

## Essentials of Jaina Philosophy

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### Background

I met my first boss DS after a gap of twelve years. As we caught up with the past I told him about my new found interest in Bharat and the site esamskriti.com.

During dinner he said, “I am now working for a Jain group and would like to read something on Jain philosophy”. I said surely but boss give me a couple of days for me to recommend an appropriate book.

The next day I called my Jaina advisor Manish and asked for help. He invited me to his bookshop located in C.P. Tank an area that I had never visited before. Thanks to Boss got to see parts of the real good old Mumbai.

Manish recommended a book Jaina Darsana by Munisri Nyayavijayaji translated into English as Jaina Philosophy & Religion by Shri Nagin Shah. Shri Shah has throughout the book used the word Religion instead of the word Dharma although Sanskrit verses quoted use the word dharma.

Since to my mind religion is not dharma (an Indian concept), I have preferred to use the word Dharma throughout.

Since I had full faith in Manish’s judgment just picked up the book blindly. I had initially thought of sharing excerpts from the book as one chapter. However, after finishing the book realized that the content is best shared as multiple chapters under separate headings. The content is verbatim from the book. My thoughts would always start with Friends. Courtesy & copyright Bhogilal Lehar Chand Institute of Indology, distributed by Motilal Banarsidas.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction to Book

Philosophy (darsana sastra) imparts us the knowledge of Reality. In other words its subject matter is Reality. On the other hand, science of religion or dharma sastra treats dharma. Dharma means good conduct and spiritual discipline. Though philosophy and dharma are different sciences the subject matter of the latter is more or less dealt with in the former. Besides philosophy it is necessary for us to know dharma because the good of life is achieved by the practice of dharma & understanding its true nature. If one practices dharma truly, then and only then can one attain ultimate good? But the propounder of each system of Indian philosophy says that the object of his system is the highest good. By saying so the end object of dharma & philosophy is the same i.e. highest good meaning that the two of them have a special relation.

Knowledge of philosophy is useful to make the knowledge of dharma brilliant & sharp. The Yoga philosophy of Patanjali can be called philosophy & dharma as well. Just as it presents a system of philosophy it imparts dharmic teachings pertaining to non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, austerity, scriptural study, meditation on God etc.

The term ‘Darsana’ occurring in the title ‘**Jaina Darsana**’ of the original Gujarati work does not yield the sense of philosophy. It is employed in the sense of religious sect or dharma sampradaya. The title therefore **means, ‘the work giving information about religious & philosophical thought of a religious sect known as Jaina-dharma’**. The tradition, which rightly offers sacred knowledge or pure thought, is called sampradaya (sam+pra+daya, meaning that which offers rightly).

Bhagwan Mahavir was born in 599 B.C. and died at the age of 72. The possible points of his program can be succinctly stated as follows:

- To remove blind faith existing amongst the people,
- To dissipate the atmosphere of violence,
- To propagate the principle of non-violence and universal friendliness,
- To effect synthesis of various religions & philosophies through awakening power of discretion & reason,
- To disseminate the teaching that one’s happiness is in one’s own hands and those who seek happiness in wealth, prosperity and possession will certainly fail to attain it.
- Real happiness lies within us.

Mahavira set aside Sanskrit, the language of the elite and pundits and adopted Prakrit, the language of the common man.

Mahavira was posterior to Parsva, the penultimate Tirthankara of the current cycle. He did found a new religion using current terminology but brought to fore the teachings of

the omniscient Tirthankaras before him. The actual study of its philosophy convinces us of the fact that this religious tradition or sect (sampradaya) shows the path of universal happiness and highest good. A great Jaina Acarya Haribhadra states, 'Kapila, Buddha & other great saints were eminent physicians specialized in the cure of the disease of transmigratory existence.

Jaina dharma is divided into two main branches i.e. Svetambara & Digambara. Apart from some minor differences pertaining to rituals and monastic practice, the religious & philosophical literature of both the branches is almost unanimous on all points. The Agamas (Jaina philosophical works) which embody the teachings of Mahavira expound karma, spiritual development, transmigratory journey of a soul from one birth to another, classes & aggregates of material atoms, six ultimate substances and nine principles. Looking to the systematic exposition of all these topics, it appears that Jaina philosophical & dharmic traditions must have existed long before Mahavir's birth.

I confidently express that the study of Indian philosophy remains utterly incomplete without the study of Jaina philosophy & literature. Again, I impartially declare that the study of Jaina philosophical works is very useful in purifying and increasing one's fund of knowledge as also in finding the right path of spiritual poise & peace.

### **Substance of the Work**

Though all great men are seekers & cognisers of truth, their search for it and presentation of it are not identical. The style of presentation adopted by Buddha & Mahavira are different. The special method adopted by Mahavir is called *anekantavada* or non-one-sided method. It is difficult to gain the wholly true knowledge of reality. Even those who have gained it find it difficult to express it in words in entirety. Their presentations of a thing differ from one another or appear to be in conflict with one another due to differences in time, pace, style, languages etc. Even ordinary people who love to speak truth have only partial knowledge of a thing.

Taking into account this situation, Mahavira decided to invent such a method that those having partial or incomplete knowledge of Reality or of a thing might not suffer injustice at the hand of others. If other's knowledge, though partial & even conflicting with ours, is true and similarly our knowledge, though partial and conflicting with others, is true then we should find out such a method that both might get justice. That method is **non-one-sided way**. While formulating a system of thought and code of conduct, he applied the non-one-sided method under certain conditions namely:

1. One should not yield to passions of attachment and aversion, and should remain calmly impartial & equanimous.
2. So long as the tendency of equanimity does not develop to its fullness, one should constantly keep before him the aim of achieving its perfection and entertain the simple desire to know Truth.
3. One should reflect on one's own position or views & those of others.

4. One should cultivate liberality of accepting & synthesizing discreetly all those aspect's of one's own and other's experiences, which are found considerably true – though they may seem conflicting.

Nayavada (doctrine of standpoints) and saptabhangivada (doctrine of seven fold judgement) are the corollaries of anekantadrsti (non-one-sided method). All the systems of thought, which were prevalent then, were given their due place in nayavada.

