

JAINIASM, FUNDAMENTALISM AND PEACEFUL SOCIETY

Introduction:

Let me come to the subject through a story, I read in a book on Value Education. Here is the story of a little black boy who was watching a balloon man at the country fair. The balloon man was attracting customers by releasing a red balloon, a blue balloon, a yellow one and a white one. They all went soaring *up in* to the sky until they disappeared.

The little boy asked, “Sir, if you send the black one up, would it go as high as others?” The balloon man understanding the boy’s question, snapped the string that held the black balloon and as it soared upwards, he said, “It is not the colour, son. It’s what is inside that makes it rise.”

This story leads to a very fundamental understanding on which the entire day’s talks will depend, that it is not the worldly or material wealth surrounding us but the spiritual light that glows inside us which elevates us.

Today, my entire talk has three aspects. You may call each one, in-a-way independent topic. In the beginning I will introduce Jainism to you. We will know what is Jainism with special reference to Jain a way of life. The second talk deals with meaning and consequences of fundamentalism. This we will deal with reference

to to-days world and its crisis. The third and the last talk will be on peaceful society. I will conclude all the talks by asserting how Jainism and Jain a-way of life can lead towards peace of mankind. Let us go to what Jainism and Jaina way of life is.

PART-I

Jainism and Jaina Way of Life:

Points to Ponder :

1. **Understanding** of Jaina Religion & Jaina Way of Life - Two are different.
2. **On Religion** : (in general)
 - * Religion precisely means a belief in a personal God in whom our being or existence is roote. Religion is knowledge of God and an emotional and practical relation ship with Him.
 - * If the supreme purpose of human existence is to know, the Soul, the World and God (Super Soul) and to realize the divinity within him it can be sought through religion alone. It is religion which alone can assure us of everlasting joy and peace.
 - * "The ultimate purpose of religion is to establish knowledge of self realization and provide the way to attain freedom from suffering. This means becoming liberated from material entanglement by using this human form of life for reaching spiritual platform of existence" (Stephen Knapp: The Secret Teachings of Vedas - Eastern answers io the Mysteries of Life)
 - * The Main aim of Religion is establishment of unity' of all existence. "It proclaims that the Reality which is to be realized through religion is the soul of Truth, delight of life, the fullness of peace and immortality."

What is Religion according to Jainism? According to Jainism religion is a way of life. Life and religion can not be separated. They are not different., not separate and can not be thought about one without the other. Where there is life, where there is aim and goal of life, the methods or way to reach the goal, Religion is the ultimate path - away that transforms soul into a higher soul.

According to Jain Scriptures, "Friendliness (*Maitri*), Acitivity (*Pramoda*), Compassion (*Karunā*) and Neutrality (*Madhyas'tha*) are four qualities (*Bhavanā*) required in the foundation of religion".

3. On Jainism : The Philosophy.

● Jain Metaphysics:

i. Jain view of the creation of Universe and its constituents: Six reals-Six Substances (*dravya*)

1. Jiva : embodied soul with consciousness - with life (*Chetnā*)
2. Ajiva : Without consciousness : (five kinds)
 - a. Pudgala- matter
 - b. Dharmastikeya - Ether motion media
 - c. Adharmastikaya - Rest media
 - d. Akāsa - Space : (Limitless pure empty space and limited but vast Universe)
 - e. Kāla - time - (real apparent and absolute.)

They all have Three characteristics :
Utpāda; Vyaya, Dhrauvya

ii. Nine Elements — Fundamental Truths:

Jiva, Ajiva, . Punya, Pāpa, Asrava, Sanivara, Nirjara, Bandh, Moksha

- iii. Concept of Soul.
- iv. State of Existence (*Gati*) & class of being (*Jati*) as per karma

Gati : Deva, Naraki, Tiryancha, Manusya.

- Jaina Logic
 - Naya Logic - *Nayavāda*
 - Seven Nayas - Stand points
 - Anekāntavāda* - Non - Absolutism
 - Syadāvēda* - Manisidedness
- Jain Ethics:
 - a. Theories of conduct in accordance with metaphysics & epistemology
 - b. Law of karma - free from Karma: Salvation
 - c. Ethical discipline for spiritual purification and social fitness
 - d. Two forms of Righteous Conduct: Partial non-attachment and complete Non-attachment.
 - c. Two sets of rules of conduct - for households and for monks. The code of rules :
 - 1. Panch Mahavratā or five great vows.
 - 2. Practice extreme carefulness (*Samiti*) in walking, speaking, receiving alms and other things, and answering call of nature so as to avoid any harm to tiny life.

