classificatory terms of heavenly deities, earthly kings, and ascetics. He, however, did not mention the position of salvation in this context¹². The philosophic age opened new vistas of knowledge. It is credited for moulding the human mind towards scientificity and logicism in addition to authoritarianism in the field of visible and invisible world.

Devotional Age :

The intellectualism of philosophic age was not suitable to the psychology of laymen. It was too complex for them. In fact, the period posed a problem of even preserving the institution of religion as the country's political situation also took an unfavourable turn at this time. There could be no question of modifying it. This led to the concept of devotionism and practice. Though this trend existed and has been noted in earlier times, it could not be popularised until this age. This resulted in the importance of spiritualism or inner soul and individualistic pleasure or bliss. Various forms of devotion (incantations, hymns, etc.) were developed. This period continued for about 1000 years when people had to become more religion-preservers and individualistic towards physical or spiritual progress. This resulted in an individualistic mind leading to a large contraction in scientific outlook. The social-welfaristic religion of canonical age was converted into an individualistic base. To assume religion in this way would be called a contracted definition rather than a general one. The definition took forms like :-

1. A means for purification of soul (life ?)
2. A means for attaining four qualitative infinities (of knowledge, sight, energy, and bliss)
3. A means to learn the nature of self and non-self :
4. As nature of self and non-self itself.

These definitions led the religion to be purely introspective. The common man enjoyed this definition as the qualities of soul and pleasures of other world were described in mystically indescribable way. Man became habituated to wander in an ideal world through religion. This led him to live in this world with specific indifference with an

attitude of "No harm could come to me, whosoever be the ruler." Different forms of devotion turned him away from the actual realities. The individual became past-oriented and futuristic¹³. He tended to overlook the present. As a result, society began to lag behind in the running with the world. The progress earned during the philosophic age was largely lost. Frustrated people could neither earn physical prosperity nor spiritual bliss.

Modern Age :

This age may be said to begin with the progress of science or industrial revolution. In this age, one could learn about the vastness of human world on the one hand, and on the other hand one could also realise the universal sameness of human tendencies despite differences in language, climate, and other factors. The multi-religious Indian mind learnt about the fundamental principles of many other religions and sects. The scientific mind could observe that various religions have many basic similarities, their many differences are only external. The world is gradually converging into a human family due to facilities of transport, communications, publications, and propagation. There has been a phenomenal increase in the feeling of universal brotherhood and socialistic welfare. Many national and international organisations have started working in these directions. That is why the definition of religion has again gone multi-dimensional in this age.

Many earlier dictionaries mentioned religion as a term indicating faith in God. This meaning has changed. There may be, like Jainism and Buddhism, Godless religions too. The scholars have guessed about the primal circumstances under which religion or its concepts were developed. Now, the derivative meaning of the term is being expanded with reference to modern context. The grammatically formed Sanskrit term *Dharma* (or religion) is being redefined as carrier of society or public welfare or 'welfare activity or activator itself. The English synonym religion (of Greek origin) is now defined as 'combination or socialisation' and 'as a set of behaviours leading to those processes.' Thus, the basic concept regarding religion in east and west has gone nearly equivalent. Not only that; the current definition seems turned towards canonical one leading to the guess that the Jaina canonists were also modernists or scientists, a great credit for them. According to the new-age thinking, the religion originated because of immense desire for socialisation, co-ordination, and unification among human beings. The above definition satisfies this objective. Moreover, this also overlooks the superhuman element in religion and it is thus acceptable to theists and atheists alike. It has no place for sectarianism, conservatism, and terrific activism.

In early days, the concept of co-ordinated form of religion was taken as a form of belief and stability. Four factors are mentioned for the success of any belief system : (a) concept of psychological protection through superhuman element; (b) conception about ideal life and social structure; (c) development of innate nature towards ethical duties; and (d) feeling of inner energy¹⁴. The belief is said to be a definite process or knowledge which is a long-timed activity. In fact, the belief nurtures the religious attitude. The past

has shown that the inertia of belief has generated obstructions to proper progress¹⁵. However, the scientific age has a liking towards right, rational, and dynamic belief.

