

Human Solidarity and Jainism

(The challenge of our Times)

The challenge of our Times

Ours is the age of reason, science and technology. They have done great service to mankind by removing superstitions and false dogmas, by understanding the real nature of world as well as by providing the amenities of pleasant living respectively. Now-a-days, we, due to the tremendous advancement of science and technology have light-legged means of transportation; physical distances have no bars to meet the people of different nationalities, cultures and religions. Our world is shrinking and consequently we have been more interdependent in every sphere of our life as we were never before. But, unluckily and disdainfully, distances of our hearts are increasing day by day. Human race was divided in the past and is being divided at present also in the name of caste, colour and creed by so called those political, religious and social leaders, who want to serve their vested interest. We are becoming more and more selfish and neglecting the claims of greater goodness of mankind as a whole.

The growth of scientific knowledge and outlook has destroyed our superstitions and false dogmas, but unfortunately and surprisingly it has shaken our faith in religious morality and spiritual values. Today we know more about the atom and atomic forces than the values needed for meaningful and peaceful life. This advancement of our knowledge could not sublimate our animal and selfish nature. Animal nature within us is still dominating our individual as well as social behaviour. Our life, so to say, is full of excitements, emotional disorders and mental tensions. Though, we are wordly pleading for peace, non-violence and co-existence, by heart we still believe in the law of jungle i.e. the dictum 'might is right'. The race of nuclear

weapons of the powerful nations is a strong evidence of our belief in aforesaid dictum, which also alarms us that we are proceeding to formidable funeral procession of mankind.

Racialism, castism, regionalism and sectarianism are a great curse to the present day human society. At present, religion as such is largely shown in the background and the political parties are claiming themselves as a true well-wisher of mankind. But, contrary to their promises, they are also sailing in the same boat of racialism, castism, regionalism and sectarianism.

Actually narrow and selfish outlook of man gives birth to fanaticism and intolerance and leads to disintegration of human society. The immediacy, therefore, is to develop a friendly and harmonious outlook towards the members of other nations, cast and creeds. It is the only way to approach by which we can generate peace and harmony inside the human society. Today, what is needed for man is nothing but a complete integration with his own personality and with his social environment.

Can Jainism meet this challenge of our times and save the human race from this sordid situation? Before this question is answered, we must inquire into the root cause of disintegration and communal, racial and religious rivalries.

Attachment and aversion: the causes of disintegration

Among the causes, which are responsible for disintegration and sectionalism, the attachment is the principal one. Attachment in Jainism is considered as a binding principle.¹ It is the cause of union. At the same time it is also responsible for separation or disintegration. Attachment and aversion are the twins; though they seem opposite but they are one and the same, like the two facets of a coin. Attachment emanates aversion and they, due to its disposition, cannot be separated from each other. Attachment unites us with some one, but simultaneously separates us from others.² It is the attachment, which emerges from the concept of mineness³ and we cling to the notions

such as my nation, my province, my region, my caste, my race, my religion etc. Nationalism, regionalism, castism, racialism and the sectarianism are the born-children of the joint-principle of attachment and aversion. From attachment follows "mine" and from aversion follows "alien" and this single concept of "mine and alien" is solely responsible for national communal, racial and religious rivalries. Jainism denies this established notion that the integration and harmony can be achieved on the emotional basis i.e. on the basis of attachment, love and affection (here the term love is used as a passionate love, which is an outer expression of attachment).⁴

Jainism holds that the slightest, even pious, attachment towards the prophet, is also a hindrance to a seeker of truth and aspirant of perfection.⁵ It generates uncritical and biased outlook. Thus attachment and aversion (hatred) are the two great enemies of impartial thinking and behaviour.⁶ Intense attachment unfailingly generates blind faith in religious leaders, dogmas, doctrines and rituals and consequently religious intolerance and fanaticism come into existence. Attachment is also responsible for our narrow and selfish outlook. It results in nationalism, castism, racialism and sectarianism and divides human race into the smaller groups, while aversion turns itself into the hatred and rivalries among these smaller groups and thus both of them disturb integrity and solidarity of mankind. The Jainas therefore, laid stress on the elimination of attachment and aversion⁷; the root causes of selfishness and intolerance respectively. They firmly believe that the stable integration and solidarity of mankind can only be established on the rational grounds of equality and benevolent and co-operative nature of all sentient beings.