3. Practice restraint (*Gupti*) of thought, speech and bodily movements.
4. Practice *dharma* of ten different kinds, namely, forgiveness, humility, straightforwardness, truthfulness, cleanliness, self-restraint, austerity (internal and external), sacrifice, non attachments and celibacy.
5. Meditate on the cardinal truth, taught regarding the self and the world.
6. Conquer, through fortitude, all pains and discomforts that arise, from hunger, thirst, heat, cold etc and....
7. Attain equanimity, purity, absolute greedlessness and for perfect conduct Jain ethics includes different *gunvratas* and *Siksavratas*. The five great vows aim at "virtue consists in five fold conduct of one who has knowledge and faith. These five vows are
 - i. *Ahimsa* or non-injury in thought, speech and deed.
 - ii. *Satya* or Truth
 - iii. *Asteya* or not to steal.
 - iv. *Brahmacharya* or chastity in words, thought and deed, and
 - v. *Aparigraha* or renunciation by thought, speech and action.

Ahimsā If Jainism has been described as an 'ethical system par excellence', *Ahimsa* is the keynote of the system.

Jain Philosophy of Soul. Soul - Anādi- since beginningless of time, immortal, eternal, indestructible and permanent

1. Pure soul- Four infinities - no layer of karma
2. Embodied soul - Impure Soul - As per karma; state of existence (Gati)
3. Pluralistic realism
4. Accepts the existence of Soul
5. Eight qualities of Soul- Infinities:
 - i. The faculty of omniscience (*Keval Jnāna*)
 - ii. The faculty of absolute undifferentiated cognition (*Kevala Darsana*)
 - iii. The Superiority over joy and grief (*Avyabādha*)
 - iv. The possession of complete religious truth (*Samyaktva*) and irreproachable moral conduct (*Caritra*)
 - v. The possession of eternal life (*Aksayasthiti*)
 - vi. Complete equality in rank with other Jivas (*Agurulaghutva*)
 - vii. Complete formlessness (*Amurtatva*)
 - viii. Unrestricted energy (*Virya*)
6. Five great soul: Holy pentad (*Panch Parmesthi*)
7. Soul in state of Bondage & in state of Release.
8. Stages of spiritual development : *Gunasthanas*'

Jain Literature:

1. Canonical Literature : Scriptures (Agama)
2. Quasi : canonical Lit. : Sacred texts of the Jains
3. Non Canonical Lit. : written by Jains & Non Jains.

Concept of God : Jain Theism:

1. Jainism is religion & a Jain is a religious person
2. Jainism believes in the existence of soul
3. Jainism believes in God as super Soul or Absolutely Pure soul with all qualities in infinities
4. Jain believes in worship - *Sadhana* - and liberation or *Moksha* as the highest aim in life
5. Jain has its own ethics, prayers, principles of morality and practice of eternal vows and values.
6. Jain has a metaphysical theism- One who is a true Jain is truly Theistic.

PART-II**Fundamentalism** (Meaning and Nature)

Let us understand Fundamentalism and a fundamentalist.

Fundamentalism precisely means an attitude or insistence to stick to Texts-without any modification, or interpretation or change. 'What I say is the scripture and one has to believe or act accordingly, if one does not he will be punished.'

This clearly brings to us the element of "**Force**" and use of punishment through Violence in Fundamentalism.

In fact, a fundamentalist believes that it is his duty to force or to fight or even to kill those who do not act according to his understanding of scripture.

In fundamentalism there is a forcible submission to action of his (fundamentalist's) understanding. Force means no freedom, force means violence. Thus we find absence of freedom, peace and cordial relationship in fundamentalism.

What does a fundamentalist want ? A fundamentalist always claims the absolute truth of knowledge; and his main work is to

establish his religion all over the world. He will die but will not leave it, will not give in. This is the essence of Crusade or Jihad in Christianity or Islam. It is an attempt to win back the control from those who belong to non-Christian or non-islamic sect or religion.

I would also like to note one more aspect of fundamentalism. It is irrational or anti-rational in nature. No rationalist, in the right sense of the term, can be a fundamentalist. In fundamentalism reason has no place. Power of faith operates in fundamentalism and it propels the fundamentalist to fundamental acts. A fundamentalist is irrationally staunch in his fundamental action.