The current age has given sufficient universality to the definition of religion. Its sphere has involved the nations and the world as a whole besides the individual and society. This has become more public welfare-oriented in terms of its ten forms as stated in the *Sthānāṅga*¹⁶. Thus, religion cannot be qualified with any adjective. The religious behaviour increases the auspiciousness of physical, psychological, social, philosophical, and spiritual aspects of human kind. This regulates the animal instincts in man. This serves as a panacea medicine or chemical oxygen for the overall welfare. The scriptures have illustrated the functions of religion in terms of similes like island, river, gem, chariot, garden, elixir, lion, axle, and refuge. Religion has become an art of living in scientific age. This is a non-violent process of increasing the amount of happiness in the world. This is a purifier of body and mind and promoter of inner energy.

This form of religion is a more generalised form of Jaina canonical definition in terms of 'religion is for compassion, protection of all living beings in the world'. The thinkers have removed some of the deficiencies in earlier definition. Now, this involves Samantabhadra's definition of a three-fold system of right faith, knowledge, and conduct with knowledge being placed in the middle as a threshold lamp without which neither faith may be right nor conduct may be proper.

Jainism : A Scientific Religion :

The scientific mind has struck the inertial mind of man. Jainism has been atheist from the very beginning. Hence, it should not be a surprise if it is scientific. Science has served as a catalytic force in maintaining the knowledge research-oriented, ordered, and progressive. It is based on observation, analysis, and inference. The Jaina scholars also point out the same processes. In fact, man starts his physical life first by observing external world at the opening of his eye. He is scientist at the first place. He becomes religious later through observation in the inner world. Of course, religiosity has a place for intuitive knowledge which is now taken as reliable in many spheres by the scientific community in general¹⁷.

The early Jaina scriptures have taught men to awaken the religious predilection by becoming a scientist. The author of the *Ācārāṅga*¹⁸ was a great scientist. He pointed out that what he was writing was observed, experienced, well thought, and scripted. The desire of enquiry is the mother of knowledge. The truth must be examined by intellect and wisdom. The man of intuition does not require sermons. Kundakunda¹⁹ even goes further to tell that scholars should correct the inconsistency in his statements. Samantabhadra²⁰ also points out that only those scriptures are authentic which are irrefutable and consistent perceptually or inferentially. He is the vocal supporter of examination-based learning. He wrote a series of treatises of critique type. In the age of logic, the physical phenomena were examined by logical observations and intelligence. That is why many Jaina logic treatises have several chapters on topics related with physical world like sound, matter, etc. Hemacandra²¹ was also favouring the

examination-base as one of the characteristics of the scriptures.

It seems that Jaina scholars must have been aware of many flaws in scriptural knowledge like non-truthfulness, inconsistency, tautology, confusion, controversy, and sensory incapacity as experienced by the Vaiśeṣikas. That is why the author of the *Viveka-cudāmaṇi*, *Sāgaradharmāmṛta*, and the *Pravacanasāroddhāra* have cautioned to use intellect and wisdom for scriptural studies²². These opinions encourage scientific attitude regarding scriptural concepts and practices. How and when these directive principles got overlooked by religious scholars and commentators leading to dim-lighting the ever shining torch of knowledge ? The current age is not interested to accept the canonical contradictory opinions in the absence of omniscients²³. The man of today demands to examine the canonical contents with reference to growing knowledge in the related fields. The validity of contents will strengthen our faith in canons. Not only this, Dixit has cited many examples to show that many concepts have developed gradually and a historical perspective must also be considered for evaluation²⁴. The scientific age requires to present the religious and philosophical tenets in scientific language. The statistics-based Jaina conceptology by Mardia²⁵ and some mathematical formula-based description by Jaina²⁶ seem to be pointers in this direction. It is also a pleasure to learn that, whereas scientific community is concurring with many scriptural contents qualitatively, others are being modified as per needs of the current age. For example, meditation is now going to be a laymen's affair which was earlier associated with asceticism. The foreign-going Jaina monks have glorified Jainism through this method only. The scripturally allowed examination-trend leads one to conclude scientificity and modernity of Jaina religion. This becomes quite explicit when one looks at its principles of physical and psychological improvement like *karmic* theory, polyviewism, non-violence and equitable distribution.

