

JAINA PATH OF EDUCATION

□ Dr. B. K. KHADABADI

Reader in Prākṛt,
Karnatak Arts College,
DHARWAD

□

Education aims at equipping man with the art of living—living a successful life. In ancient and medieval India education and religion were closely related, or rather, religion also played the role of educating its followers. Jainism has been no exception to this fact. Therefore, Jainism can be said to have had its own influence on the educational system and values of India, more particularly of the ancient and medieval period.

A characteristic feature of the Hindu system of education in ancient days was its *Gurukula* system. 'The teacher's house itself was the school, the higher educational institute and the hostel—all in one.' The four *Vedas*, the six *Aṅgas*, the eighteen *Dharmaśāstras*, logic grammar, lexicography, economics-sociology-law (*cāṇakya*), medicine, astrology etc., all these subjects were taught in the course of seven or eight years. Later with the retention of the *Gurukula* system, places of pilgrimage also developed as centres of education. Gradually in places like *Takṣaśilā* educational centres of University level and model came up. Some *Agrāhāras* turned up to be small centres of education. Some pontiffs of the Hindu *maṭhas* took considerable interest in and helped the cause of education. Such work, in varied ways and by many pontiffs, is going on even to this day.

As we enter and peep into the early Buddhist sphere of education, we are struck with a peculiarity that imparting of education took place mostly in the monasteries and they were meant for the newly initiated monks. But later on, outsiders too began to be admitted into these monasteries and non-Buddhist subjects too came to be introduced for them. As a result of such gesture, in due course of time, there appeared Universities of international fame like *Nālandā*, *Valabhī* and *Vikramaśilā*. Soon these Universities earned a name as educational centres of high order amongst the seekers of knowledge even from foreign countries, particularly from those in Middle and East Asia. But later, all these unfortunately fell prey to the reckless plunder and arson of the Muslim invaders. Then, with the later Buddhism, its hold on education in India too disappeared. But the present excavated part of the great *Nālandā* University very well speaks to the visitor today of its old grand scale of planning and facilities provided therein.

Now coming to the sphere of education falling within the compass of early Jainism, what we find conspicuously is that no Jaina University like that in *Takṣaśilā* or *Nālandā*, nor



other centres of education of those models, came into existence. The reason for this is not far to seek. The great vow of *Aparigraha* (non-possession) appears to have been at the root of this phenomenon. According to this vow, the Jaina monk cannot own or possess any property of any kind; and because of this strict injunction, there did not at all exist Jaina monasteries in those days. Even keeping books with oneself was considered as breach of the vow of *Aparigraha*. This led also to the loss of considerable part of the scriptural knowledge on the part of the early Jaina monks.

The Jaina Ācāryas, in the early period, kept on always wandering and camping as per the dictum 'one night at the village, five nights in the town (or city) and ten nights in the wood' :

“ग्रामेऽकरात्रं नगरे पंचरात्रं अटव्यां दशरात्रं”

and they spent most of their time in observing their vows and practising penances. It was at the time of delivering sermons to their laity that they used to educate them. Each Ācārya had his own interesting and effective method in this regard. Moreover, as the Jaina Ācārya wandered about according to the dictum cited above, he kept on imparting religious education to his monk-pupil, who, with previous permission, had accepted him as his teacher. Such instruction was given punctually and systematically in the manner of the mother-bird tenderly and punctually feeding its young ones :

“जहा से दिया—पोय एवं ते सिस्सा दिया य राओ य अणुपुण्वेण वाइय ।”

(Āyāra, I-6-3, Calcutta, ed. 1967)

Such monk-pupil after initiation, used to be with his teacher for 12 years and during this period he could amass almost the entire scriptural knowledge. Then, the young monk, with his teacher's permission, used to go on wandering independently and according to the rules of the *Saṅgha*. Scholars opine that such system was in vogue from 500 B. C. to 100 A. D.

Then, during the first half of the 1st century A. D., there began to appear here and there *caityas* or *basadis* introduced and maintained by lay community; and according to Dr. J. P. Jain, from the 3rd century A. D., the Jaina monks began to stay in such *caityas* and during the period between the 5th and 6th centuries A. D., there distinctly appeared two categories viz., *Vanavāsī* and *Caityavāsī* among them. Later on, gradually, the *Caityavāsī* monks began to teach the children of the laity also in addition to their own monk-pupils who lived along with them. That new course of instruction could have been : exposition of the *Aṇuvratas*, *Śikṣāvratas* and *Guṇavratas*, bad effects of *Saptavyasana*, exemplification of *Punya* and *Pāpa*, elucidation of the path leading to liberation etc. The *Caityavāsī* monks, as years passed on, may have also commenced to impart general education of the primary stage to the children of the round-about laity. Later, some members of the lay community also may have started Primary Schools or *Pāṭhaśālas*. It is reasonably presumed that such primary education commenced with a salutary sentence like 'ॐ नमो सिद्धार्थे' the corrupt form of which viz., 'ओनामासीध' it is said, was available till the 20th century A. D., in numerous schools of Northern India.

