

## ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY OF KUNDAKUNDA

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In the history of Jainism, Kundakunda shines as a profound exponent of spiritualism. His thoughts are dedicated to evaluating objects and phenomena mystically. He justifies his approach by saying that people at large have not only listened to, and are intensely familiar with the dualities of life, but they also have experienced them a great deal; on the other hand they have not even chanced come across the mystical approach to life.<sup>1</sup> Kundakunda's works, therefore, strike a tranquil but dynamic note of spiritual inwardness. For him, nothing short of spiritual realisation can serve as the highest objective of human life. Only those who are profoundly interested in the spiritual way of life can benefit from his writings. He pursues the whole subject with intense earnestness with a view to giving a thorough mystical turn to the ordinary ways of man's thinking. His writings often have not been comprehended by those who are not equipped and are not capable of meeting the challenge of life. The intent of his works, if these works are not studied in their entirety and in the totality of their context, would escape since there are *gāthās* in his works which, taken singly, would mislead the reader. To illustrate : "the empirical viewpoint is false and the transcendental viewpoint is true."<sup>2</sup> Both the auspicious and inauspicious actions are evil.<sup>3</sup> There is no difference between merit and demerits.<sup>4</sup> They are like the fetters of gold and iron respectively.<sup>5</sup> Again, repentance for past misconduct, pursuit of the good, self-censure, confession before the Guru etc—all these constitute the pot of poison.<sup>6</sup> To say, 'our village, our town, our city, our nation' is self-delusion.<sup>7</sup> On forming a consistent view of his utterances, we find that, although he advises the individuals to dive deep into the depths of human self after abandoning mundane career, he does not ignore the momentousness of moral attitude. He may be the champion of supper-empirical view of life; yet he does not absolutely cast aside empirical view of life. For instance, in the *Samayasāra*, he says that the transcendental viewpoint which speaks about the real nature of objects is fit to be known by the realisers of the highest spiritual experience. But those who fall short of the experience need be preached by means of empirical viewpoint.<sup>8</sup> While it is not unlikely that we cannot find much in his works which may enable us to form a systematic view of his ethical philosophy; even then, from whatever is available in his works, may shed light on his ethical thinking. In the present paper I shall endeavour to reconstruct his view of ethical philosophy, so that his concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, are properly formulated. As for ethics, I seem to feel that it should be confined to the realm of right and wrong, good and evil. The realm beyond this is the realm of metaphysics and mysticism, not of ethics. I,

therefore, shall not here talk about the supra-ethical character of life, however, important it may be for Kundakunda. What I intend to discuss here relates to some of the questions that arise in normative ethics, and meta-ethics in the context of the ethical views of Kundakunda.

At the outset, we come across certain presuppositions which Kundakunda has made in order to work out his moral philosophy. The first presupposition made by him refers to the existence of the individual centres of consciousness which existed in the past, exist at present, and shall exist in future.<sup>9</sup> In other words, these centres of consciousness have been existing since beginningless time : They, moreover, will endure for ever. These are endowed with cognitive, effective and conative tendencies, by virtue of which they see and know, they like pleasure and fear suffering, and they are engaged in beneficial as well as harmful activities.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, according to Kundakunda, for everything that an individual does, he is responsible (*Pahu = Prabhu*). No other being can be held responsible for the actions which a person commits. To say that a person is held responsible for an action is to say that he could have done otherwise if he had chosen to do otherwise. Thus the ascription of responsibility to man is inconceivable without a free will. If a man is not his own sovereign, he cannot be free; therefore he cannot be held responsible and also he cannot be praised or blamed, punished or rewarded. Kundakunda seems to be aware of the fact that the assumption of responsibility and that of freedom are parts of the moral institution of life. Frankena rightly remarks : "We must assume that people are normally free to do as they choose. If by nature, they were like ants, bees, or even monkeys, if they had all been thoroughly brain-washed, if they were all neurotically or psychotically compulsive throughout, or if they were all always under a constant dire threat from a totalitarian ruler of the work's kind, then it would be pointless to try to influence their behaviour in the ways that are characteristic of morality. Moral sanctions, internal or external, could not then be expected to have the desired effects."<sup>11</sup> Thirdly, Kundakunda points out that an individual is the doer of actions, right or wrong, good or evil. That he voluntarily performs actions, follows from the fact of his being a free agent. Again, and as a consequence, he is the enjoyer of the results of those actions.

