

THE JAIN CONCEPTION OF LIBERATION IN THE SŪTRAKṚTĀṄGA

DR. CH. LALITHA

The *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* is the second among the eleven extant Jain Aṅgas which belong to the Anga-Pravista group of the Svetambara Jain canonical Literature. This paper aims to study the Jain conception of Liberation as depicted in the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*. It is divided into three parts. The first part deals with Jain object of liberation. The second section gives a description of various means of liberation. The third portion deals with the fruits of stages in spiritual realization.

i

JAIN OBJECT OF LIBERATION

According to the Jain standpoint liberation (*mokṣa*) is nothing less than aiming to get complete deliverance of the soul from all evil and covering of *karma* (*Sarvavarana vimuktir muktih*). Karma is the cause of bondage of the soul. The object of liberation is to tear as under of the snares of karma binding the *jīva* under the sway of subreption (mith *yātra*) to the *saṃsāra* and hence it is not the result of anything preceding it as its cause.¹

1. P.C. Nahar and K.C. Ghosh (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Jainism*, PP. 604, 607.

Bondage is preceded by influx (*aśrava*). The karmic matter flows into the soul through the channel of action which is termed as influx. It is of two kinds : Psychical and physical. That change of consciousness by which karma gets involved into the soul is known as psychical influx and the karmic matter itself which enters the soul is called physical influx. There are two kinds of influx of *karma* that is virtuous (*puṇya*) and sinful (*pāpa*). *Puṇya* and *pāpa* are the sources of all weals and woes with this difference only that those who commit sin go down to the lower grades of *saṁsāra* or go into hell to suffer penalties as the natural result and those who perform virtuous deeds take birth in the higher levels of *samsara* to enjoy there the pleasures of life and achieve the objects of their desire. So far the achievement of freedom i.e. *mokṣa* both *pāpa* and *puṇya* have got to be worked out.

Bondage is of two kinds psychical and physical. When *karma* is bound with the soul by that conscious state it is called psychical bondage whereas when there is interpenetration of karmic particles and the soul, it is called physical bondage. The cause of bondage is a specific modification of consciousness including of passions by which *karmas* are tied to the soul. The practice of stoppage (*Samvara*) of the fresh inflows of material particles and physical austerities and mental discipline will lead to the destruction of the accumulated karma. *Mokṣa* is the emancipation of the soul from the snares of *karma* (*karma-pāsha*).

According to Jain conception *mokṣa* is resolved into subjective (*bhava*) and objective (*dravya*). When the soul becomes released from the four action-currents of Injury (*ghātya karmas*) it attains subjective (*bhava*) *mokṣa*. When action-currents of non-injury are dissolved from the constitution of the soul it attains objective (*dravya*) *mokṣa*.

By the process of dissipation of *karmas* (*nirjarā*) the soul gets free from the four-fold action currents of injury to the natural vision (*darshan*) knowledge (*Jñāna*) and thereby the soul becomes omniscient (*kevalin*). omniscience (*kevalajñāna*) is attained on complete destruction or dissociation (*ksāya*) of deluding karma (*mohanīya*) which is essentially followed by the destruction of knowledge-covering (*Jñāna-varaṇa*) institution covering (*darśanā varaṇa*) obstructive karma (*antarya*). Having achieved omniscience (keval jnana) the cause of foregoing fresh fetters of bondage being absent by virtue of stoppage (*saṁvara*) and dissipation of karmas (*nirjarā*) being yet in the practice of working, the jivanmukta kevalin gradually becomes released from all the residuum of the Action-current of Non-Injury (*aghāitn karmas*) and thereafter, reaches to a state of never-ending bliss and everlasting beatitude. The realization of the Jīva of this viz. the permanent state of being in knowledge and infinite delight is what is called as freedom or emancipation (*mokṣa*) from the snares of karma. Thus the liberated soul goes straight up to the region of the free and the liberated (*Siddhasīla*) at the submit of the bounded space (*Lokākāśa*). This stage represents the trans-empirical state. It is a state of infinite, pure and unlimited bliss.² Just as Śramaṇa Gñātriputra is the foremost of all human beings, just as the anurtara gods are the highest among all the deities, just as Sudharman's palace is the best among the celestial dwellings, so too *Nirvāṇa* is the chief object of the Law.³

2. *Ibid.*, PP. 617-618.