The grounds for Human solidarity

(a) Equality of Human beings

Jainas strongly hold the equality of all human beings and profound the rational maxim "that which thou desire for thyself

desire for others that which thou desire not for thyself, thou shall not desire for others also. This is the essence of teachings of the Jina."⁸

They further say just as suffering is not agreeable to you, it is so with other beings; endowed with regard and equanimity, be compassionate and co-operative to all beings as you are towards yourself.⁹

This Jaina concept of potential equality of all sentient beings is the core of Jaina-theory of non-violence and can serve as the basis for human solidarity and integration. Non-violence is nothing but to give an equal treatment to all sentient beings, of course, prominently to human beings. Non-violence is a regard for life, which is an essential condition for co-existence.

(b) Human race is one

Jainism does not discriminate between man and man on the basis of their caste, creed and colour. According to it, all barriers of caste, creed and colour are superficial. They vehemently declare the human race is one. In later period indeed the concepts of caste and *varṇa* are also crept into Jainism, but it was obviously the influence of Hinduism. Jainism, what we may say, neither proposes nor supports the concept of superiority or inferiority on the basis of caste and colour. In *Uttarādhyayana* it is clearly mentioned that a man is neither high nor low, because he is born some particular caste or lineage or due to his social, political or economic status, but it is the moral conduct that makes a man high or low. In its 12th and 25th chapters there are contemptuous criticism of *varṇa* system hierarchy and assumed superiority of Brahmins. It is clearly asserted that a real Brahmin is not one who is born in a particular lineage, but one who is completely unattached, talented and of good-conduct. It is not the lineage but the character, which is the determining factor of one's superiority.¹⁰

(c) The natural law of co-operation:

The second but not the least motto of Jainism is the law of co-operation. For Jaina thinkers co-operation is the essential nature

of living beings.¹¹ They strongly condemn the doctrine of 'struggle for the existence' i.e. 'living by killing'. They aver that the directive principle of our living is not the struggle but the co-operation. The dictum 'Live on others or living by killing' is not agreeable to them, simply because it goes against the judgment of our faculty of reasoning and commonsense. For them, the directive principle of living is not merely "live and let live", but "Live with others" or "Live for others". They argue if nobody has any right to take my life then on the same rational ground I have also no right to take other's life. Just I need other's co-operation for my existence, so I should also co-operate in other's living. For Jainas, not the struggle, but the co-operation is the law of life and only through the firm belief in and practice of this natural law we can integrate the nation and as well as mankind. It is the law of mutual co-operation on which the institutions of family and society stands. This concept of co-operation is a positive aspect of Jaina theory of non-violence. At present it is only the firm faith in the observance of non-violence, which can save the human race from disintegration. It is mutual credibility and belief in the equality of human being, which can restore the peace, and harmony in human society.

Religious tolerance in Jainism

Religious intolerance and sectarianism are also responsible for disintegration of mankind as well as nation. If we are inclined to human solidarity and national integration then, we should develop the concept of religious tolerance and religious co-existence and should give-up the idea that my religion is the only way to approach the ultimate.

Jaina religion since its inception till modern age has been tolerant and respectful towards other faiths and religions. The Jaina Ācāryas while opposing the different ideologies and religious standpoints, paid full regard to them and accepted that the opponent convictions may also be valid from a certain standpoint. Their well-

known theory of *Anekāntavāda* or Non-absolutism is the base of religious tolerance. If viewed from two different angles, according to this theory, both contrary views may be relatively true.

Jaina thinkers accept that reality is a complex one.¹² The reality, which has many facets, various attributes and modes, in its completeness it cannot be grasped by us. It can only be viewed and understood from different angles. While every angle or viewpoint can claim that it gives a true picture of reality, each one only gives a partial and relative picture. On the basis of this partial and relative knowledge of reality, one has no right to discard the views of one's opponents as totally false. So the Truth-value of opponents, according to Jaina thinkers, must be accepted and respected. This pragmatic view of the Jains made them open-minded and consequently tolerant.

