



JAINISM : The Most Humanistic Religion

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Humanism is a philosophical attitude and is a logical development of the pragmatic method of testing knowledge by human values. It makes for toleration and rests upon the growth of human knowledge. Its general effect is to diminish the philosophic importance of dialectical subtleties which appeal only to the few.

Human beings can survive only in society. They depend upon one another for the realization of their wishes. The unfettered pursuit of personal interests would lead to internecine strife, which would completely destroy this possibility. But because they are intelligent enough to realize that unrestrained conduct is destructive of all desirable ends, they accommodate their activities to one another's aims and subject their conduct to rules which take other peoples' welfare into account. If they did not, cooperation would be impossible and the common purpose that mutual dependence or interdependence generates would not be permanent. But this subjection to rule of social relationships and the consequent mutual accommodation of cooperative activities, have as their counter-part, the self-discipline of the individual in his own private life.....¹.

Reason, tempered with mercy and truth, is the foundation of social justice. Most of our contemporary evils have surely been the result of the decline of such reason. That was why Socrates said that "Philosophy is the love of Wisdom." "Good life" said Betrand Russell, "is the life inspired by love and guided by knowledge." It is that which provides justification for man's claim to rational autonomy. The exaltation of freedom is, in fact, one of the major themes of humanists. The humanist exalts the soul of man for its powers of freedom. This freedom can be utilized for creation of a better social order, a better world.

Though humanism started as a movement in philosophical thought and literature in the second half of the 14th century in Italy, it recognised the value of human dignity and the spirit of freedom. It asserted the superiority of the active life of contemplation and of moral philosophy to physics and metaphysics Its interest in defending the value and freedom of man drew it into discussing the traditional problems of God and providence and of the soul and its immortality.² It has been used to designate communism, pragmatism, personalism also called spiritualism which affirms man's capacity to contemplate the internal truths or in general, to enter into relationship with transcendent reality..... which affirms that there is no other universe than the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity.³

Humanism and Religion

Humanism, as a philosophical attitude of mind, is closely related to religion which is almost a universal phenomenon in human societies. One striking fact about the word religion is that we use it without hesitation ; we find it difficult to tell others what we mean by it.....The lack of agreement among students of religion is due to wide differences in intellectual orientation and basic assumptions. Religion is essentially contemplative, covering man's consciousness about the universe and the infinite. In its concern for human welfare, it deals with ethics, the science of action. Belief or faith has a practical and moral import assuring affection, peace and safety.

The existence of many religions is due to existence of different persons in different positions, with different powers, with different functions and duties. No two of us have identical difficulties ; we cannot therefore expect identical solutions.....Life is an internal fact for its own sake, before it is an external thing relating itself to other things. The worth of internal life depends upon the self-realization of existence.⁴

Authoritarian Religion

The Oxford Dictionary defines religion "as recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny and as being entitled to obedience, reverence and worship." This definition has reference only to authoritarian religions which require their followers to surrender themselves to a power which has created them and the world they live in. Obedience to such power as revealed through certain scriptures interpreted by saints and sages assiduously following the tenets is virtue ; disobedience of the tenets or the will of that power as required by the holy followers would be a great sin. That Authoritarian Power called God is conceived of as the creator, protector, preserver and destroyer of all the living creatures and man and the world they live in. He is conceived of as Omniscient and Omnipotent before which a human being is powerless. In *authoritarian religion*, God is the symbol of power and force. He is supreme because he has supreme power, and man, in juxtaposition, is utterly powerless.⁵ Though some religions consider God to be creator and mover of everything on earth, they consider him to be the very "self-essence of love". Different religions have attributed to Him different forms. While thinking about the forms of different Gods, one finds some satisfaction in what Robert Bridges said in his *Testament of Beauty* :

"I wondered finding only my own thought of myself, and reading there that man was made in God's image knew not yet that God was made in the image of man ; nor the profounder truth that both these truths are one."