How narrow would be the purpose of life, if we do not believe in the existence of soul even after the death of the body? No other idea can instill strength and energy in human heart as does the idea that he will certainly attain his ultimate goal in the future birth if not in this one. Taking this account one gets convinced of the existence of an independent **eternal sentient substance called soul**. It certainly experiences the fruits of good or evil actions, which it performs knowingly or unknowingly. And on account of karmic bondage it has to wander in the cycle of rebirth. Says Acarya Haribhadra in his Yogabindu excerpts:

1. That karma which bears fruit even with little effort and remains barren with great efforts is called destiny. It is either auspicious or inauspicious. Again auspicious or inauspicious karma is of various kinds. 322.
2. Similarly, human effort is nothing much but exertion, which certainly gives its fruit even in future birth. Karma & human effort are mutually dependent. 324.
3. Human effort destroys weak destiny or fate. And strong destiny or fate destroys human effort. Stronger of the two destroys the other. 327.

The science of karma emphatically declared that man should put forth enough effort to remove miseries, not only of his but also of others. **God helps those who help themselves**. The science of karma never propagates such cruel and mean teachings as to leave the poor, oppressed to their destiny. It only commands and enjoins people to put forth sincere efforts to relieve them of their miseries, to remove their poverty and distress, and to save them from calamities. By helping the poor we generate auspicious karmas. By ignoring them on the premise that their poor condition is on account of there past karmas, it proves that we lack universal love, friendliness and compassion, such behavior generates inauspicious karmas. If, in accordance with our ability, we put forth sincere efforts to uplift the miserable, then, as maintained by the science of karma, their misery causing karmas would suffer a severe blow. These efforts would generate auspicious karmas.

This is the essence of man's dharma. And by following it we do good to ourselves as well as to society. The words of the great **Veda Vyasa** in the following couplet comprises the universal truth. 'Compassion and friendliness towards all living beings, charity & sweet words constitute the matchless charm or spell in the three words, which unfailingly wins over the hearts of all beings'.

## Chapter 2

### Jina & Jaina

The term Jaina is derived from the term Jina. And the term Jina is the common name for the supreme souls who are totally free from all the feelings of attachment, etc that defile the soul. It is a noun from Sanskrit verbal root 'ji' meaning 'to conquer'. Arhan (the Worthy) and Vitaraga (One free from attachment) and Paramesthi (the Supreme Divinity) are the synonyms of Jina. And devotees of Jina are called Jaina. And the Dharma propounded by Jina is called Jaina Dharma. Arhata Dharma (dharma propounded by the Worthy), Anekantadarsana (Philosophy of Non-one-sidedness), Nirgranthasasana (Teachings of the Knotless), Vitaragamarga (Path made and enlightened by one who is free from attachment) – these are the terms employed for Jaina Dharma & Philosophy.

### Tirthankara (TR)

A soul attains full manifestation of its sentiency as soon as all the possible karmic veils are totally removed. This happens when the practice of spiritual discipline reaches its highest point. The birth in which this event takes place is the last birth for that soul. And such a soul is said to have become the supreme soul in that birth. Such supreme souls are divided into two broad classes.

The first class comprises TR(Makers of Tirtha) who are from the very birth endowed with miraculous cognitive powers & extraordinary grandeur and sublimity. These TR's are not omniscient from the very birth and hence do not have tirthankarahood yet they are called TR from their very birth, keeping in mind that they are going to attain tirthankarahood in future in that very birth. Having renounced their household life and taken to monk life, when they, on attainment of the highest plane of the spiritual discipline, completely remove the nature-obscuring karmic evils and as a result acquire manifestation of their natural omniscience, they establish tirtha. **Tirtha means** the fourfold order of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. The principal directs disciplines of a TR to compose scriptures on the basis of the preaching's of the TR. These scriptures are divided into 12 books, which are known as 'Dvadasanga' (a group of 12 Anga works). Angas are so called because they are limbs of the entire body of scriptures. Tirtha also means this group of 12 Anga works. Thus, TR's are so called because they are the founders of the fourfold order as also because they were authors of the meaning embodied in Anga works composed by their direct principal works.

The second class comprises the omniscient, attachment-free, supreme souls who lack the above-mentioned specialties. So they are called 'samanya-kevalins' or ordinary omniscient ones.

In the Vedic tradition, the Dharmasastras divide one Time-cycle into four divisions called Yugas (ages); they are called Krtayuga, Tretayuga, Dvaparayuga and Kaliyuga. Each succeeding Age is having less duration than that of the immediately preceding one. It is also supposed that the regularly descending length of the Ages represents a corresponding physical & moral deterioration in the people who live in that age. So also, according to

Jainas, Cycle of Time ceaselessly and eternally moves on. One half represents the period of progress while the other half represents the period of decadence with decrease in life span, prosperity etc. At present India is in the first part of the descending half-cycle. TR's and the ordinary omniscient ones are never born again in this transmigratory world once they attain the state of absolute freedom from embodiment. Thus TR's are not different incarnations of God but they are souls different from one another. **Jaina philosophy does not accept reincarnation of God.**

The 9 reals constitute the subject matter of the Jaina philosophical works. These 9 reals are – jiva (soul), ajiva (non-soul), punya (auspicious karmic matter), papa (inauspicious karmic matter), asrava (inflow of karmic matter), samarava (stoppage of the inflow of karmic matter), bandha (bondage of soul with the inflowed karmic matter), nirjara (partial disassociation of the bound karmic matter from the soul) and moksa (total & absolute disassociation of the bound karmic matter from the soul).

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Soul (Jiva)**

Soul is not amenable to sense perceptions as physical objects are. It can be known through the simple exercise of self-awareness. A body made up of five physical elements ie water, air, fire etc cannot have feelings. It is never the body that is happy or unhappy because if that were so a dead body would be happy or unhappy. This proves that there must be some other substratum for experiences of desire, happiness to reside in. The name given to this other substratum is Soul (atman) whereas the body is physical and hence insentient.