3. Hermann Jacobi, *Jaina Sutras*, part II, PP. 299. HERE AFTER ABBREVIATED AS JS.

MEANS OF LIBERATION :

From the Jain philosophical position all the four kinds of persons viz., a clever discerning person, one who believes that the self (*puruṣa or Īsvara*) is the cause of everything and one who believes that Faith is the cause of everything, adhere to their intellect, will, character, opinions, taste, undertakings and plans and leave their former occupations cannot be accorded as those who have entered the noble path. They can neither return to the worldly life nor get over beyond it. But the Āryās as well as Non-Āryās whether they have kinsmen and property or not renounce their various possessions in order to lead a mendicant's life. They should not go on reflecting their pleasant associations with kinsmen and property nor they should cherish the painful feelings being disassociated with the former. Since karma is exclusively individual they should understand that they can neither help nor save others nor they can harm or destroy others at their will. Having realised that the householders who do not abstain from their five cardinal sins, being instructed by a well-behaved monk who takes food, drink and rest at proper time, who practises *ahiṃsā* by means of perfect control over himself, explains the law to all those who intend to listen and preaches it with indifference not for the sake of any material benefit or pleasure but only for the sake of others peace of mind, cessation of passion, *Nirvāṇa* absolute purity and freedom from bondage. All faithful adherents who exert themselves on the righteous path endowed with all virtues, abstaining from all sins and passions attain *Nirvāṇa* or the final beatitude.⁴

4. *Ibid.*, P. 372.

By avoiding the three kinds of committing sins namely by means of one's own activity, by means of commission and by approving others to do sinful deeds one attains purity of heart and thereby attains Nirvāṇa.⁵ Whoever grasps the Law of the Jinas, whoever restrains one's senses and overcomes all kinds of hardships, in course of time attains the ultimate liberation.⁶

A wise monk gives up the pride of genius, the pride of sanctity, the pride of birth and the pride of good living and thereby transcending the Gotra attains moksha or liberation.⁷ A good monk who protects himself in his thoughts, speech and action, who practices austerities and silence thereby annihilates all sins and attains final liberation.⁸ A wise follower of the path who abstains from works which one ought to do by virtue of one's birth, who controls the senses and destroys one's karma either is reborn in the realm of gods or becomes liberated.⁹ He who practises ahimsā or non-violence without injuring all living beings which dwell on the earth, over it and below it and also does not kill those which move and do not move attains the goal of *nirvāṇa* (which consists in peace).¹⁰ A learned monk whose soul is pure and who gives up all sins and is free from delusion in course of time attains final liberation.¹¹

One can cross the difficult flood of saṃsāra by treading that best path preached by Tirthankaras. Thereby one attains liberation freeing from all suffering. Whether god or human being whoever may be, when enquires about the right path should be informed about the teaching of the Omniscient Mahāvīra who belongs to the *Kāśyapa clan*. Just as the traders who intend to cross the ocean successfully reach

5. *Ibid.*, P. 243.

7. *Ibid.*, P. 322.

9. *Ibid.*, P. 332.

11. *Ibid.*, P. 278.

6. *Ibid.*, P. 268.

8. *Ibid.*, P. P. 326-327.

10. *Ibid.*, P. P. 271, 311.

the other shore, similarly like others in the past who have followed the fight ours path preached by Mahāvīra cross over the phenomenal existence.¹²

A pious monk who subdues his senses who cultivates forbearance and always asserts himself by leading a calm life by meditating on the teachings of Tīrthaṅkaras shall attain liberation.¹³ A wise monk who is devoid of pride and deceit whoever renounces all worldly vanities, whoever firmly controls and subdues their senses shall attain final liberation.¹⁴ Perfection is attained when one follows the rules of conduct, being free from greed, takes care of the Highest Good, while walking, sitting, lying down, in regard to food and drink, controls oneself and must be free from pride, wrath, deceit and greed. He should consider the Law to be the Highest Good and conducive to one's spiritual welfare, obeys one's preceptors, ceases from works and thereby gets free from the great flood of worldly existence. One attains liberation i.e., the Highest Good on comprehending the truth and lives up to it, seeks the Law, performs austerities seriously, possess self-control (*Guptis*), being skillful controls oneself for the benefit of the soul.¹⁵ When one practises the thirteenth kind of action i.e., actions referring to religious life, one will put and end to all misery and thereby attains perfection. When an ascetic is free from anger, delights in the truth, being aware that one alone understands that liberation is real and the best thing.¹⁶

Those who aim at their spiritual welfare and totally abstain from the three-fold sins namely which are committed by one's own action, by the order of others and by giving one's assent to do sinful deeds, one attains perfection as in the

12. *Ibid.*, P. 310.