(Book I, lines 402-5)

Humanistic Religion

Humanistic religion, on the contrary, centres around man and his strength, particularly his moral and spiritual. Such religion requires man to develop his power of reason in order to understand himself, his relationship to his fellowmen and his position in the Universe. He must recognise the truth both with regard to his limitations and his potentialities. He must develop his power of love for others as well as for himself and experience the solidarity of all living beings. He must have principles and norms to guide him in this aim.....Man's aim in humanistic religion is to achieve the greatest strength, not the greatest powerlessness. Virtue is self-realization and not blind obedience.⁶

In humanistic religions which are theistic, God is the symbol of man's own soul-powers which it is his ultimate aim in life to realize ; in such religion, God is not the symbol of force



and domination ; He is not the absolute Ruler and man is not merely a creature of his play. God as conceived by Spinoza has no trace of authoritarianism. He is identical with the totality of the universe, and man is free to develop his powers of love and reason to the fullest extent to attain the true nature of his Soul.

While in humanistic religion, God is the image of man's higher self, a symbol of what man potentially is or ought to become. In authoritarian religion God becomes the sole possessor, the highest ruler, judge, benefactor and the controller of the destinies of all. He is the first cause of all consequent existence and adjectives like Absolute, Supreme, Immutable and 'Primary Cause and Ruler of All' apply to Him.

"For humanism" says Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "man is the highest type of individual in existence and the service of man is the highest religion. It believes in the good life, in moderation, harmony, balance while religion insists on another standard. Humanism assumes that man is by nature good and that evil rests in society, in conditions which surround man." He concludes the discussion by saying : "Humanism is a legitimate protest against those forms of religion which separate the secular and the sacred, divide time and eternity and *break up the unity of the soul and flesh*. Religion is all or nothing. Every religion should have sufficient respect for the dignity of man and the rights of human personality. We cannot preserve them if we repudiate religion.....Religion is the perception of the truly human....."⁸

Jainism : A Humanistic Religion

Judged in the light of what we know of a humanistic religion, Jainism can be said, without hesitation, to be a religion or a system of thought which preaches the supremacy of the individual soul and his capacity to realize his inherent attributes of a *Paramātman*. Every *Jiva* is the architect or maker of his own destiny and there is no supernatural power which can hinder him in the realization of what he has sown or exerted for. The path of Liberation or *Nirvāna* is well-defined and is constituted by a harmonious combination of the *three Jewels*, propounded by the Tirthankaras.

Jaina Concept of God and Worship

The most common concept of a God in other religions is that he is the Supreme Being Who created the world and Who rules over it. He presides over the destinies of living beings and awards rewards or punishments according to the merits or sins committed by an individual. In the *Bhagvadgītā*, Shri Krishna says : "If any devotee desires to worship the idol of a God with devotion, I grant him unshakeable faith in that God only. He worships that God endowed with faith and gains his desires, for it is I who bestow the same on him."⁹ *Swami Vivekananda* said : "What makes the creation : God. What do I mean by the English word God : Certainly not the word ordinarily used in English. I would rather confine myself to the Samskrit word *Brahman*. He is the general cause of these manifestations. What is *Brahman* : He is eternal, eternally pure, eternally awake, the almighty, the all-knowing, the all merciful, the omnipresent, the formless, the partless. He creates this universe."¹⁰

During the primitive days of civilization, man regarded the most powerful elements of nature like wind, rain, fire etc., as gods. He conceived of many forms as worthy of worship and propitiated them in various ways including sacrifices etc. Among the Hindus, the Taintity of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Mahesa* is most popular and the incarnations of *Vishnu* are too well-known to need mention. Their functions in the creation and protection of the universe are well-known.

The idea of a Jaina God is that of a pure soul possessed of infinite knowledge, infinite faith, infinite bliss and infinite power. These attributes are inherent in every soul but they are

veiled by the Karmas due to the exhibition of passions in thought, word and deed. It is this pure soul known as the *Paramātman* or which has attained his inherent divinity and purity that is regarded as worthy of worship. The Tirthankaras are such liberated personalities who have attained perfection and omniscience. They are prophets who have preached the eternal truths of life to all living beings so that they too could liberate themselves from the miseries of transmigration.