There are five sense organs in a body. But the soul who uses them as instruments is different from them. It sees color with eyes, experiences taste with tongue, grasps smell with the nose, hears words from the ears and cognizes touch with the skin. The soul uses these sense organs as instruments to cognize physical things but on that account the sense organ and soul cannot be said to be one. A dead body has five sense organs, yet it cognizes nothing through them. Why? It is because the soul that cognizes things through sense organs is different from the sense organs.

Soul that has seen a thing in the past through the visual sense organ remembers that very thing later on even when it is devoid of the visual sense organ. Soul can remember the things in the past because the past experience has left behind its impressions which the soul continues to retain and carry with it, and it is these impressions, when revived that give rise to the memory of the thing which has the object of that experience.

Soul has no color whatsoever and cannot be perceived by visual sense organs. But on that account it cannot be said that it does not exist. Though physical atoms are not amenable to visual sense perception, their existence is accepted on the basis of inference. Any gross physical object requires its material cause for its production. This material cause, itself being an effect, requires its own material cause for its production. Thus it proved the

existence of physical atoms. So also, means other than sense perception prove the existence of the soul.

Many times we observe that the acts performed by a person do not give their fruits to that person in this entire life and the fruits he enjoyed in his entire life are not the fruits of the acts he performed. We come across others who are in a very miserable condition in this life. We cannot account for this anomaly so we are left with no other option but to attribute it to the person's karmas in this or past births. So also the results of karmas or actions in this birth would take place in this birth and the next. Since at the time of death the body and sense organs no longer exist there has to be something that gets carried forward from one birth to another. This thing is a sentient substance called the Soul. Actions give their fruits through the impressions, which serve as a link between actions & fruits. Though acts are momentary they leave their impressions on the soul. These impressions remain associated with the soul till the soul enjoys their fruits at the destined time. **These impressions are material and called Karma.**

In this world we come across different type of people, some rich other poor, some intelligent others dull. Sometimes twins differ in their growth, development and life-styles. Friends if my brother is North Pole I am South Pole. Our attitude to life is just the opposite. How does one explain such differences? There must be some cause that governs all these seemingly causeless differences. This cause is Karma. In this way wise philosophers have proved the existence of the soul. It is because karma (in the form of fine particles), which causes happiness or misery to soul, is associated with the soul from the beginningless time. And because of its association with karma, the soul transmigrates from birth to birth in the world.

If the soul performs auspicious acts, its next birth will be good, if not its next birth will be bad. Either type of act leaves an impression on the soul. This impression is a group of material atoms of a special type called Karma. So karma is a group of material atoms of a special type attracted and bound with the soul on account of its activity. New karmas go on associating themselves with the soul and old karmas go on dissociating themselves from the soul after having given their proper and complete fruits to it. Karmas associated with the soul continue to exist inactive till the next birth or thru many births till they give their fruits good or bad. As soon as the soul experiences the fruit the karma of which is the fruit gets dissociated from the soul. **The present and future births of the soul are governed and conditioned by the force of its accumulated karmas.**

Thus we have proved the soul to be different from the body and sense organs.

### **Infinite Souls in the World**

A question arises in our minds. At any point of time, many souls have attained liberation, many are attaining it and others will attain it in the near future. Will this not result, at any one point of time, in the world becoming empty of souls?

One must find an answer to this question in a manner by which none of these principles, one that the world never gets empty of souls and the other that liberated souls are never

born again - suffers any harm. Scriptures say that the total number of souls in the world get reduced by the number of souls that attain liberation, yet the world will never be empty of souls because the souls in the world are ananta or infinite in number.

The term **ananta** is explained as follows: the minutest indivisible unit of time is called 'samaya' in the Jaina scriptures. Samaya is so minute a time unit that it is impossible for us to know how many samayas pass in a second. If we take all the samayas, past and present their number comes to infinite times infinite. The number of souls in the world is equal to that of infinite-time infinite samayas. Hence there is no possibility at the entire world becoming empty of souls at any time.

Friends practically speaking soul can attain liberation by good karmas. With so much evil and violence in this world, the number of souls attaining liberation can only go down.

### **Classification of Souls**

Generally souls are divided into samsari or transmigratory & mukta or liberated souls. The word 'samsara' is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root 'sr' prefixed with the preposition 'sam'. The meaning of the root 'sr' is 'to go, to wander, to transmigrate'. So the meaning of samsara is 'wandering transmigration'. To wander, **to transmigrate in 84 lakh birth types is samsara** and one who does so is samsari.

We can classify the transmigratory souls in various ways. In one way, they are divided into two main clauses – **mobile** (trasa) and **immobile** (sthavara). Those who can voluntarily move from one place to another in order to seek pleasure and avoid pain are mobile. And the opposite are immobile. The earth-water-fire-air & plant bodied souls are immobile. They have one sense organ, which is invariably a tactile one. Called one-sensed souls they are further sub-divided into subtle and gross class. The subtle five bodied immobile souls are present everywhere in the universe but we cannot see them. The gross five bodied immobile souls are amenable to visual perception. Souls whose bodies are various forms of earth like clay, stone are to be understood as gross earth-bodied souls. Souls whose bodies are various forms of water i.e. well-river-pond water which are not attacked by fire or not influenced by any other substance are gross bodied souls. A tree and its branches, twigs etc are gross plant bodied souls.

When the above mentioned forms of living earth are attacked by cutting, colliding, piercing and baking souls depart from them making them lifeless. So also when water is boiled or mixed with sugar it becomes dead and soulless.

The two sensed souls have two sense organs only and these two are invariably tactile and gustatory. An earthworm, a microbe found in water are examples of two-sensed souls. Three sensed souls have three sense organs namely tactile, gustatory and olfactory e.g. a bug, a large red ant. Four sensed souls have four sense organs namely fly, mosquito etc. Five sensed souls have five sense organs, are divided into four classes – humans, animals, that of gods dwelling in heavens and that of infernal being dwelling in hells.