14. *Ibid.*, P. P. 306,314.

16. *Ibid.*, P. 308.

13. *Ibid.*, P. P. 300-301.

15. *Ibid.*, P. 260.

past and as too, others in future.¹⁷ Those who renounce the worldly life without being subdued by women, who perform pious acts and obtain freedom from bondage will exert themselves towards the goal of liberation.¹⁸ Those who are well instructed in the Law, endowed with all virtues and abstain from all sins attain liberation which is the final beatitude.¹⁹ Those who revile a monk who leads a holy life, those who do not attain purity by observing the right path showed by the Tīrthaṅkaras cannot overcome the vicious cycle of transmigration.²⁰ One cannot attain perfection by abstaining from salt, by ablutions or by means of doing austerities at fire or by taking baths at the dawn. If it is argued that the incurred karman can be washed off by water, the latter should wash off the merit too. If water washes off one's sins those who are in the trade of killing water beings should attain perfection. So also, if those who do austerities at fire in the dawn and in evenings can attain perfection, the mechanics who often work with fire should also be liberated.²¹ Whoever do not practise detachment and struggles in phenomenal bondage cannot grasp the law of the Omniscient which leads to liberation.²²

The virtuous beings who withdraw their mind as well as the five sense-organs from committing the sinful deeds and thereby extinguish bad karman will exert towards the goal of liberation.²³ The *Śramaṇās* and *Brāhmaṇās* who are *Kriyāvādins* maintain that suffering is resulted from one's own deeds and not by either fate or creator and right knowledge and right conduct only lead to the goal of liberation.²⁴ Those *Sramaṇās* who lead a disciplined life for many years and overcome the twenty-two calamities and all sorts of hardships at the end of their life attain the knowledge of

17. *Ibid.*, P. P. 260-261.

19. *Ibid.*, P. 355.

21. *Ibid.*, P. P. 294-295.

23. *Ibid.*, P. 291.

18. *Ibid.*, P. 330.

20. *Ibid.*, P. 266.

22. *Ibid.*, P. 309.

24. *Ibid.*, P. 317.

kevaling which is infinite supreme, unobstructed un-impeded which further lead them to attain Absolute Perfection, Enlightenment and deliverance.²⁵ perfection is attained by the binding of karma which can be checked by means of controlled activities of the body, mind and speech (gupti) that is carefulness while moving, speaking, receiving, lifting up and laying down a thing and performing excreational activities (Samiti), moral obligation of a monk (dharma), reflections (anuprekṣā) dispassionate endurance of troubles (parīśahajaya) and right conduct (cāritra). By means of fasting (anasana) condensation of food (Avamaudarya), restriction of certain food (Vṛtti-parisaṅkyāna) renunciation of delicacies (rasa-parityaga) resting in a lonely place (viviktaśayyāsana), humiliation of the body (kāyaklesa) expiation (prāyaścitta) modesty (vinaya) service (vāiyavṛttia), study (svādhyāya), renunciation of ego-centricity (Vyutsarga) and meditation (dhyāna) the accumulated karmas can be removed. Of the above twelve, the first six are external whereas the remaining six are internal. The external means are chiefly associated with physical purification whereas the internal ones are mainly concerned with purification of mind.

Pure knowledge (kevalajñāna) is attained on complete destruction or dissociation (ksāya) of which is essentially followed by the destruction of deluding karma (mohanīya karma) which is essentially followed by the destruction of knowledge covering (Jñānavaraṇa) intuition covering (Darśanavaraṇa) and obstructive karma (Antarāya karma). The first step to be followed in the path (mārga) of spiritual enlightenment is imbibing a right world-view. This is attained by repudiating the wrong world-view (mithyā-dṛiṣṭi) which is procreated by passions and perversions, acquired from the beginningless past.

iii

FRUITS OF STAGES IN SPIRITUAL REALIZATION :

An aspirant or a muni achieves spiritual perfection by performing spiritual activities which is the goal of religious endeavour. He gains the title arhat or arhanta. Arhat may be of two kinds-Tīrthaṅkara and non-Tīrthaṅkara (ordinary omniscient soul).

