

# EDUCATION IN JAINISM

-Dr Hemant Shah

## **Introduction:**

Jainism is one of the oldest living religions of the world. It is independent and not a branch or off shoot of any religion. It holds a very important position being a perfect system of religion. Its contribution to Indian Philosophy in particular and to the world thought of non violence, Truth and Peaceful Co-existence is significant and of great value. The title of this article immediately strikes at two important words: Education and Jainism. Since we want to examine place and important of Education in Jainism let us, from this point of view, let us take a note of Jainism – its philosophy and fundamental assertions. In view of Jainism, we will discuss Education as an important activity – a process of development, a path to the highest goal of life.

## **Jainism:**

Jainism, apart from being a major philosophical system of Indian philosophy, is a perfect religion, perhaps the oldest living religion. It has notably served to the cause of Indian culture and spirituality as well as towards the positive, progressive and peaceful solution of human suffering and pain. It will be a matter of great pride for a Jain to note what a great western historian and scholar, Dr. Winternitz has noted. “The Jainas have extended their activities beyond the sphere of their religious literature to a far greater extent than the Buddhists have done, and they have memorable achievements in the secular sciences to their credit, in philosophy, grammar, lexicography, poetics mathematics, astronomy and astrology, and even in the science of politics. In one way or the other, there is always some connection even of these ‘profane’ works with religion. In Southern India, the Jainas have also rendered services in developing the Dravidian languages, Tamil and Telugu, and especially the Kanarese literacy language. They have, besides, written a considerable amount in Gujarati, Hindi and Marwari. Thus

we see that they occupy no mean position in history of Indian literature and Indian thought.”<sup>1</sup>

Jainism takes an integral view of life. It discusses in the ‘Samanasuttam’, the universal values as means to achieve the highest goal of life. According to Jainism the highest aim or goal of life is to attain Nirvana or liberation. How to, achieve this goal? In his book ‘Tattvartha – sutra’ Acarya Umasvati says: ‘Nirvana or Moksa can be attained by right Faith, right Knowledge and right Conduct together.’ Unlike the western thought, Jainism affirms that Faith or Knowledge or Conduct alone by itself cannot take us to the path of liberation. We should have all the three to tread the path. Lord Mahavir says, “By knowledge one understands the nature of substances; by faith one believes in them, by conduct one puts an end to the flow of karmas and by austerity one attains purity.”<sup>2</sup> Thus in Jainism, knowledge plays an important role in Spiritual development to attain the goal of liberation. But then what is knowledge its meaning, scope and kinds? For this let us have a broad look at Jain theory of knowledge.

### **Jain Theory of Knowledge:**

“The consideration of Jain thinkers about the concept of knowledge is quite historical and has great importance in the field of ‘Epistemology’- Jainism accepts the existence of soul, and it has its own theory regarding the nature of soul. The soul, according to Jainism, has an inherent capacity to know all things. Higher the degree of purity of soul, higher the capacity to know. The obstructions to soul to know are the karmas. Total destruction of karmic veils will lead to ‘Ananta Jhana ( Infinite knowledge). Knowledge ( Jnana) according to Jainas, “is the soul’s intrinsic, inherent, inseparable and inalienable attribute, without which no soul can exist. Knowledge plays an important part in the conception of soul and its emancipation.”

The soul, according to Jain theory of knowledge, has consciousness (cetana) and power of understanding as its most prominent inherent qualities.” As conscious, the soul experiences in the three following ways. Some experience merely the fruits of Karma; some their own activity; and some again, knowledge.”<sup>3</sup> Kunda – Kundacarya observes that “Upayoga or understanding is of two modes ; Cognition and Sensation.” Nemichandra says, “Understanding is divided into two species viz. Darshan or Sensation and Jnana or Cognition.” Uma Svati says, “Understanding is

the distinguishing characteristic of the soul. It is two serts (viz Jnana or Cognition and Darshan or Sensation). The first is of eight kinds and the second of four.”<sup>4</sup>