Thus all mobile souls are two-three-four or five sensed souls.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Insentient Real (Ajiva)**

All the objects that are bereft of sentiency fall under the class of insentient reals. There are five insentient reals namely medium of motion (dharma), medium of rest (adharma), space (akasa), matter (pungala) and time (kala). Together with the soul, they make six substances. For the medium of motion & rest the Jaina thinkers use the terms dharma & adharma, which ordinarily mean auspicious karmas (punya) and inauspicious karmas (papa) respectively.

#### **Medium of Motion (Dharma)**

We observe physical objects and living beings move from one place to another. Though they are inherently capable of motion, they cannot move without some assisting cause. And this assisting cause is the medium of motion. E.g. a fish has inherent capacity to swim but cannot do so without the assistance of water.

#### **Medium of Rest (Adharma)**

A tired traveler has an inherent cause to stop his motion but he will not stop on the way, unless he finds a shade of a tree. Here the shade of the tree serves as an assisting cause for his stoppage of motion. So also, though physical objects and living beings have inherent capacity to stop their motion, they cannot stop their motion without some assisting cause. And this assisting cause is the medium of rest.

Souls and physical objects are the independent agents of motion as also of stoppage of motion. By their own nature they move or rest. But that they require the assistance of some other force or principle is accepted even by modern scientists. It is noteworthy that early Jaina thinkers have posited the mediums of motion – rest as two assisting causes of motion & rest respectively. According to Jaina thinkers, the medium of motion does not itself impart motion to the physical objects & souls or set them in motion. So also, the medium of rest does not itself urge them to stop motion and to rest. But they passively assist them when the latter themselves undertake motion or rest.

#### **Space (Akasa)**

For Jaina thinkers, space is an independent substance. It is infinite in extent. It is present in the universe but also far beyond it over the non-universe. Thus, no substance is so extensive as the space substance. As it is omnipresent it cannot move from one place to another. The function of space is to offer room to other substances. Thus, space is a universal container in which all other substances are contained.

That space, which is related to the universe, is called the **universe-space** (lokakasa) and that which is beyond it is called the **space-beyond-universe** (alokakasa). The medium of motion (dharma) and medium of rest (adharma) are present in all directions & that region which is covered by their presence is given the name universe – loka. And the region which falls outside this universe is given the name ‘region beyond universe’ or aloka. It is only with the assistance of these two substances that souls and material objects move

from place to place & rest. As these two substances are absent in the region-beyond universe, there exists neither an atom nor soul therein. Then what is there in aloka. There is nothing in it. It is simply the form of pure space.

There is one more argument to prove the division loka & aloka. The Jaina scriptural principle is that the soul moves upward as soon as it becomes completely free from all karmic atoms. But what is the limit of upward motion? The answer to it cannot be found unless the division of space into the universe space and space beyond universe through the presence or absence of the medium of motion & rest is accepted. The acceptance of this division allows us to say that the medium of motion, the assisting cause of motion, is present in the upward direction up to the highest point of the universe, so the upward motion of the soul freed from material karmic atoms stops as soon as it reaches the highest upward limit of the universe and there it stays, beyond that the medium of motion being absent it cannot move further.

### **Matter (Pudgala)**

All physical objects from an atom to the grossest object are given the technical name 'pugnala'. This term is a compound formed from two verbal roots viz 'pur' and 'gala', the meaning of the former is to fill – to integrate and that of the latter is to decay – disintegrate. The process of integration & disintegration we experience in our bodies & physical objects are incessantly going on. Every moment some free atoms get integrated into an aggregate & same time some integrated atoms get disintegrated from it. An atom is the ultimate unit of matter (pudgala). The object that comes into being as a result of the combination of atoms is called an aggregate (skandha).

To have the physical qualities of touch, taste, smell, color is the nature of matter. This constitutes its corporeality (murtata). It means the state of assemblage of the four physical qualities. For it the term 'rupi' is also used meaning one have rupa (color). From this it becomes clear why all substances except matter are called arupi (devoid of color).

Touch is admitted to be of eight types i.e. hard, soft, heavy, light, cold, hot, unctuous and arid. Taste is of five types i.e. pungent, bitter, astringent, sour and sweet. Smell is of two types good and bad. Color is of five types i.e. black, red, yellow, green & white. Thus, the types of all the four physical qualities are twenty in all. But each physical quality has numerous divisions & sub-divisions when viewed from their different degrees of intensity. Sound, light, shadow, hot radiation and darkness are the forms of matter.

According to the Jaina thinkers, all atoms are qualitatively the same. There are no four classes of atoms. Atoms combine to form an aggregate when they manifest the required degrees of cohesiveness and aridness. Atomic combination is to two types – one giving rise to dimension and shape and the other not. The Jaina thinkers recognize the possibility of an aggregate occupying that much space which a free atom occupies.

### **Time (Kala)**

Time is experienced by all. A new thing becomes old, an old one decays and a decayed one is at last destroyed. Time substance is posited to account for the incessant minute

imperceptible changes as well as perceptible gross changes. Without it these changes would not take place as it is assisting cause. Friends to my mind life is all about time. Things happen when the time is right. What is right time is a function of our karmas and the laws of nature.

### **Space-Point (Pradesa)**

A space point means the most subtle (i.e. indivisible ultimate) unit. Medium of motion – rest, space & matter are the four insentient substances and one sentient substance the soul is possessed of many space points. All understand that the ultimate indivisible units of physical objects like a pot are atoms. And these atoms are called space points so long as they are integrated into the whole (avayavi). But when they are disintegrated from it and are free, they are called **atoms**.

The space points of the above-mentioned four non-physical substances are of a special type. They are mutually absolutely inseparable and form a perfect unity. They are never disintegrated or separated from their substances as those of a physical object like a pot are. They are identical with their substance; they together form an impartite unity. These four substances under consideration, which have space points of this type, are eternal.

### **Substances of the Nature of a Collection of Space-points (Astikaya)**

A soul, medium of motion and rest possesses innumerable space-points each. Space has infinite space-points. Space confined to the universe has innumerable space-points, while space, which there in the region beyond the universe has infinite space-points. Thus these five substances (medium of motion – rest, space, matter, time) are of the forms of a collection of space-points. Hence they are called **Astikaya** i.e. formed of two words ‘asti’ (space-point) and kaya (a collection). So Astikaya means ‘that which is of the nature of a collection of space points’.