After dealing with the presuppositions of morality in accordance with the ethical philosophy of Kundakunda, we may first proceed to consider what things, or kinds of things, have intrinsic value according to him. In other words, the question that confronts us is : what is intrinsically good or worthwhile in life according to Kundakunda ? The reply of Kundakunda seems to me to be this : The belief in the presuppositions is the first to be intrinsically desired. Kundakunda firmly holds that, without the belief in responsibility, freedom, and the individual centres of consciousness, nothing worthwhile can be achieved in life.<sup>12</sup> It is the root of the tree of moral life,<sup>13</sup> Besides this, compassion for all the living being,<sup>14</sup> a

whole of knowledge and virtue,<sup>15</sup> observance of five great vows,<sup>16</sup> virtues like contentment<sup>17</sup>, forgiveness<sup>18</sup>, modesty<sup>19</sup>, moral emotions like fearlessness<sup>20</sup>, and universal love<sup>21</sup>, and propagation of values<sup>22</sup>—all these are intrinsically desirable. It should be borne in mind that it is the experience of these intrinsic values that is good in itself. Kundakunda states that good experience (*śubha bhāva*) is intrinsically valuable.<sup>23</sup> Kundakunda speaks of *śubha bhāva* to represent all that is intrinsically valuable<sup>24</sup>. It is a complex mental state comprising cognitive, conative and affective elements. The *Samayasāra* regards *bhāva*, *pariṇāma*, *adhyavasāya*, *citta* etc. as synonyms.<sup>25</sup>

We have dwelt upon the things that are intrinsically worthy. But the basic question that remains to be discussed is the definition of good or *śubha*. Kundakunda enumerates things that are *śubha*. Perhaps he does not face the question 'What is good or *śubha*?' It is surprising that he does not give us any criterion of intrinsic goodness. Simple enumeration cannot lead us anywhere. I shall try to give the definition of good which, I believe, shall be in congruence with the utterances of Kundakunda. Thus we may say, *śubha* is an experience in tune with *ahiṃsā*. Since there are degrees of *ahiṃsā*, so there are degrees of *śubha* or good. The ingredients of this experience which is complex but unified are emotions, and knowledge issuing as a result of an end-seeking action. Satisfaction on the fulfilment of ends is the accompaniment of experience. The implication of the definition of *śubha* or good is that goodness does not belong to things in complete isolation from feeling; a thing is good, because it gives rise to an experience in tune with *ahiṃsā*.

I wish to discuss this question a little further. The question as to what is *śubha* in the realm of ethics is like the question 'What is *dravya*' in the realm of metaphysics. The definition of *dravya* given by the Jaina *ācāryas* is : *Dravya* is that which is *sat* (being). Here 'being' is used in a comprehensive, and not particular, sense. However, no particular can be apart from being. We may logically say that being is the highest genus whereas the particulars are its species and the relation between the two is 'identity-in-difference'. Similarly, when I say that *śubha* is an experience in tune with *ahiṃsā*, I am using the term '*ahiṃsā*' in the comprehensive sense and not in a particular sense. No particular *śubha* can be separated from *ahiṃsā* and *ahiṃsā* manifests itself in all particular *śubhas*. In a logical sense, it can be said that *ahiṃsā* is the highest genus and particular *ahiṃsās* are its species, and the relation between *ahiṃsā* and *ahiṃsās* is a relation of identity-in-difference. For example, in non-killing and non-exploitation, though the identical element of *ahiṃsā* is present, yet the two are different. So the above is the most general definition of *śubha* just like the definition of *dravya*. It may be noted here that we can understand 'being' only through the particulars since general being is unintelligible owing to its being abstract, though we can think of it factually, i. e. value neutrally. Similarly, the understanding of general *ahiṃsā* shall come only through

the particular examples of *ahiṃsā*, e. g. non-killing, non-exploitation, non-enmity non-cruelty etc., though we can think of it evaluatively. I may point out, in passing, that particular kinds of *ahiṃsā* are a matter of exploration. Every age develops many kinds of subtle *hiṃsā* which are a matter of exploration. Gross *ahiṃsā* like non-killing is easily recognisable but subtle *ahiṃsā* like non-exploitation is a matter of discovery. Thus different forms of *ahiṃsā* will ever be appearing before us and by our exploring outlook and tendencies. In fact, *ahiṃsā* presupposes a realm of living beings, both human and non-human. So *śubha* will be operative only in such a realm of living beings. In other words, the experience of *śubha* will always be in relation to living beings : No living beings, no *śubha*. Thus the definition of *śubha* as the experience in tune with *ahiṃsā* is the most general definition like the definition of *dravya* as that which is *sat*. The former can be thought of evaluatively, just as the latter can be thought of factually i. e. value neutrally.

Thus all the goods represented by Kundakunda can stand the test of *ahiṃsā* in the comprehensive sense. We can speak of Kundakunda as a value-monist from the point of view of *ahiṃsā* and a value-pluralist from the point of view of things that are good in themselves. This theory of intrinsic goodness may be styled '*ahiṃsā*-utilitarianism'. This means that this theory considers ends tested by the criterion of *ahiṃsā* to be the general good which includes one's own good without any inconsistency. This *ahiṃsā*-utilitarianism is to be distinguished from Hedonistic utilitarianism of Mill, but it has some resemblance with the Ideal-utilitarianism of Moore and Roshdall.