We have already noted that during the period between the 5th and 6th centuries A. D., there appeared among the Jaina Ācāryas two categories viz., *Vanavāsī* and *Caityavāsī*. Almost during this very period, there set in the *Bhaṭṭāraka* tradition among the Digambaras. These *Bhaṭṭārakas* converted many *Jaina Maṭhas* (monasteries) into mini centres of religious education. It is possible that subjects like lexicography, grammar, mathematics, astrology etc., were also

studied in such centres because numerous manuscripts of works on these subjects, besides those on religion, philosophy etc., are found even to this day systematically preserved in these *maṭhas*. It is also interesting to note that the *Bhaṭṭāraka* tradition is still alive in places like Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Kāranjā, Moodbidri, Kolhāpur etc.

An important outcome of the educational work conducted and carried over by the *Caityavāsī* monks and the *Bhaṭṭārakas* etc., is that there appeared, in due course of time and under their care, manuscript libraries of varied sizes and contents. Some of them latter developed into eminent libraries called *Śāstrabhaṇḍāras*. Important works of secular nature, too, were preserved in them. Some scholars hold that the idea of Public Library is a Jaina one, and that the earliest *Granthabhaṇḍāra* (*Śāstrabhaṇḍāra*) is found in Rājasthan. This tradition of Jaina Manuscript Library has come down all along to this day. Such Libraries at Jaisalmer, Pāṭan, Ārrāh, Moodbidri, Kolhāpur etc., have earned the value of a national asset and attract scholars from abroad too.

From this brief survey of the educational aspect of early and medieval Jainism, we gather the following points : The Jaina teachers impart religious education to their monk-pupils regularly and directly, and to the laity through sermons. Later, the *Caityas* or *basadis* also served as schools of general type of primary education, in addition to religious education, for the children of the laity of the surrounding areas. *Pāṭhaśālās* were also run by some members of the lay community. The *Bhaṭṭāraka* tradition developed in their *maṭhas* mini centres of education, religious as well as partly general. Later, gradually, there appeared manuscript libraries in some of the *basadis* and *maṭhas*. The general type of education, however, did not make much progress so as to enter into its higher order. "The reason for such state of affairs," as Dr. Altekar observes, "is that the Jaina community, mostly belonging to the merchant class, did not think much about higher education for their children. They mostly trained their children in their own family business and later accommodated them therein alone. This tendency can be seen among some Jaina merchants even to this day."

Though the Jaina teachers did not build outstanding educational centres like *Takṣaśilā* and *Nālandā*, the work done by them in field of social education or mass-education is unique. Well-equipped with the vast scriptural and general knowledge, bearing pure thinking and conduct, always wandering about as a model for other young monks and the pious laity, every Jaina teacher was almost a moving mini university. His sermon was a powerful means of mass-education; the religious story (*dharmakathā*) in the sermon was an effective medium of such education; and narration of such story in an interesting and entertaining manner was a wholesome method followed by him. Thus, through various stories, the constituent (individual and social) virtues of the *Śrāvaka* *dharmas* and other ethical principles were imprinted on the minds of the masses. In order to keep away the common people from the seven vices (*Saptavyāsana*), many Jaina teachers have told numerous interesting stories, which we can read even today in the rich Jaina narrative literature in different languages and of different periods. Thus, religious or ethical instruction in an entertaining manner is the secret of successful social education or mass-education achieved by the Jaina Ācāryas. During the reigns of some of the Kadamba, Ganga, Chālukya and Rāṣṭrakūṭa rulers, the Jaina teachers have successfully carried out such mass-education in Karnataka. This is also true of Rajasthan and Gujarat under their favourable rulers. The cumulative effect of such education in these provinces could be seen in the fact that the virtues of regard for *Ahimsā* etc., in general and vegetarianism in particular were nurtured by



most of the people of those and later days—including the present days to some extent—in these regions. Moreover, some scholars think that the percolation of the principle of *Ahiṃsā* to the very root of Gandhiji's mind is the later fruit of such age-long education by Jainism.

Another interesting factor in the educational values of Jainism is that in the day-to-day practice itself of the *Śrāvakadharmā* by the members of the lay community is found the carrying out of some important education principles. *Dāna* (gift), *śīla* (protection of minor vows), *upavāsa* (observance of fast) and *pūjā* (worship) are the four constituents of the layman's way of pious life; and they play a very important role in his total life. The gift of *Śāstra* (books) or *Jñāna* (knowledge) is one of the four facets of *Dāna* (gift), the first constituent of the *Śrāvakadharmā*. *Śāstradāna* means to provide the right person with the right book (or books, the vehicles of knowledge) at the right time. The educational importance of this aspect of gift can be illustrated from a gesture of an eminent historical personage of medieval Karnataka when printing was unknown. With a beneficial motive of augmenting interest in (religious) literatures, in 973 A. D., the great pious lady Attimabbe, wife of general Nāgadeva (under the Western Cālukyas), got prepared 1000 copies of Ponna's *Śāntipurāṇa* and distributed them to the deserving ones. The worth and strength of this *Śāstradāna* is seen even today among numerous well-to-do members of the Jaina community extending a helping hand towards publication of worthy books, encouragement to scholars in their pursuits, liberal donations to educational institutions etc. A number of educational trusts have come up out of this motive in different parts of the country.