Medium of motion – rest and space are having only one individual or instance, souls are infinite and matter is a substance having infinite instances in the form of atoms. Time is not of the nature of a collection of space-points. In its case space-point is but a moment. There is no possibility of two moments existing simultaneously and hence there is no possibility of a collection of moments. As time is but a moment, the term astikaya is not applicable to it.

In all, there are six substances recognized in Jaina philosophy – five extended plus one non-extended. For those who do not regard time as an independent substance, there are five substances only.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Karma**

### **Auspicious Karma (Punya) and Inauspicious Karma (Papa)**

The term ‘**karma**’ means mental, vocal or bodily act as also a trace or impression that the act leaves behind on the soul. In the present context, karma means the latter meaning

‘the karmic matters constituting the trace’. The impression bears fruit in this or the next life, gets attached to the soul when the act is performed and gets released from the soul when the soul bears the fruits of that impression.

The formation of the karma theory is the result of the Jaina thinker’s sincere efforts to find answers to questions like, All souls are equal by nature (sounds like Vedanta), what causes inequality between them? What explains the born diversity among different individuals? What is it that makes an individual behave differently and experience different states at different times?

The consistency of the life of a soul – the life stretched in the three divisions of time – depends on karma. The theory of rebirth is a natural corollary of the theory of karma. Every act must be followed by its consequences. Simply put we reap what we sow. Positive acts form and leave auspicious impressions on the soul and negative just the opposite. The former results in happiness and the latter in misery.

Karmic matters are classified into eight fundamental types. They are –

- a) Knowledge covering (jnanavarana) karma.
- b) Vision-covering (darsanavarana) karma.
- c) Feeling-producing karma (vedaniya).
- d) Deluding (mohaniya) karma.
- e) Longevity-determining (gotra) karma.
- f) Body-making karma.
- g) Status-determining karma.
- h) Obstructive (antaraya) karma.

Of these (a), (b), (d) & (h) are inauspicious because knowledge covering karma covers the faculty of knowledge, vision covering karma obscures the faculty of vision, deluding karma deludes and confuses the soul – i.e. obstructs right inclination and conduct and lastly obstructive karma obstructs our attainment of the desired objects. Each of the other karmas could be auspicious or inauspicious. For e.g. body making karmas causing bad & repulsive body-traits are inauspicious karmas and those causing good & attractive bodily traits are auspicious karmas.

### **Inflow of Karmic Matter (Asrava)**

The entire universe is full of karmic matter. The inflow of karmic matter into a soul takes place on account of the soul’s activities. So, these activities themselves are also regarded as the inflow of karmic matter.

Through soul’s mental, vocal and bodily activities the karmic matter is attracted towards the soul, flows into it and gets bound with it. Positive activities like charity, donation, civilized speech, feeling happy for others cause positive karmas while negative activities like violence, theft cause negative karmas.

The auspicious or inauspicious character of bodily or vocal activities depends on the auspicious or inauspicious character of the accompanying mental operation or state. The

main cause of bondage of auspicious or inauspicious karmic matter with soul is mental activity.

### **Stoppage of the Inflow of Karmic Matter (Samvara)**

For the stoppage of the inflow of karmic matter into a soul, the Sanskrit word Samvara is used. It is formed from two words i.e. 'sam' and 'vr' meaning 'to stop, to prevent'. Highly spiritual states of the soul, causing control & restraint of the mental, vocal and bodily activities, effect the stoppage of the inflow of karmic matter.

The Sanskrit term 'asrava' is derived from the verbal root 'sr' meaning 'to ooze', prefixed with the preposition 'a'. Hence, it means the inflow of the karmic matter into the soul, or the activities through which this inflow takes place. And the prevention of the inflow is called 'samvara'. The higher the spiritual stage, the thinner is the inflow of karmic matter. The greater the cessation of the inflow of karmic matter, the higher is the spiritual plane attained by the soul.

### **Bondage of the Karmic Matter with Soul (Bandha)**

Bondage is of the nature of interpenetration of karmic matter and soul like the interpenetration of milk & water in a mixture of the two. The karmic matter gets stuck to the soul due to its unctuousness of attachment, aversion & delusion. Now arises a question: why must a naturally 'dry' i.e. pure soul come to acquire an adventitious unctuousness of the passions of attachment and aversion?

Can we say that the **soul has got this attachment at a certain point of time**? If yes, it would mean that the soul was pure and pristine state earlier. If we accept that a pure soul began to assume impure states then why must even the liberated souls not be infected the impurities of attachment? Absence of clear answers proves that the impure states have not started at some point of time but are beginning less. The impure states of attachment & aversion are not natural to the soul in the sense that they depend on karma. This is because they rise in the soul bound with karmic matter. And this state of bondage is also beginning less. Interesting na.

How can that which has no beginning have an end? Karmas covering the soul are like dust covering the glass. When the dust is removed the glass shines so also when karmic impurities are removed from the soul, it shines with pure light of sentience.

From this we cannot say that first the soul was alone and only afterwards karma came into existence. Neither can we say that first karma was alone and afterwards the soul came into existence. This is impossible because it would imply that the soul is destructible and also because the existence of karma is impossible without the soul. Thus the only alternative is that both the soul and karma are bound together from the beginning less time.

Types of soul's activities govern the types of karmas (karmic matter). In the Jaina scriptures eight basic type of karmas as enumerated above. Soul in its real nature is the

pure Existence, the pure Sentience and the pure Bliss. But on account of the coverings of these eight types of karmas, its original nature is not manifested. **8 basic types of karma:**

1. **Knowledge-covering karma** - covers the soul's faculty of knowledge. The lesser this karma the more developed is the intellect and vice versa. Thus, intellectual diversity noticed in the world is due to the different degrees of subsidence or elimination of the karmic matter of this type. When the karmic matter of this type is eliminated from the soul, the faculty of knowledge manifests in perfection – is called omniscience.