The next question that arises is : what is the criterion of the rightness of action ? In this life an individual passes through many situations and as a moral agent or as an adviser he has to take decisions. So the interrelated question is : what must we do or advise others to do in a certain situation ? Let me clarify this question. Suppose a man borrows a sword from his friend for self-defence for a particular period of time, shall he return it to him at the expiry of time when his friend is planning to kill his parents ? What would Kundakunda say ? Should the man keep his promise or break it ? Keeping in view the good to be produced by breaking the promise, Kundakunda, it seems to me, would advise him to break the promise. Thus the criterion of rightness of action, according to Kundakunda, is the greater balance of good over evil that may be engendered in a particular situation. It means that Kundakunda upholds teleological position as distinguished from the deontological one in which an action or a rule is intrinsically right irrespective of the goodness of the consequences. This is tantamount to saying that, in the ethical philosophy of Kundakunda, right cannot be separated from the good.

It is true that, from the study of his works, we find that nowhere does he talk of life-situations. He is the master of inwardness, and consequently he is concerned more with the moral worth of an action than its mere rightness. He

seems to be aware of the fact that there may be external rightness without there being any moral worth. Kundakunda is prone to transform the individual. In consequence, he discusses the rightness of an action from the standpoint of moral inwardness. For him an action which has no moral worth is morally evil though it may be right. So far as I have been able to understand Kundakunda, he stands for the moral transformation of an individual and seems to believe that if all the individuals take care of themselves, the external situations will always be in harmony with their moral attitude. He, therefore, proclaims that mental inclination (*bhāva*) is the cause of virtue and vice.<sup>26</sup> The moral worth of an action depends on virtuous mental disposition (*śubha bhāva*) or good disposition. It is this virtuous mental disposition which, according to Kundakunda, entails merit (*puṇya*) and the disposition contrary to this entails demerit (*pāpa*).<sup>27</sup> In the *Samayasāra* he tells us that the mental inclination in *hiṃsā*, falsehood, possession, unchastity, and stealing entails demerit, whereas the mental inclination in *ahiṃsā*, truthfulness, non-possession, chastity and non-stealing entails merit.<sup>28</sup> In the *Pañcāstikāya* he avers that those actions which are fraught with indolence, which come from anger, conceit, deceit, and greed, which cause injury to others, and which culminate others, fall into the gamut of evil actions.<sup>29</sup> Besides, inordinate indulgence in carnal pleasures, to be subject to sensuous objects, to be occupied with anxiety-ridden mental states, to enjoy cruelty, fraudulence, thieving, and possessiveness, to employ knowledge in harmful activities—all these are evil inclinations.<sup>30</sup> If some evil action because of *aśubha bhāva* is committed, Kundakunda prescribes the performance of repentance (*pratikramaṇa*), so that the consciousness of *śubha bhāva* is (indirectly) deepened. Kundakunda considers *pratikramaṇa* to be so important that in the *Niyamasāra* he says that, if the performance of attentive *pratikramaṇa* is not possible because of the exhaustion of bodily vigour, one should at least have unflinching faith in it.<sup>31</sup>

It seems to me that, in a way, Kundakunda identifies right with the good and wrong with evil. *Śubha bhāva* is right and good : *Aśubha bhāva* is wrong and evil. These two expressions seem to be one for Kundakunda. Leslie Stephen rightly remarks, "... morality is internal. The moral law—has to be expressed in the form, 'be this' not in the form, 'do this' .... the true moral law says 'hate not', instead of 'kill not' .... the only mode of stating the moral law must be as a rule of character'.<sup>32</sup> Kundakunda believes in 'to be' and not merely in 'to do'. It means that 'being' should result in doing and 'doing' should be based on being. Kundakunda says that compassionate disposition should result in the act of kindness to a thirsty, hungry and distressed being with whom feels sympathetic suffering.<sup>33</sup> This comes to a point that Kundakunda adheres to the cultivation of morally good dispositions rather than to the doing of right actions either prudentially or impulsively or altruistically. This, in essence, seems to be the ethical philosophy of Kundakunda.

**Notes and References**

1. *Samayasāra* : 4.
2. *Ibid.*, 11.
3. *Ibid.*, 147.
4. *Pravacanasāra*—II. 77.
5. *Samayasāra*—146.
6. *Ibid.*,—306.
7. *Ibid.*,—325.
8. *Ibid.*,—12.
9. *Pañcāstikāya*—27, 30.
10. *Ibid.*,—122.
11. Frankena, *Ethics*, p. 59 (Prentice Hall).
12. *Darśana-pāhuḍa*—20.
13. *Ibid.*,—10.
14. *Pravacanasāra* II—65.
15. *Sila-pāhuḍa*—2.
16. *Caritra-pāhuḍa*—30.
17. *Sila-pāhuḍa*—19.
18. *Bhāva-pāhuḍa*—107.
19. *Ibid.*,—104.
20. *Samayasāra*—228.
21. *Caritra-pāhuḍa*—7.
22. *Ibid.*,—7.
23. *Bhāva-pāhuḍa* 76.
24. *Pravacanasāra* I—9,46.
25. *Samayasāra* 271.
26. *Bhāva-pāhuḍa* 2.
27. *Pañcāstikāya* 132.
28. *Samayasāra* 263-264.
29. *Pañcāstikāya* 139.
30. *Ibid.*,—140.
31. *Niyamasāra* 154.
32. Leslie Stephen, *The Science of Ethics*, pp. 155-158,
33. *Pañcāstikāya* 137.