Acarya Nemicaandra, explaining Darshan says, “That perception of the generalities (Samanya) of things without particularities (visesa) in which there is no grasping or details is called Darsana.”<sup>5</sup> “Darshan or Sensation is of four kinds – Visual (cakshusa) , Non -Visual ( acakshusa), Clairvoyant (avadhi darshan) and Pure (keval Darshna)”<sup>6</sup> The Jain scholars divide cognition or knowledge into two divisions viz: Valid knowledge and Fallacious knowledge. The valid knowledge is of five types: Senseous (mati or abhinibodhika), Authoritative (Sruta) Clairvoyant (Avadhi), Telepathic ( manah paryaya) and Pure (keval). Kumati, Kusruta and Vibhang are the three Fallacious forms of Mati, Sruta and Avadhi Jnana. Thus cognition, according to Jain theory of knowledge is of eight kinds: five valid and three fallacious. At this stage we avoid a detailed description of each of these eight kinds. In concluding the theory of knowledge we will definitely note that it is quite consistent with its metaphysics, ethics and philosophy of soul. It fosters a rational outlook and an appropriate attitude in understanding the scope and limitation of soul’s capacity to know.

### **Reason, Intuition and Faith:**

Let us understand Reason, Intuition and Faith and see them from Jainism’s point of view. Let us not forget that knowledge alone is not education and again, as we have earlier noted in Jainism knowledge alone can not lead you to liberation. So talking about Reason, we should know that Reason essentially is a human phenomena. Etymologically, the word ‘Reason’ is derived from ‘ratio’ meaning relation. “In most generalized sense of all, reason might be defined as the rational element of intelligence.”<sup>7</sup> Reason is not merely abstract or formal but it is higher and synthetic. “It is the whole mind in action, the indivisible root from which all other faculties arise”<sup>8</sup> One should know the difference between Reason and Intellect. Intellect is abstract and partial. Reason is comprehensive and synthetic. Reason is superior to intellect.

Intuition essentially is a subjective experience, and like reason, is a source of knowledge. Intuition is a higher source of knowledge than reason. Intuitive knowledge is knowledge by identity, it is the direct knowledge, which is final and supreme. Reason works under the limitations while intuition is free from such limitations. Though intuition is higher, when it is to be expressed it needs

intellect. “Intuition is beyond Reason, though not against reason. It is the response of the whole man to reality, it involves the activity of reason also”<sup>9</sup>

Faith is always required to be understood specially as compatible to Reason. In Indian philosophy and also in Jainism, both reason and faith are accepted as valid sources of knowledge. Reason, in fact, is considered essential for Faith. In Jainism, reason is an important means to support what faith has revealed. This is what we call ‘reason’s’ service to faith’. Swam Paramanand in his book titled “Faith is Power” says that faith and reason are not opposed to each other, they supplement each other. One should also know that faith is not belief. They are different. Belief is superficial and easily shaken, but faith makes us strong and steadfast. Faith is not an abstract indefinite sentiment, it is necessary for us all. Faith is and should always be understood in its three fold aspects: Faith is one’s own self, in humanity and in God. These aspects are interdependent and are not isolated.

There is a long discussion and volumes written on reason and Faith in the west. With special reference to all moral experiences and approach to religion, Faith and Reason has been discussed by Prof. J. F. Ross. He states that “Both the activity of faith and the activity of reason are always arriving at knowledge. This has a substantial and important claim. Both faith and reason are always arriving at knowledge of God and God’s will for man”<sup>10</sup>. In Jainism faith is not merely a source of knowledge but of vision too. In Jainism faith (Shraddha) is both, a state as well as an activity. According to Jain scriptures “friendliness (Maitri), activity (Pramoda), compassion (Karma) and neutrality (Madhyastha) are four qualities basically required in the foundation of religion”<sup>11</sup> Acarya Sri Haribhadra Suri gives great importance to equanimity or right faith (Samyak-karma). So according to Jain concept right faith is the foundation of religious activity (Sadhana).

Let us understand all the above discussed terms from Jain point of view. According to Jainism it is the human soul (Jivatma) alone which can regain the highest degree of perfection. All souls are possessed of fullness and perfections. “The infinite is inherent in the finite. That is why the finite is ever struggling to break down its finiteness and reach out to the fullest freedom.”<sup>12</sup> Jainism uniquely maintains that the infinite power lies latent in each soul. What one required is to put utmost self effort to defeat one’s enemies: Lord Mahavir says, “Fight with yourself. Why fight with external foes? He who conquers himself, through himself

will obtain happiness.”<sup>13</sup> The self-effort is an effort to attain the unity of Right knowledge (Samyak-Jhana) Right Vision or Faith( Samyak Darshan) and Right Conduct ( Samyak – Caritra). The emphasis also leads to the very basic spirit of life and education in Jainism. “ The basic spirit of Jainism is ‘to live and let live’, to live a life of understanding, tolerance, systematic co-operation and peaceful co-existence, nay, the still fuller and nobler co-relation”<sup>14</sup> How wonderfully these qualities we find being reflected in modern days in a child through value education as well as life skills in the current system of education!