2. **Vision-covering karma** - covers the soul's faculty of vision. There is not much of a difference between knowledge & vision. The initial cognition that grasps the object concerned in a generic form is given the name vision (darsana). It is like cognition that a man has an object when he sees it from a distance. And the cognition, which, arising in the wake of the vision, grasps that very object in a specific form is given the name of knowledge (jnana). Sleep, blindness are the fruits of this karma.

3. **Feeling-producing karma**, producing ever-changing experiences of happiness & unhappiness through sense organs and mind.

4. **Deluding karma** generates delusion in the soul with regard to wife, son, friend and the things it likes. This karma generates attachment and aversion towards worldly objects. Blinded by this karma it loses its buddhi or intellect meaning the power to discriminate between the right and the wrong. It is like a drunken man under the influence of liquor. Of the eight karmas, this plays a leading role in blurring and perverting all knowing all seeing pure nature of the soul. This karma is of two types – one that obstructs soul's natural inclination towards what is real & good, and the other that hampers its good and wholesome conduct.

5. **Longevity-determining karma** has four types according to the longevity of celestial beings, of human beings, of animal beings and of internal beings. A man whose legs are bound in chains cannot move to another place. So also a soul who is bound with a particular longevity-karma cannot transmigrate to another birth till it has not fully enjoyed that determined longevity of the present birth.

6. **Body-making karma** has many types & sub-types. In short, on this karma depends the beauty or ugliness of the body, good or bad bodily structure, fair or dark complexion etc. Again on account of this karma, the soul is born in one of the four main species i.e. gods, humans, animals and hell-beings and in one of the five classes of beings referred to earlier. On account of auspicious karmas the soul acquires god body and vice versa.

7. **Status-determining karma** is divided into two sub-types i.e. higher and lower status determining.

8. **Obstructive karma** puts obstacles in soul's efforts to achieve various objectives. Though one is rich and has all the means of pleasure at his disposal, one cannot enjoy those objects on account of this karma. Though one intelligently makes various attempts, one cannot succeed in this business or incur losses on account of this karma.

This was karma in brief. The **degree of passion** with which an activity is performed determines the degree of stickiness of bondage of the karmic material atoms with the

soul. At the time of formation of such bondage, the duration that is how long this karmic matter will remain stuck to the soul is also bound. There is no rule as to after how much time would a particular karma bear fruit because the bound duration changes according to the changes in the mental states.

Some karma is bound very tight while some loose. The former is called 'nikacita' in Jaina scriptures; mostly one cannot escape from the enjoyment of the fruits of this karma. W.r.t. to the latter we can free ourselves from the fruits of these karmas by practice of meditation and spiritual discipline.

Let us think somewhat more clearly about the bondage following the inflow. There are numerous groupings of material atoms. From among them the grouping that possesses the capacity to undergo transformation of the form of karma is received into itself by a soul and is bound by it to its constituents in a particular fashion. That is to say, even while being non-physical (amurta) by nature a soul has become akin to something physical since it has been associated with physical karma from beginningless time.

The physical karmic atoms are attracted towards the soul thru its mental, vocal and bodily activities, they are stuck to it like dust particles stick to wet leather. There takes an interpretation of the karmic material atoms and the units of soul like the interpretation of milk & water in a mixture of the two. This is called **Bondage**. That the karmic material atoms received by the soul undergo transformation of the form of karma means that at that time four characteristics are produced by them, namely nature, duration, intensity & quantity. Friends simply put every time an activity is performed, its impressions get registered on the soul, and these impressions are then interpreted.

It is these characteristics that constitute the **types of bondage**, which are four. Bondage in respect of nature, duration, intensity and quantity. The nature of the karmic atoms – the nature to cover knowledge, the nature to cover vision, the nature to cause the experience of pleasure & pain etc- is generated in them in accordance with the nature of the activity undertaken by the soul. The nature of the karmic atoms are invisible, but they can be known & enumerated simply on the basis of the observable effects produced by them. The natures that produced these effects are innumerable, yet on the basis of the summary classification they have been divided into eight types as referred to above like knowledge covering karma.

Along with the nature characteristic is produced the duration characteristic too. That is, a limitation as to time-period up to which the karmic atoms in question obstruct the concerned quality of the soul is produced in those atoms as soon as they are bound. The third one produced is the effect-intensity characteristic. Meaning what would be the intensity of the karma on the concerned soul i.e. strong, moderate or mild. Fourthly all karmic atoms that are being received by the soul get transferred into diverse natures and hence undergo a corresponding quantitative distribution under each nature.

As already stated, the nature-characteristic is governed by the nature of activity; the quantity of karmic atoms depends on intensity of activity. This is so because even passion

free souls bind karmic atoms to itself due to activities. On the other hand duration of karmas & intensity of their fruits depends on passions. Thus activity and passion are the two causes of bondage.

Going into details, there are **5 causes of bondage** namely mithyatva (pervert inclination or faith meaning absence of spiritual reflection), avirati (non-restraint meaning not to desist from vices, violence etc), pramada (carelessness) meaning spiritual-lethargy, self-forgetfulness etc, kasaya (passions) meaning anger, greed etc and yoga (activities) meaning activity of mind, speech & body.

Water enters a boat thru holes and when those holes are filled with some proper substance water stops entering the boat. So also activities of mind, speech and body are the entrances through which karmic matter enters the soul, and when these entrances are shut, the karmic matter stops entering the soul. When the activities that result in impressions on the soul are arrested, then no karmic matter enters the soul and sticks to it. This event takes place in the life of the liberated-while-living in the world at the last moment when he enters the disembodied state of liberation. This happens when the liberated soul becomes free from passions. And when he is completely free from passions; the bondage of karmas that takes place due to activities only, has almost nil duration and no fruit.