Moreover, of the six duties to be carried out daily by the *Śrāvaka*, viz., *Pūjā* (worship prayer etc.), *Vārtā* (the exercise of honest livelihood), *Dāna* (alms-giving) *Svādhyāya* (self-study or the study of scriptural and other religious works), *Saṃyama* (practising self-restraint and observing vows) and *Tapa* (penance like *Pratikramaṇa* etc.), *Svādhyāya* represents an important educational tenet in the sense that it makes the layman or laywoman indulge in an ideal type of self-study daily. This can be explained just by merely enumerating the constituent parts of act of *Svādhyāya* ; *Vācanā* (reading), *Praśna* or *Pracchnā* (questioning), *Parivartanā* (repetition, revision), *Anuprekṣā* (meditating and reflecting) and *Dharmakathā* (listening to or relating religious story). Hence, there would be no exaggeration if it is remarked that the way of life prescribed by Jainism for the pious layman and laywoman, represents a perennial stress on self-education on the part of each member in the community.

Now we must take into account a very important contribution of the Jaina Ācāryas to the cause of education in general. Though the Jaina teachers did not build great educational institutions, they have composed and left for posterity a great number of treatises on many different subjects which have been serving as valuable means of higher education for the last several centuries. Their contribution to the disciplines of metaphysics, ethics, logic, philosophy, poetry, grammar, lexicography is considered as excellent and, at times, unparalleled. The works of Umāsvāti, Kundakunda, Siddhasena, Haribhadra, Jināsena, Udyotana, Somadeva, Hemacandra etc. are accepted as valuable gems in the syllabi of several modern Universities in India and abroad. Moreover the Jaina *Syādvāda* (Doctrine of seven-fold Predication) has been estimated to be a rare asset of Indian thinking. Similarly, it is the Jaina teachers and monks who, with devoted efforts cultivated and gave literary status to the south Indian languages like Kannada, Tamil and Telugu. This historical phenomenon also contains an important educational principle viz. effective instruction through the medium of mother tongue, which was practised first by Bhagavāna Mahāvīra himself.

Lastly coming to the modern days, the Jaina community as a whole has been adjusting to the needs of the time. Its members have been paying sufficient attention to the educational needs of their children from their very early age and educating them in various branches of learning both in India and abroad. Wealthy and pious members, as usual, have extended their helping hand towards building numerous educational institutions which are open for all. Individuals as well as members with collective gesture have come forward to set chairs in Universities for Jaina studies in different parts of the country.

The Jaina Ācāryas, too, have made no slight contribution to the cause of education. Besides their usual routine of imparting religious and ethical education through their sermons to the masses wherever they stay or move, they are also playing the role of the main spirit in building notable educational centres, where education in varied branches is to be imparted in accordance with the Jaina ideals. For example, Kothali (Karnāṭaka), Kumboj (Mahārāṣṭra) etc., represent primary and secondary stage of such education. The Jaina Viśva Bhāratī at Lādnū (Rājasthān) has already developed into a virtual University with these ideals, where fresh interpretation of doctrines like *Anekāntavāda* and new experiments in scriptural teachings are going on. Another centre of these ideals and high stature viz., Ādarśa Mahāvīra Vidyāpīṭha, is said to come up soon somewhere near Ahmedabad. At Virāyatana (Bihār) is coming up fast a unique institute with such ideals and novel experiments in the teachings of the Jaina.

This brief survey of the Jaina path of education from the early period to the modern days discloses some important educational principles and values which also indicate the contribution of Jainism to the field of education in India in general. They can be enumerated as follows :

- (i) Careful preservation of ancient works.
- (ii) Effective education through the mother-tongue.
- (iii) Mass education through sermons delivered in an interesting manner.
- (iv) Self-education as a part of the daily routine of an individual.
- (v) *Anekāntavāda* for social health.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Education in Ancient India, A. S. Altekar, Vārāṇasī, 1953
2. Jaina Sources of the History of India, J. P. Jain, Delhi, 1964
3. Jaina Yoga, R. Williams, London, 1963
4. Bhāratīya Saṃskṛti meṃ Jainadharmā kā Yogadāna, H. L. Jain, Bhopal, 1962.
5. Medieval Jainism, B. A. Saletore, Bombay, 1938
6. Jainism and Karnataka Culture, S. R. Sharma, Dhārṇwād, 1940
7. Jainism in Rājasthān, K. C. Jain, Sholapur, 1963
8. Āyāraṅgasutta, Culcutta. 1967
9. Ratnakaraṇḍaka-Śrāvaka-cāra, Bijnore, 1931.
10. Vaḍḍārādhane, Ed, D. L. Narasimhacar, Mysore, 1935.
11. Vaḍḍārādhane : a study, B. K. Khadabadi, Dhārṇwād, 1979.
12. Jaina Viśva Bhāratī Samācāra Darśana, Muni Śrī Rājendraji, Lādnū, 1980.