Upādhyāya Yaśovijaya, a famous Jaina Ācārya of 17th cent. AD mentions. "A true non-absolutist does not disdain any faith and he treats all the faiths equally, like a father to his sons, for a non-absolutist does not have any prejudice and biased outlook in his mind."¹³

For Jainas, the door of liberation is open to all. One who can attain equanimity of mind, according to Haribhadra, will for certain get the emancipation whether he may be a Śvetāmbara or a Digambara or a Buddhist or any one else.¹⁴ About the means of liberation also they had broad-minded outlook. They were not of this opinion that their mode of worship is the only way of emancipation. For them, it is not the external mode of worship, but the right attitude and mental purity, which makes religious practices fruitful.

From the earliest Jaina literature to the age of 20th cent. A.D., we come across many references of their religious tolerance. *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* mentions 'those who praise their own faith and possess malice against their opponents will remain confined to the cycle of birth and death'.¹⁵ In *Isibhāsiyām*, a Jaina text of third century BC

the Brahmanical and Śramanica saints are remembered as *Arhat Rṣi* and their teachings are regarded as an *Āgama*.¹⁶ Haribhadra – Jaina saint of eighth century AD was a staunch preacher of religious tolerance. In his works *Śāstravārtāsamuccaya* and *Yogaḍṛṣṭisamuccaya*, he has elaborately illustrated this liberal outlook.

In the *Yogaḍṛṣṭisamuccaya*, he remarks that the ultimate truth transcends all states of worldly existence, called nirvāṇa and is essentially and necessarily "single" even if it be designated by different names, like Sadāśiva, Parabrahman, Siddhātmā, Tathāgata etc.¹⁷ Not only in the general sense but etymologically also they convey the same meaning. In *Lokatattvanirṇaya* he says 'I venerate all those who are free from all vices and adorned with all virtues, be they Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva or Jina.'¹⁸ Haribhadra's crusade against sectarianism is unique and admirable in the history of world-religions. This view is further supported by various Jaina thinkers of medieval period such as Akalaṅka, Yogindu, Mānatuṅga, Hemacandra and many others. While worshipping Lord Śiva, the Jaina pontiff Hemacandra says: "I worship those who have destroyed attachment and aversion which are the seed of birth and death, be they Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva or Jina."¹⁹ It is important that though Hemacandra was a Jain-saint, he composed a hymn in praise of Śiva. This liberalism is also maintained by later Hindi or Gujarati Jaina writers like Ānandaghana and many others.

Ānandaghana, a mystic Jaina saint of the 17th century A.D. remarks that just as ocean includes all the rivers so does Jainism all other faiths. Further, he beautifully expounds that all the six heretic schools are the organs of *Jina* and one who worships *Jina* also worships them.²⁰ A Hindi couplet (20th cent.) reads:

*buddha vira jina hari hara brahmā ya usako svādhīna kaho/
bhakti bhāva se prerita ho, yeha citta usi me lina raho//*

Along with these literary evidences there are some epigraphical evidences of religious tolerance of the Jainas. Some Jaina Ācāryas such as Rāmakīrti and Jayamaṅgalasūri wrote the hymns in the praise

of goddess Cāmuṇḍā. Jaina kings such as Kumārapāla, Viṣṇuvardhana and others constructed the temples of Śiva and Viṣṇu along with the temples of Jina.²¹

Historically, we also find that various deities of other sects are adopted in Jainism and worshipped by the Jainas. Ācārya Somadeva in his work *Yaśastilakcampū* remarks that where there is no distortion from right faith and accepted vows, one should follow the traditions prevailing in the country.²² Thus Jaina thinkers advocated religious tolerance, which is a necessary condition for national integration and human solidarity.

Meaning of Unity in Jainism

Jaina philosophers firmly believe the concept of integration of unity, but for them unity does not mean an omnivores unity in which all its constituents lose their entity and identity. They believe in that type of unity in which all its integral parts conjoin each other and form an organic whole without losing their independent existence and peculiarities. In other words integration or unity, as Jainas believe, means a harmonious co-existence of different nations, faiths and cultures in an organic whole.