The object of worshipping them is not for getting their favours and grace but to cultivate the same attributes of one's own soul to attain their state by gradual advancement on the path of spiritualism. Acarya Pujyapāda in his commentary on the *Tattvartha-Sutra* by Umāsvami has expressed in the opening verse the concept of Jaina worship :

Moksamargasya netaram, bhattaram karmabhūbhritam :
Jnataram visvatattvanam vande tadgunalabdhaye.

“I bow to the Lord who is the leader to the path of liberation, the destroyer of the mountains of Karmas and the Knower of the whole of the substances and their modifications of the universe, so that I may realize the same qualities which He has attained.”

This verse makes it clear that liberation can be attained by a soul, on removal of all Karmic impurities and on realization of his inherent qualities of Knowledge and Bliss, with freedom from wordly pain and pleasure. The same is the object of every Jaina repeating the *Namokara Mantra* :

Namo Arihantanam, Namō Sidhanam, Namō Ayariyanam,
Namō Uvajjhayanam, Namō Loe Savvasahūnam.

“Adoration to the Arhat, Adoration to the Siddhas, Adoration to the Acaryas, Adoration to the Upadhyayas and Adoration to all the Sadhus of the Universe.” This mantra which a Jaina is required to meditate upon everyday requires him to offer his salutations to the five Supreme Beings so that he could acquire their attributes and ideals.

The special features of Jaina worship and prayer are : (1) the catholicity of the Jaina attitude in worshipping all liberated and holy souls : (2) the worship is of the aggregate of all virtues and attributes and not of any particular individual ; (3) the Arhat, the Omniscient being, who has shown the path of salvation is the highest ideal as it is he who has laid down the principles leading to the path of liberation ; and (4) the prayer and the worship are the media through which we can exert to achieve the ideals. As J. L. Jaini has observed : “Jainism, more than any other creed, gives absolute religious independence and freedom to man. Nothing can intervene between the actions which we do and the fruits thereof. Once done, they become our masters and must fruitify. As my independence is great, so my responsibility is co-extensive with it. I can live as I like but my voice is irrevocable, and I cannot escape the consequences of it. This principle distinguishes Jainism from other religions, e. g., Christianity, Muhammadanism, Hinduism etc. No God or His prophet or deputy or beloved can interfere with human life. The soul, and soul alone, is responsible for all that it does.”¹²

The Universe

The Vedanta school maintains that every thing in the universe, souls and matter alike, was produced from God's own essence as *Lila* or sport of the Brahman. Christianity holds the view that God made the Heaven, the Earth, the Sea and all that is there. It is the “lord of Heaven and earth.....that maketh the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and send the rain on the just and the unjust.” “In Him” says St. Paul, “we live and move, and have our being.” The Muslim account of the Universe, as found in the Quran seems to have been founded upon



the story in the Genesis. The Buddha discouraged all speculation on the origin and end of the Universe, as he thought, that it was transient and in continuous flux.

The Jaina Cosmology is both realistic and scientific. It does not share the views of other authoritarian religions which conceive of God as the creator or the Universe and as its ruler. The core of Jaina metaphysics is that reality and existence are identical. The Jaina Acaryas propound that *Jiva* and *Ajiva* are the two main substances that are basic to the formation of the world or *Loka*. *Ajiva* is divided into five categories, namely, *Pudgala* or matter, *Dharma* or the medium of motion, *Adharma* or the medium of rest, *Akasha* or the space, and *Kala* or time. These substances are uncreated, eternal and of immense magnitude. The world is dynamic and not static. It is subject to modifications and decay. The principles underlying the concept are real and scientific. The theories in Physics have been undergoing changes since the time of Newton. The intricacies of the theory of Relativity have revolutionized the fundamental concepts of mass, time and space. It (the theory) has provided a new key to a perception of the mysteries of the Universe. In view of the limitations on space, it is not possible to discuss the characteristics of the substances and their importance in the scheme of the Universe.