The removal of the causes of bondage is achieved by the cultivation of their opposite qualities. Mithyatva is removed samyagdarsana, i.e. true viewing regarding soul, avirati by virati i.e. refrainment from vicious acts, pramada by apramada i.e. spiritual alertness in the performance of acts one should perform, anger, pride, deceit and greed. Activities (yoga) of mind, speech and body turn auspicious and pure thru restraint & culture. Thus to remove the causes of bondage is called Samvara. And the partial dissociation of the bound karmas from the soul is called Nirjara.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Liberation**

#### **Partial Dissociation (Nirjara)**

The partial dissociation of the bound karmic matter takes place in two ways. One is by force of austerity for a higher spiritual objective where the bound karmic matter gets dissociated with the soul even before it has yielded fruit. Two comes about from the dissociation of the bound karmic matter thru experiencing its fruit at the destined time. The former is voluntary (sakama) & the latter involuntary (akama). Today we eat fruits that are ripened naturally meaning experiencing by the soul of the fruits of its karmas or where they are kept in a room and ripened by other means meaning we can use the heat of austerity & get karmas burnt (dissociated) by the fire of austerity.



While experiencing the fruits of its karmas, if the soul is perturbed, constantly engages in bad thoughts and yields itself to passions, then it binds new karmas. Thus, this cycle will go on for infinity. Conversely if the fruits of the bound karmas are accepted peacefully without yielding to passions, then no new karmas are bound to one's soul.

As stated earlier samvara (stoppage or prevention) is the opposite of asrava inflow. It **stops the inflow of karmic matter**. It is of the nature of internal purity, which **is achieved** by means of gupti, samiti, dharma, anupreksa, parisahajaya and caritra. Gupti means spiritually beneficial control of the activities of mind, speech & body. Samiti means careful activities inspired by a sense of discrimination. Dharma means meritorious qualities i.e. forbearance, softness of heart, humility, truthfulness, non-attachment etc. Anupreksa means spiritually beneficial deep-reflections. Parisahajaya means endurance with equanimity. Caritra means the endeavor to remain steady in the state of equanimity by giving up all impure activities.

By all these means stoppage of the inflow of karmic matter is achieved. And the partial dissociation of the bound karmas is achieved by means of austerity. Spiritually motivated external & internal austerity leads to the partial dissociation. **Internal austerity is divided into six types** i.e. prayascitta (atonement with a view to making clean sweep of defects), vinaya (veneration), vaiyavrttya (rendering service), svadhyaya (self-study), vyutsarga (renouncement of attachment & other passions) and dhyana (spiritually beneficial mental concentration).

Knowledge & vision covering karmas, deluding & obstructive karmas are called ghati-karma (destructive karma) because they cover or adversely affect the natural qualities of the soul. When these four ghati-karmas are removed completely from the soul, perfect knowledge (omniscience) manifests itself. And when this perfect knowledge manifests itself, the soul becomes perfect seer and perfect knower. Then the concerned soul, at the time of its life span coming to an end, by its special efforts dissociates even the remaining four karmas designated 'agahti'. And the moment they are totally removed from the soul, the latter moves upward, and within a moment reaches the end of the universe and rests there. This state is called liberation or moksa.

### **Liberation (Moksa)**

On account of the removal of the causes of bondage as also on account of the dissociation of the bound karmas, there takes place the total & absolute dissociation of all karmas. This is liberation. The soul is now established in its pure and pristine state. To move upward on the total & absolute removal of all the karmas is the nature of the soul. Moving upward the soul reaches the end of the universe; it stops there and rests there. It cannot move upward because beyond the upper limit of the universe there is no medium of motion, as assisting cause of motion, there. Nor can it move backward, because it has no weight, nor sideways, because it is devoid of any urge generated by karmas.

In this state the soul does not have body, sense organs and mind altogether. It is eternal, infinite & pure. In liberation there are no gardens, women or sweet dishes. But how can

we forget that all the miseries of the soul are due to its desire for sensual pleasures. These pleasures like everything else is temporary.

The liberated souls, who are completely cured of the disease of delusion, always remain blissfully engrossed in their pure mental state. Such bliss as is there in the absolutely pure state of soul is ultimately real, perfectly pure and completely unmixed with sorrow. The Indian philosophers have given to such supreme souls who are pure, supremely blissful and perfectly luminous (i.e. omniscient) various names like Suddha (the Pure), Buddha (the Enlightened), Siddha (the Perfected), Niranjana (the Unstained).

Liberation is attained through human body only. Heavenly bodies are by nature lacking in restraint. So it is not possible for them to attain the supreme state of liberation directly from their state of godhood. All worldly souls are divided into two i.e. bhavyas and abhavyas. The former are those who are capable of attaining liberation while the latter are those who are not capable of achieving liberation.

## **Chapter 7**

### **God (Isvara)**

According to Jaina philosophical works, the definition of God is as follows: **God is that soul who has completely removed all the karmas.** Thus he is not in way different from the liberated soul above. The defining characteristic of Godhood is identical with that of liberation itself. To attain liberation is to attain Godhood. The meaning of the term 'Isvara' is powerful. **So, the term Isvara can very well apply to the soul who has become powerful by attaining its perfectly pure state constituted of four characteristics** i.e. infinite knowledge – vision – power & bliss.

We must recognize that every living being is essentially pure and has the capacity to fully developing its own nature. Jaina philosophical works mention that by constant practice of spiritual discipline spiritually right knowledge & conduct, the means of liberation, gradually develop and ultimately attain perfection. And when they attain perfection, all the coverings get removed and all the bondages are cut off. To attain this state is to attain Godhood.

It is a Jaina doctrine that one who steadily advances on the path of spiritual development and makes the right efforts to attain the state of absolute purity i.e. liberation can well become God. For them there are many Gods. In spite of this there are reasons for regarding them as one. All the perfected souls are alike. And their absolute likeness is the cause of our considering them to be one as also our applying the term 'one' to them. Again all perfected souls being uniformly formless, they interpenetrate with one another, as do the lights of different lamps. Hence they in their indistinguishable and undifferentiable collectible form are viewed as one and consequently the term 'one' is applied to them. Thus it is not improper to regard many perfected souls as one God (Isvara or Bhagwan) from this standpoint.