Jaina thinkers assert that unity implies diversity. Unity and diversity are the two phases of the same reality. They find reality as unity in diversity. In *Bhagavatī-sūtra* Lord Mahāvīra mentions that 'I am one as well as many'.²³ There is no class without individuals and every individual belongs to a certain class. We cannot imagine a cow without cow-hood and without cowhood a cow. The terms unity and diversity are relative, such as husband and wife. The term husband implies wife and the term wife implies husband, similarly unity implies diversity and diversity implies unity.

So, whenever we talk about human solidarity it does mean the unity in diversity, for diversity is also an essential characteristic of mankind. Radial, cultural, linguistic, regional and religious differences are inevitable and essential. In *Niyamasāra* Ācārya

Kundakunda, a well known Jaina philosopher of Tamilnadu, says that there are different persons with their different activities or *karmas* and different levels or capacities, so one should not indulge in rivalries neither with other sects nor one's own sect.²⁴

Haribhadra also remarks that the diversity in the teachings of the sages is due to the diversity in the levels of their disciples or the diversity in standpoints adopted by the sages or the diversity in the period of time when they were preached or it is only an apparent diversity. Just as a physician prescribes medicine according to the nature of a patient, his illness and the climate, so is the case with diversity of religious teachings.²⁵ So far as diversity in time, place, levels and understanding of disciples is inevitable, variety in religious ideologies and practices is essential. The only way to remove the religious as well as other conflicts is to develop a tolerant outlook and to establish harmony among different faiths, ideologies and cultures.

Nationalism v/s Human Solidarity

Thus, in Jainism, unity means a co-operative co-existence of the constituents in an organic whole. So far as the problem of national integration is concerned Jainas support it theoretically as well as practically. In *Sthānāṅga* we have a mention of Kuladharmā, Grāmadharma and Rāṣṭra-dharma. i.e. the duties pertaining to the family, the township and the nation.²⁶ They also favour that if necessary the interests of the individual, the family and the township should be sacrificed for the common and greater good of the nation. For them, the concept of human solidarity has more importance than the concept of nationality. They are determined that for the solidarity and the greater good of mankind as a whole, we must get rid of the narrower concepts such as regionalism and even nationalism. If viewed from the whole mankind, nationalism is also a narrower outlook and a hindrance to human solidarity, so the mankind should get rid of the narrower concepts and should think of the greater good of mankind as a whole.

References:

1. (a) *Sthānāṅga* 2/4
(b) *Samaṇasuttaṃ*, 596
2. *Uttarādhyayana- sūtra*, 32/38
3. *Ibid* - 32/89
4. *Ibid* - 32/92-92
5. *Kalpasūtra* Tīkā by Muni Vinaya-Vijay, Page 120
6. *Studies in Jaina Philosophy* - Tatia , Page 22
7. *Uttarādhyayana* - 32/19
8. *Bṛahadkalpa Bhāṣya*, 4584
9. *Samaṇasuttaṃ*, 150
10. (a) *Uttarādhyayana- sūtra* 12/37
(b) *Ācārāṅga* 1/2/3/1
(c) *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* 1/13/16
11. *Tattvārthasūtra*, 5/21
12. *Anyayogavyavacchedikā*, Hemcandra- 22
13. *Adhyatmopaniṣad*, 70
14. *Sambodhasattari*, 2
15. *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* 1/1/2/23
16. *Isibhāṣiyāṃ* 1/1
17. *Yogaḍṛṣṭisamuccaya*-Haribhadra- 129
18. *Lokatattvanirṇaya*, Haribhadra- 40
19. *Mahādeva-stotra* - 44
20. *Namījinastavana* -1, Ānandaghana
21. *Jainaśīlālekhasaṃgraha* Vol.-III Introduction - by G. C. Chaudbary.
22. *Yaśastīlaka- campū*, Somadeva Page 373 (Bombay Edition)
23. *Bhagavatīśūtra* 1/8/10
24. *Niyamasāra*, 155
25. *Yogaḍṛṣṭisamuccaya*, 133 x 137
26. *Sthānāṅgasūtra* 10/760