It is however necessary to mention the characteristics of a soul according to the Jaina philosophy. *Jiva* or soul has consciousness, knowledge (*Jnana*) and perception (*darhsana*); he is the enjoyer of the consequences of his own actions and his size is conditioned by his own body; the *Jiva* is incorporeal and is ordinarily found bound by its Karmas. Every soul which is bound by Karmas is possessed of four characteristics—strength, senses, life-span and respiration. The *Jivas* may be either mundane (*samsari*) or liberated (*mukta*). A *Jiva* may be found in the form of a plant, insect, bird, animal or human being. Due to its Karmas, a *Jiva* may be born in any of the four *gatis* or states of existence : *Naraka gati* (hellish state), *tiryanch gati* (State of plant, bird or animal) and *manusya gati* (human state) and *deva gati* (State of god or goddess). These differences are brought about by karmic conditions which are responsible for transmigration.

Soul and Karma

It is necessary at this stage to explain what exactly is the connection between a *Jiva* and Karma. Almost all religions recognise the theory of Karma. Karma is a form of fine matter consisting of innumerable atoms which are indivisible and possessed of structure, colour, taste, touch and smell. The vibrations generated by activities of the mind, speech and action attract the Karmic matter which clings to the soul. Anger, greed, pride and delusion are the passions which often disturb the tranquillity of mind. Our psychological conditions may be auspicious (*shubha*), inauspicious (*ashubha*) or pure (*Shuddha*) in character. The first two are responsible for bondage of meritorious or sinful karmas which are the natural conditions of a mundane life (*Jiva*). The goal of every living being is to attain purity by getting rid of Karmic pollutions.

The importance of the doctrine of Karma lies in providing a rational and satisfying explanation to the apparently inexplicable phenomena of birth and death, happiness and misery, of inequalities in mental and physical attainments and of the existence of different species of living beings. The Karmic atoms baffle all analysis as they are subtler than the waves of sound, light or electricity. There are eight kinds of Karmas—*Jnanavaraniya*, *Darshanavaraniya*, *Antaraya*, *Mohaniya*, *Ayu*, *Nama*, *Gotra*, *Vedaniya*. The first four are called *Ghati* Karmas as they are destructive of soul's knowledge, perception, power and bliss which are the supreme attributes of a pure soul. The other four Karmas which are called *aghatiya* (non-destructive) determine the span of life (*Ayu*), the nature of the body, (*nama*), family status in which a being is born (*gotra*) and pleasure and pain causing circumstances and things (*Vedniya*). These eight Karmas explain every feature of life, either pertaining to the body or the strength or weaknesses of the attributes of a human being. It is laid down by every religion that the main task of a

living being is to get over these mental and physical infirmities so that the soul can regain its supreme status of the *Siddha* (or liberated and perfect being).

Jainism expects each individual in society to live in a pious way and at the same time, if possible, to exert for the annihilation of the Karmas by following the spiritual path. One common charge made against this religion is that it only preaches the path of renunciation and says nothing about the life on earth. This criticism is far from the truth. Jainism lays so much emphasis on the importance of human life that even the gods and goddesses must return back or be born again, after the exhaustion of the meritorious Karmas, as human beings in order to work for their salvation or liberation from the bondages of Karmas.

Jaina Ethics

The Code of Conduct prescribed for a householder is less rigorous than the one prescribed for a monk or a nun. Every person must live in such a way that the spiritual goal of his life should not be lost sight of. He must grow in wisdom and virtue. As he progresses in life, he must become more humane and capable of sympathetic understanding. We all live by faith ; and the health of every society depends upon the moral values that the individuals practise in daily life. Jainism preaches a universal spirit of humanism and harmony among all living beings. Acarya Samantabhadra who lived in the latter half of the second century A. D. preached the doctrine of *Sarvodaya* in the following words in his work called the *Yuktiyanushasana* :

Sarvadamantakaram nirantam,
sarvodayam tirthamidam tavaiva. (Verse 61)

The all-round advancement of all beings by warding off all their difficulties is *Sarvodaya* as preached by Bhagavan Mahavir. It cannot be denied that we are bound by sympathy with countless souls and that our happiness depends upon the smiles and well-being of others. That is why the principle of *Sarvodaya* was preached as a code of conduct for daily practice.