### **Right Faith and Right Conduct:**

Acarya Umaswami or Umasvati in his book “Tattvarthasutra” explains in detail the four prerequisites of right faith (samyagdarshana) They are (i) **Prasama** (happiness from calmness and equanimity), (ii) **Samvega** (great enthusiasm for righteousness and avoidance of evil deeds) (iii) **Anukampa** ( compassion – both negative and positive. Negative is ahimsa – non violence, in positive it is compassion, goodwill, fellow feelings) and (iv) **Astikya** – ( belief in the principles of Truth).

Samyag, Darshan results into entire transformation of a person. ‘His attitude towards life, his out look of the world and worldly things, the basis of his relations with others, his values all are changed.’ He has a way of life following discipline, self restraint, the five great vows (non -injury, truthfulness, non- stealing, sex fidelity and non -possession of wealth or worldly objects. In support to this, five Samiti – carefulness ( in moving, speaking, eating, keeping and receiving things and evacuating bowels) and three self control in mind, speech and physical deeds. Jainism talks about these twelve reflections and ten virtues (forgiveness, humility, straightforwardness, truth, purity, self restraint, austerities ,renunciation, non -acquisitiveness and chastity) as essential. Thus ‘samyagdarshan’ – right faith in Jainism moulds or educates a householder to obtain peace and happiness.’ It also facilitates social harmony and peaceful co-existence in the world.

When we talk about education in Jainism, a special note has to be taken of its Gunavratas and Siksavratas or educational vows. These vows are self disciplinary practices and are considered essential for individual welfare, social harmony and world peace. Thus we can say that the observance of the twelve vows is of great importance and highly significant in modern systems of education.

## **Education:**

Let us understand 'Education' its concept and its role in life. In its very simple sense education is a process; it is a training. The training of the body, mind and soul is education. This training has its aims and objectives. Education is a means to live a life more effectively as well as more efficiently. In short education aims at a student's or learner's physical, mental and moral development. Education aims at imparting knowledge and making a child intelligent, it imparts yoga and other physical exercise to make a child physically strong, through its cultural and life skill activities, it makes a child good in conduct and finally it inculcates values in a child and makes his character virtuous. Thus education aims at all round development of a student. In the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "It is the aim of education to train us to apprehend human virtues and simple decencies of life. We must educate not for cruelty and power but for love and kindness. We must develop the freshness of feeling for nature, the sensitiveness of soul to human need. We must foster the freedom of the mind, the humanity of the heart, the integrity of the individual". With right education one attains right knowledge, right vision and faith, right conduct and victory over sensuous limitation. It is a path that leads to liberation. Its role, no doubt, is vitally significant and important. In order to see how the ideas of a true education- system are reflected in a Jaina way of life, let us first briefly glance at Education as it is and as it should be in future. Avoiding a big discussion on the system of Education that was in ancient India, let us know about education from seventeenth century with the notion of progress and development till it prevails now and the education of future. To know this it becomes very important that we know the Indian approach to education. The Vedas, Upanishads and Jain canonical literature say: "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man." Knowledge is inherent in man, no knowledge comes from outside, it is all inside. According to Jainism also, the soul has all infinite powers- infinite knowledge, infinite power, infinite faith and infinite bliss. The knowledge and all these infinities are veiled and education is simply unveiling. Education means to lead, to bring forth, to educe – to educe the inner, hidden, dormant potential within every human being. Sri Aurobindo writing on education says, "The first principle of the true teaching is that nothing can be taught." <sup>15</sup>

Taking note of the current education system that has undergone notable changes, the change is mainly because of the change in the concept, approaches and values that have changed also. Instead of knowledge for liberation we have technology for physical pleasures and comforts; instead of happiness and divinity within, we have cravings to succeed in a globalized material world outside. The growth of advanced technology, though required is certainly not enough. We need to know that information is not Knowledge, and intellect is not vision. Veda says, "The intellectual understanding is only the lower knowledge (Buddhi); there is another and higher knowledge (Buddhi) which is not intelligence but vision, is not understanding but over standing in Knowledge." In nut shell, we find the improvement of the current system of education or the removal of the misleading, materialistic worldly approaches in education is an immediate need. For this we will have to adopt and implement Jaina concept of education.