Qualified religion : Practical religion :

Different religions of the world are identified by their specific names. Their number has led to complexity for human beings. They represent different systems with a common object of human welfare. They have developed at different places and times. A majority of them are named after their propounders. However, there are others which are named on the basis of their specificities and objectives. The East has been worshipper of qualities. The current age requires quality-based religions. These should be cultivated and practised at individual social level. On this score, too, Jainism is an ideal religion. It aims at winning over the inner and outer enemies. Moreover, it also has a lesser feeling of supremacy and inertial trend in comparison to individual-qualified religions. When the term 'religion' is qualified with a prefix, it takes the shape of a group, community, sect, or an institution. It turns into a way of practice and thinking at things rather than being ideal. The ideal is always boundary-less while the real or practical has boundaries and controls. It cultivates an age of independent existence. The real religion nurtures directly or indirectly some innate desires and tendencies such as ambition, identity, age, I-ism etc.. In contrast, the unqualified religion teaches to subdue or zero

these tendencies. The practical form indicates the path to control these trends rather than eliminate them altogether. That is why it involves devotion, compassion, charity, daily essentials, and sacred activities. This serves as a ladder towards ideal religion. At present, the qualified religions may be called practical religions. It is with respect to these religions that it is said that overall religiosity is increasing in the world which can be verified from the following observed facts²⁷ :

1. The increase in human population in geometrical progression (in contrast to the concept of rarity of human destiny), thus, physique making *karma* getting better.
2. The continuous increase in longevity which is proportional to sacredness, and thus, longevity determining *karma* seems to be improving.
3. Increase in physical prosperity, comforts, and wealth, all proportional to sacredness; thus pleasure-producing *karma* improving.
4. Increase in trends towards more social welfare in the world — a result again of pleasure-producing *karma*.
5. Discovering newer vistas of knowledge in fields of medicine, agriculture, etc. indicating reduction in knowledge-obscuring *karma* in general.
6. Increase in human sensitivity towards national, international, natural, or accidental calamities in the world — a sign of improved *karma* as in (4).
7. Political or social mutation of status-determining *karma* as is seen in reservation of jobs, studies, and services.
8. Increasing frequency of consecration-ceremonies, and religious rituals among Jainas in particular to earn sacredness and to forego some attachment towards wealth-indicating reduction in deluding *karma*.
9. Possible synthesis of living cells in laboratories, a sign of improved knowledge-obscuring *karma* and coination-obscuring *karma* too.
10. Increase in family planning methods indicating a reduction in obstructive and deluding *karmas*.

These facts are undoubtedly increasing the overall pleasure in the world. Nevertheless, it is also clear that the individual religiosity is fast getting down. This problem has attracted the attention in our age and many positive steps are being taken to improve the situation.

Per chance, Jainism visualised the above two forms of religion since the very beginning. Kundakunda became the most prominent exponent of this reality. This strengthened the relationship between the two forms. This fact has been one of the important factor in effective enlivening of Jainism even in absence of royal patronage. This point also confirms the scientific nature of this religion.