The former is capable of exhorting and propagating the religious principles in order to guide the worldly soul immersed in life of illusion, and his sermons are properly worded by Gaṇadharas whereas the latter is not the propounder of religious tenets, but silently enjoys simply the sublimity of spiritual experience.

According to *Ācārāṅge Sūtra* an arhant is established in truth in all cardinal points. He is established in the atman (*ātmasamahita*). He is free from anger, pride, death, greed, hatred, birth and death. In the state of arhat hood there are neither senses, nor there is any disaster, nor astonishment, nor astonishment, nor sleep, nor desire, nor hunger; there is only *nirvāṇa*.²⁶ Secondly, an arhant leads a life of supernormalism. Thirdly, an arhant instructs humanity for its upliftment and distributes spiritual pills to suffering humanity. Fourthly, with the emergence of atmanic experience and steadfastness in it, the conquest over the mind, the senses and emotions becomes natural to the arhant. Fifthly, according to the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra* the unwise sleep, the sages always awake. Sixthly, the arhant attains supersensuous knowledge, infinite power and unique resplendence.²⁹ He is the omniscient

25. *Ibid.*, P. 380
the Jains, Vol.IX, 179.

28. *Acaranga Sutra*, 1,3,1(P.28).

26. *Niyamasara*, Sacred books of

27. *Svyambhustotra*, 11,35

29. *Pravacanasara*, 1,15,19.

being who experiences eternal bliss. Seventhly, the spiritual experience of arhat is ineffable and surpasses all the similes of the world. Considering from the perspective of the spiritual fulfilment, arhat and siddha stand at par. The former enjoys embodied liberation whereas the later disembodied one. Arhat is a divine guru, who delivers sermons for general beneficence and is also a perfect deva on account of the complete actualisation of the divinity potential in himself. Therefore, in arhat there is the consistent identification of devatva and gurutva, of inward and outward experience whereas in the siddhas there is only devatva. A siddha who is completely liberated from the karmic bondage is completely released and hence formless he cannot practically preach the Dharma but the living Arhat who is omniscient can preach the dharma to the mankind. A Nirgrantha is one who is free from love and hate who knows the absolute ātman, who is well disciplined who understands the Law and subdues his senses attains liberation.

According to the parable of the Lotus pool narrated in the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*³² there was a Lotus pool which is delightful and magnificent filled with much water and mud and contains many white lotuses. This lotus pool possesses in the middle, one big white Lotus. There came four men from the four quarters who are proud of their own abilities and tried to fetch the big white Lotus. As they proceeded, the water and mud seemed to extend, so they could neither reach the white Lotus nor return to the bank and got stuck up in the mud. Then arrived a restrained monk who called aloud standing by the

30. Pandit Hemacandrajī (Tr & Company), *Sri Sutrakṛtāṅga Śtra* (Prathamā Śrutaskandh), P. IV.

31. JS Part II, P. 334.

32. *Ibid.*, P. 335.

bank and the big white Lotus flew to him. This story was narrated by Mahāvīra who asked his followers whether they have understood the meaning of the simile and on their replying in the narrative illustrated that the 'Lotus pool' is the world; the 'water' is karman, the 'mud' is pleasures, the 'lotuses' are people in general, the 'big white Lotus' is the king, the 'fourmen' are the heretics, the 'monk' is the creed and the bank is the 'order', and the 'monk's voice' is the preaching of the creed and the 'big Lotus flying up' is *Nirvāṇa*. Thereby, only the Nigrantha ascetic succeeds and attains *Nirvāṇa*.³³

RESUME :

Thus the above study of the Jain conception of Liberation in the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* divulge the fact that according to the Jains liberation of jiva can be attained by the two-fold practise of stoppage of the fresh inflows of the material particles and the dissipation of karmas which lead to the goal of complete deliverance of the soul from all evil and coverings of the karma. From the jain standpoint *Nirvāṇa* which is the chief object of the law has two stages subjective (*bhava*) and objective (*dravya*). Of these the subjective liberation is attained when the soul is released from the four obstructive (*ghātin*) *karmas* and the latter the objective liberation is attained when the soul is released from the four unobstructive (*aghātin*) *karmas*. All this process ultimately leads a spiritual aspirant to attain the goal of pure and perfect knowledge (*kevalajñāna*).

33. *Ibid.*, P. P. 335-338.