It is some time believed that a fundamentalist is an uneducated person. This is not correct. Even highly educated person can be highly fundamentalist. Education does not always inculcate rationality. History records even persons who have received modern education have become fundamentalist and terrorists. The myth of belief that modern education will prevent fundamentalism and terrorism is proved to be baseless and false.

Fundamentalism, thus is a big threat due to its forceful and irrational insistence on others, and adopting violence and killing for those who do not submit.

Fundamentalism and Jainism:

There is no fundamentalism in Jainism, There can never be fundamentalism in Jainism. Do you know why? Because, Jainism is in complete contrast to fundamentalism. The implementation of non absolutism leaves no scope for force. Besides, Jaina theory of knowledge says that an object has infinite forms and qualities. We can't know them all. No body can claim to know all. No body can claim to know absolute truth. One can know only a few of the infinite aspects of an object. And therefore, one's knowledge is necessarily partial and relative. No fundamentalism can be built on relative and partial knowledge.

There is one more fact, about Jainism, worth noting with reference to fundamentalism. There are no commandments in Jainism. Jain Gods have not given commandments. They have always

explained the reality. Freedom, in Jainism, lies with each soul to decide and act. Destiny is as per the choice, as per the freedom exercised, as per the karma.

There are no crusades, no Jehads in Jainism. The pillars of Jainism are Friendliness (*Maitri*), Activity (*Pramoda*), Compassion (*Karunā*) and Neutrality (*Madyastha*). How can there be fundamentalism or a fundamentalist in a religion like Jainism whose soul is non violence (*Ahimsā*) and non absolutism (*Anekāntavāda*).

PART III Peaceful society:

Peace and peaceful co-existence is not a new idea, it is not a new craving or quest of anykind. Peace and harmony have been sought ever since the dawn of civilization. All religions of the world preach peace and science is always expected to establish peace.

The meaning and nature of peace is very simple though bringing peace or peaceful state is very difficult, "Peace can be conceived of in two ways -negative and positive. Negative peace is understood as absence of organized violence amongst nations and also among racial and ethnic group. Positive peace on the other hand is understood as the state or spirit of co-operation and integration among men, among societies and among nations. Peace is understood in its most popular and precise way, as absence of war- absence of conflict and killing. Of course this is its negative meaning. Peace in its positive sense is inner silence. Leaving all the discussions about the causes of war and about the spiritual peace, we are going to talk about peace and peaceful society with reference to Jainisni and fundamentalism.

Let us first be clear that in a peaceful society fundamentalism has no place. Unless the fundamentalist's ideologies are mutilated peaceful society can not be established. Only in absence of fundamentalism peaceful society can exist. Peace of society is to be guarded against the unwholesome assault of fundamentalism.

Both fundamentalism and fundamentalists, directly as well as indirectly, use force and violence to control and insist upon others; and wish them to act according to their understanding of the scriptures. In such situation the society loses its peace and experiences fear.

The essential condition for the emergence of a peaceful society is restraint. All other condition, though sound meaningful, have proved baseless in practice. The only solution to peace, universal peace or peaceful society is restraint. The restraint is capable to keep the conflicts and quarrels away, and thus it brings mutual understanding and harmony.

When we talk about a peaceful society, see Jain community and see the Jain way of life. You will not find fights and killing. You will find Jain community remaining away from dirty politics simply to be away from quarrels and fights. Jain Sangh Jeevan and Sangh system leads to cultural unity. It is the best example of a peaceful life in a peaceful society. The world community should evolve the Jain way of social peaceful existence.

All religions have selfishness in it except in Jainism. It has only pure religion in it and nothing but religion. Avoid disputes with others (others are also correct from their point of view) for your interest but adjust your interest with others with Friendly spirit; this is Jain way of life. Disputes breed strife and violence. Adjustment breeds compromise and harmony. Jainism's insistence on Friendliness, Compassion and Neutrality leaves no scope for disputes and violence, which in turn; establish peace and harmony for peace Maitri (Friendship) should be the bases of social life.

Conclusion:

If we see Jainism with special reference to Jain way of life on one side and the threat of fundamentalism and terrorism on the other side, -we find the society could only be peaceful through the practice of Compassion, *Ahimsa* and *Anekantavada*. Jain way is the only way to world peace - for peaceful society.