Jainism - A World Religion :

The world has a majority of followers of propounder-qualified religions. According to them, these religions qualify to become world religion because of having (a) one founder (b) one sacred text and (c) concept of supremacy. Though Jainism does not qualify for

these traditional criteria, it has a capacity on other counts like its psychological scientificity. That is why, despite its much smaller number of followers (0.1 % in the world), its principles have attracted attention of intellectuals and scholars throughout the world. Its area of influence is fast increasing. The foreign going Jaina monks have published their experiences abroad which suggest growing interest in it. This interest is turning into deeper attraction towards it because of presenting its principles in positive terms by them. It seems that this Western inclination towards Jainism will strengthen the possibilities of its being a world religion in the coming centuries²⁸.

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28. See also Samani, *Sthitaprajña* : Jain Visva Bharti, Ladnun 40.2.1992, p.109.

Table 1 : Definitions of Religion in Canons and Canon-like Texts

No.	Authour	Text	Definition
1.	Sudharmā Svāmi	Ācārāṅga	Savvajivrakhandayatthāye pavaynam bhagvayā kahiyaṃ
2.	Sudharmā Svāmi	Ācārāṅga	Aere Dhamme (<i>Conduct is Religion</i>)
3.	Sudharmā Svāmi	Ācārāṅga	Samiyāye Dhamme Āriehim Pavedite
4.	Sudharmā Svāmi	Sūtrkṛtāṅga	Dukkh-kkḥayatthāye Dhamme
5.	Sudharmā Svāmi	Sūtrkṛtāṅga	Bhasejj Dhammam Hitayam Payanam
6.	Sudharmā Svāmi	Uttarādhyayana	Religion involves physical prosperity and welfare of all the living.
7.	Sudharmā Svāmi	Uttarādhyayana	Dhamme Thie Savva-Payānukampī
8.	Sudharmā Svāmi	Uttarādhyayana	Religion is keeper / Protector
9.	Ācārya Sayyambhava	Daśvaikālika	Dhammo Mangal-mukkittham
10.	Ācārya Kundakunda	Pravacansāra	Carittam Khalu Dhammo
11.	Ācārya Kundakunda	Bodh Pāhuḍa	Dhammo Daya-Visuddho
12.	Samantbhadra	Ratnakaraṇḍaka- Śrāvakācāra	Sansar-dukkhtah Satvan, Yo Dharati Uttame Sukhe
13.	Ācārya Pujypada	Sarvārthsiddhi	Iste Sthane Dhatte, sa Dharmah
14.	Bhaṭṭa Akalaṅka	Rājavārtika 2	Surendra-Narendra-Munindradi-rupe Iste Sthāne Dhatte, Sa Dharmah
15.	Svāmikumāra	Kārtikeyanuprekṣā	Jivānam rakkhanam dhammo
16.	Svāmikumāra	Kārtikeyanuprekṣā	Vatthu Sahāvo Dhammo
17.		Sūtrkṛtāṅga-cūrṇi	Dharmo Abhyudaniśreyasikam Sukhāranam ityarthah
18.	Rājmallā	Pañcādhyāyī	Nīcāirpadāt Uccapade Dharati
19.	Rājmallā	Pañcādhyāyī	Srut-caritr-rupam va Dharmah
20.	Rājmallā	Pañcādhyāyī	Ātm-viśuddhi-sāadhanam Dharmah
21.	Rājmallā	Pañcādhyāyī	Anant-catuṣṭaya-prāpti-sāadhanam Dharmah

Derivative meanings

22.	Rājmallā	Root 'dhṛ'	Dhāranāt Dharmam-ityāhuh
23.	Rājmallā	Religion-relegere	Socialisation, co-ordination
24.	Rājmallā	Ency. Britannica	Co-ordinated set of behaviours for the welfare of the society

Meanings Under Different Systems

25.	Maharṣi Kaṇāda	Vaiśeṣik Sūtra	Yato Abhyuday-niśreyas-siddhih
26.	Pūrv-Mīmāṃsā	Saḍ-darśan Samucchay	performacial Vedic, proclamations
27.	Sāṅkhya	Sāṅkhya-kārikā	Dukkha-trayābhi-ghatke Dharmah