There is another principle of mutual self-help that is advocated by another Jaina Acarya by name Umaswami by about the same time. He said in his work *Tattvarthasutra* :

Parasparopagraho Jivanam¹² (Chapter V, sutra 21)

To help each other mutually in their work is the good turn that one ought to do towards another. This is how we can be useful to one another. We can help others by good and timely advice and guidance. In fact, our life depends upon the work of numerous people known and unknown to us. The services that others render to us to make our life happy and worth living cannot be counted and ascertained ; that is the secret of social existence. It is therefore the duty of every one of us to help others in whatever manner we can. The number of persons who work for others in society is inconceivably large and no ethic which does not provide for social obligations towards their well-being can be perfect or humane.

Pancha Anuvrata or the Five Small Vows

It is with a view to achieve the twin objectives of *sarvodaya* and mutual help that the five rules of conduct have been prescribed by the Jaina religion. These five vows are : *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *Acharya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (celibacy) and (non-possessiveness). In fact, *Ahimsa* is the basis on which all these principles or rules of conduct *aparigraha* are founded.

The goal of ethics is maintenance of moral values of brotherhood, justice and peace, Devotion to ethical ideals is the hall-mark of all modern civilizations. Jaina ethics is the most glorious part of Jainism and it is simplicity itself. That is why some authors have described Jainism as ethical realism. There is no conflict between man's duty to himself and to his society. The highest good of the society is the highest good of the individual. The soul has to be evolved



to the best of its present capacity, and one means to this evolution is the duty of helping others by example, advice, encouragement and help. ¹³

Our speech and our actions are reflections in action of our inner faith in religion and moral values cherished by each individual. In the last resort, every moral code rests, like the Ten Commandments of Christianity, on prohibitions but in Jainism, each of the vows has its positive as well its prohibitive aspects.

Ahimsa literally means non-violence, non-injury and harmlessness in its negative connotation; its basic concept is one of love, compassion and kindness towards all living beings. To Jaina thinkers, *Ahimsa* is the highest form of religion. Passion or self-interest is the root cause of *himsa* or injury. Jainism holds that the immobile beings like plants possess four vitalities, viz., touch, energy, respiration and life-duration. The mobile beings possess, besides the above, any two or more of the additional senses ; sense of taste, of smell, of sight, of hearing and of speech. There are some endowed with the mind also. *Himsa* is caused by harm or severance of any of the vitalities in a mobile or immobile being. Such injury or harm causes pain and suffering to life. He who causes harm or injury through passion or carelessness is guilty of *Himsa*. Regulation of thought, speech or conduct is essential for avoidance of *Himsa*.

Truthfulness begets trust and confidence in private and public dealings. For Gandhi, 'Truth is God and God is Truth.' Today, there is definite decline in men's regard for truth. A truthful man is ridiculed as an impractical person with no common-sense and worldly wisdom. "At no period of the world's history" says Aldous Huxley "has organized lying been practised so shamelessly or, thanks to modern technology, so efficiently or on so vast a scale as by the political and economic dictators of the present century. Most of this organized lying takes the form of propaganda, inculcating hatred and vanity....."¹⁴ Good ends can be achieved only by good and honest means. The end cannot justify the means. There can never be progress unless honesty is valued, truthfulness in word and deed is held sacred, and charity is considered holy.

The last ethical rule has personal and social implications. *Aparigraha* is imposition of voluntary restraint on acquisition of property. It is gradual elimination of greed in private life. A greedy person is ever dissatisfied and as Bhagavan Mahavira has said, "sky is the only limit to fulfilment of greed." Honesty, goodness and straight-forwardness are all thrown to the winds by a person whose heart is set upon acquisition of more and more property. Generosity, charity and non-attachment which are vital to contented living are replaced by wealth, fame and social or official position of power.

