

HOW TO STUDY JAINA PHILOSOPHY

The Jaina philosophy has been a stumbling block to many a scholar, Eastern and Western. Modern students are accustomed to think in the popular way known as the scientific way—the way common to the various sciences of the day. “It is the way with them,” as Prof. William Wallace says, “to assume that the student has a rough general image, of the objects which they examine; and under the guidance or with the help of this generalized image, they go on to explain and describe its outlines more completely. They start with an approximate conception, such as any body may be supposed to have; and this they seek to render more definite. The geologist, for example, could scarcely teach geology, unless he could pre-suppose or produce some acquaintance on the part of his pupils with what Hume would have called an ‘impression’ or an ‘idea’ of the rocks and formations of which he has to treat. The geometer gives a short, and, as it were, popular explanation of the sense in which angles, circles, triangles, etc., are to be understood: and then by the aid of these provisional definitions we come to a more scientific notion of the same terms. The third book of Euclid, for example, brings before us a clearer notion of what a circle is, than the nominal explanation in the list of definitions. By means of these temporary aids, or, as we may call them, leading strings of the intellect, the progress of the ordinary scientific student is made tolerably easy.” This is the scientific method

of study. Never in this method is brought into prominence the necessity of psychological and ethical improvement of the mind which wishes to study the great problems of life and the universe. Self-restraint, the first step in acquiring true knowledge, sacrifice of the cherished habits of mind, giving up of *Dṛṣṭi-rāga*, as we Jainas call it, which are in our opinion the *sine qua non* of full and clear understanding of the self and the non-self are seldom taken into consideration in the Western method of thinking.

This vice of popular method of thinking is specially apparent among religious propagandists and political leaders. Their idols symbolized in certain words remain always unflinching. Atheism, Fatherhood of God.