## **Conclusion**

Education in Jainism is integral and intrinsic to Jaina way of life. We know that mere learning facts & figures or information is not knowledge and mere knowledge is not education. Education includes knowledge, vision and sound character. This education is means to attain the highest goal of life i.e liberation. Jainism as religion and a system of Indian Philosophy is a way of life. To live a Jaina way of life is to educate one's own self and develop the higher quality of soul leading towards perfection, and attaining liberation from pain and suffering. Jaina way of life is a controlled, disciplined life where one observes the five great vows: Non Killing (ahimsa), Truth (Satya), Non Stealing (Astaya) Non possessing (aparigraha) and virtuous life (Brahma charya). These vows and the other vows for the householder prescribed in Jain scripture make the life value oriented. Jainism offers a unique epistemology. Jainism talks about Non-absolutism. Truth is always a truth of one of the or some of the aspect of reality. The object of Truth having multi aspects, and truth is not about all aspects Truth becomes partial and relative. Truth or the judgment we deliver is non absolute. This approach has tremendous application towards Tolerance and Mutual understanding. A true Jain will be away from extreme judgments and conflicting or controversial opinions. This again will make peaceful co existence possible. Any talk on any subject related to Jainism is incomplete without a mention of its law of Karma. The base of Jain theory of reality its epistemology and its ethics is Law of Karma. Jainism takes care to see that the life which is full of activities through the process of

samvar (stopping) and Nirjara (removing) by removing the layers of Karma, brightens the soul. A Jaina way of life will be thus away from extremes will be towards neutrality. Jaina education insists not only on non-hurting or non-killing; it also insists on forgiveness (kshama) and love (karuna). No education is complete without these external values. Jainisms universal values, its ethics and theory of Knowledge, its non -absolutism (aneekantvada) and its theory of manifold aspects of reality (syadvada) reflect a complete system of training or educating a life that fully and totally fulfills the ultimate and the highest goal of life.

Dr. Kalidas Nag, an eminent Ideologist and historian, a great admirer of Jainism and a profound scholar wrote way back in 1936: “Jainism shines today as the only religion with an uncompromising faith in peace and non violence in thought and deed. This great lesson of Jainism, which Buddhism and Hinduism in general accepted, has not yet been made public with adequate reference to the Jaina canons and Jaina history. But we hope that in, in this crisis of human culture when, in the name of nationalism and imperialism, millions of human beings could be butchered, when internationalism is ridiculed and peace causes exploited by shrewd politicians our Jaina friends of India would organize a ‘World Federation of Ahimsa’ as the noble contribution of India to humanity.”<sup>17</sup> It will not be too much to say, in our final summing up, that any ideal system of education is bound to be a system reflecting education in Jainism.

\*\*\*\*\*

15-2-13

**Dr Hemant Shah  
12, Premanjali Society  
Bodakdev  
Ahmedabad 380 015 (Guj)**

**M 8980 844844  
(Pho) 079 26870592**



## References:

1. Dr. Winterniz – Quoted by Sri Kaloidas Nag in an article on The Universal message of Janism – Publisjed in Jain Journal, Vol 1, Nps 1967- reprinted in vol. 35 no. 4, April 2001
2. Uttaradhyayan Sutra 28.35
3. Kunda Kundacarya : Panchastikya Samayasara – 16
4. Uma-Svati – “Tattvarthaabhigama Sutra II 8/9
5. Nemicandra – “Dravya Samgraha: 43
6. Ibid – 4
7. Hasting James (Ed): “Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics” P 125
8. Dr S Radhakrishnan: An Idealist View of Life p 134
9. See ‘Contemporary Indian Philosophy George Alien and Unwin London, 1952 page 486-487
10. Ross J.F: ‘Religion in Neo scholastic Tradition’ p 121
11. Sri Harbhadra Suri: ‘Lalit Vsara’ Vol I commentary by Sri Bhanuvijayaji p 20
12. Dr S Radhakrishnan : ‘Indian Philosophy ‘Vol I p. 399
13. Uttaradhyayan Sutra – IX 35
14. Dr J P Jain “Religion and Culture of the Jains” Bharatiya Jnanpith publication New Delhi p 102-103
15. Sri Aurobindo : Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo Vol , Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry page :
16. Prof: Norman C Dowsett(ed) “Education of the Future” 1996 p 10
17. Dr Kalidas Nag: ‘The universal Message of Jainism” – Jaina Journal Vol. 1 No 3, 1967.