### **Liberation – Everlasting & Endless**

There may arise a doubt – according to law a thing that is produced must always get destroyed so liberation too must end at some time as it is produced. However, liberation is not something producible. Liberation is nothing but the removal of all karmas from the soul. No new thing (quality) is produced in it, so there is no question of its destruction or end. When the cloud moves away the bright sunshines, when the covering of karmas get removed, the soul is manifest in its original nature. So nothing is produced through the process of liberation for it to get destroyed.

**The soul** that has attained absolute purity on the total removal of all karmas does not bind any karma and consequently **is never born again in this world.**

### **Total Removal of all Karmas Possible**

How can the beginningless bondage of the karmas with the soul be ended or destroyed? It is because there is a rule that the beginningless thing can have no end. In answer to this we are told that new karmas are bound and some old karmas are dissociated. This means that no bondage of an individual karma is beginningless, but the stream of bondage taking place at different consecutive moments has been flowing from beginningless time. In other words every karma has a life span, no individual karma is bound with the soul from time immemorial. From this follows that it is quite possible for the soul to disassociate all the bound karmas as well as to stop the inflow of new karmas into it by the force of pure concentration. This ultimately makes it possible for the soul to eradicate completely all the karmas and to become absolutely free from them.

Moreover, if we observe the worldly souls, we find that in some the degree of attachment and aversion is greater, in others it is less. The degree of its intensity may vary from person to person too. Surely this has a cause. Now if the cause of gradual decrease of attachment and aversion is developed to its fullness, it will completely destroy attachment and aversion. The cause of this decrease is wholesome mental activity or reflection. When the wholesome mental reflections become very strong ultimately resulting in purest mental concentration, then attachment and aversion get destroyed. And, on their destruction the soul attains the state absolutely free from the coverings of karmas.

And then the infinite knowledge (omniscience) manifests itself. The whole palace of the worldly existence rests on the pillars of attachment & aversion. These two are the root cause of deluding karma or delusion. So if these two are destroyed, then karmas get destroyed.

### **Establishment of the Existence of Omniscience**

On the destruction of aversion & attachment, the deluding karmas gets totally disassociated from the soul. As a result of this the other three ghati karmas i.e. knowledge & vision covering karma & obstructible karma get completely eliminated. As a result of this, infinite knowledge gets fully manifested. The following proof is offered of its existence.

What do the varying degrees of knowledge observed in different individuals suggest? It suggests that the degree of manifestation of knowledge is in direct proportion to the degree of removal of the covering of karma. The greater the degree of the removal of the covering, the greater is the manifestation of knowledge. And when the covering is totally removed, knowledge is manifested fully. **Knowledge is not acquired; it is there in the soul.**

Infinite knowledge is the nature of the soul. When the removal of karma covering from the soul reaches its highest limit that person is called omniscience (sarvajna), all-seer (sarvadarsi) and his knowledge is designated as kevala-jnana (pure knowledge). The soul can totally remove the defilements of attachment and aversion and consequently can gain absolute purity. And through this purity the light of infinite knowledge manifests itself.

### **God is not World-creator**

One of the Jaina doctrines is that God is not the creator of the world. The Jaina scriptures content that in the worldly cycle of birth and death, revolving by the force of karmas, there can be no place for the creatorship of God, who, according to the Jaina, is absolutely free from attachment and desires. **The entire world constituted of the sentient and insentient substances is governed by the laws of Nature.** Just to recap sentient substance is the soul and the insentient substances are medium of motion & rest, space, matter and time (chapter 4).

Pleasures and pains experienced by a living being depend on the material traces (karmas) left by the acts performed by it. Absolutely pure and attachment-free God is not pleased with some, nor is He displeased with others. This is because He is supreme soul with no taint or defilement whatsoever and absolutely free from detachment.

### **Worship of God Necessary**

If God is not the world-creator, what is the use of worshipping such God? That if God is free from attachment and consequently, is neither pleased nor displeased, then **what is the use of worshipping Him?**

Jaina philosophers say that the worship of God is not please Him, but to purify one's own self. It is highly useful and spiritually beneficial to worship God who is absolutely free from attachment and aversion – the only cause of all miseries. This soul is by nature crystal clear. But it is highly tainted with the defilements of attachment, aversion, delusion & desires. To get free from this situation we need to purify ourself. So we need to worship God who is pure & peaceful. So, by worshipping Him, by contemplating upon Him, the feeling of non-attachment arises in the worshipper and gradually advancing on this path, he can ultimately become attachment free.

God becomes an ideal of non-attachment so by being in his company, it inculcates good qualities within us. What is meant by His Company? His company means to recall Him in one's mind, to contemplate upon Him, to praise Him and to Worship Him. By worshipping him the feelings of aversion & attachment start subsiding. This is the prime & real reason for worshipping God. He expects nothing from the worshipper, nor does He

favor him with something. The devotee worships Him simply to elevate his soul spiritually.

Thus, pleasures and pains are the result's of one own's karmas, which is ultimately governed by one's mental states. And the means by which one can make mental states good & wholesome is the worship of God. This way we can achieve spiritual progress.

In short, according to Jainas, God is not the creator of the world. For them, He is perfected soul. He is absolutely pure. He has destroyed all passions and removed all impurities. As a result of this, he manifests infinite knowledge, infinite vision, infinite bliss & infinite power. This is the reason why he is regarded as God. By meditating on the pure qualities, the Jaina reminds himself daily of the possibility of attaining this pure highest state. He purifies his mind by the contemplation of the pure and strengthens his heart for the uphill journey to liberation. Worship, for the Jaina is not seeking for mercy & pardon.

Friends after having read the full book and the Holy Geeta by Pujya Swami Chinmayanjanji and Swami Rama I do not see much difference in their essence. Both talk of the Atma – soul, karma, removal of attachment – greed, learning to live life in equanimity, meditation, importance of knowledge and liberation. Surely the austerity levels by the Jainas is higher than others but to my mind that is only a different way of going about reducing desire & aversion. Surely things are not as simple as I have made them out to be. Hey Maa Durga & Bhagwan Mahavir give me the strength to some day compare the two & present them before all of you.