Jaina thinkers saw that a balanced and contented society is possible only where there is economic equality or balance among all members of a society. Pursuit of property and pleasure is an endless instinct of avarice, and unless it is curbed before it becomes a passion, it will end in ruination of all humane qualities. *Aparigraha* requires a mental poise and an earnest desire to safeguard the social well-being ; its observance in practice results in social justice and equitable distribution of property. If each individual practises non-attachment to more than what is needed for a normally comfortable living, there will be no enviable difference between the rich and the poor ; it will help creation of a society which will be just, morally peaceful and aware to all obligations to fellow citizens.

In most of the democratic countries, the planning is more towards industrialization which creates social and economic disparities. Economic disparity sows the seeds of unrest and friction. Authoritarian management of industries and factories creates a new privileged bureaucracy. No country can progress unless the economic differences between the rich and poor are reduced to a level where the latter are ensured of reasonable development in education and human comforts. *Aparigraha*, if adopted as a doctrine ensuring economic equality or at least means of reducing disparity in the economic field, there will be harmony between capital and labour so as to inspire them to work for the good of the country.

A humanistic religion must relieve men from doubt and perplexity and lead them to a region of happiness and serenity. It must interpret the universe and life in terms of human values and show the practical path of self-realization. These ethical principles are morally elevating as they do recognize the sacredness of all life and emphasise their practice in daily life as the surest means of elevating the soul. They are simple and can be observed by every one in accordance with his capacity. Their object is to improve the quality of life in society by emphasis on conversion of an individual into a selfless citizen with high morals and awareness of his duty towards his fellow-citizens. It does not debar its votary from achieving material progress in his life but requires him to regulate his life by self-control with an eye on charity and well-being of his fellow beings.

While I am on the question of Jaina ethics, I must refer to another aspect of the same which helps man to keep himself constantly alert in the development of his moral sense and his love for all living beings. Every Jaina, whether a Digambara or a Svetambara observes for ten or eight days a Festival of Universal Forgiveness technically known as the *Paryūshana-Parva* or the *Dashalakshana-dharma* during which period every householder, whether man or woman must observe the ten rules of piety besides fasting each day partially or wholly. Study of scriptures, prayers and meditations accompanied by austerities and hearing of discourses are observed by the Jainas on each of the ten or eight days' festival. It is well-known that men live by the social ideals of their Prophets, particularly by such ideals as have appealed to them and form the philosophy of their life.

This Festival of Universal Forgiveness annually reminds every follower of the religion of the ten ideals which he must think over by self-study or by hearing discourses. They are ennobling qualities of life which contribute to our inner purity and add sweet kindness to our external conduct. They are :

(1) *Supreme Forgiveness*—As the saying goes —to err is human, to forgive is divine. Its observance requires an inward introspection, repentance and confession of one's own faults consciously or unconsciously committed. There is a simple verse which everyone is required to recite and absorb its spirit so as to reflect it in his conduct towards all living beings :

“I forgive all living beings, may all living beings forgive me ;
I have love and friendship for all living beings and enmity towards none.”

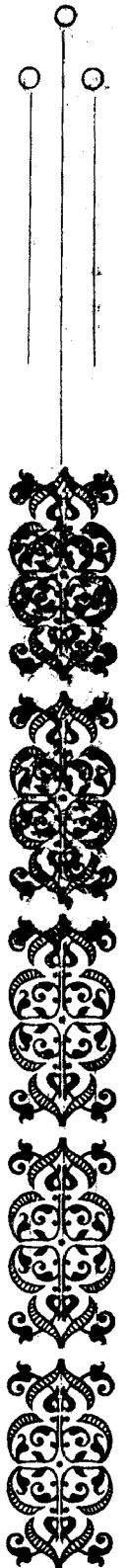
(2) *Supreme Humility*—Humility is the sign of real culture and learning. It is a virtue that adorns the learned and adds grace to his life. It annihilates all pride.

(3) *Supreme Straight-forwardness*—It requires a person to be straight-forward. Crookedness is a vice and is characteristic of the perverse. It creates suspicion and ruins friendship. It never begets any trust in others.

(4) *Supreme Truthfulness*—I have already spoken about the divine quality of this virtue. A truthful man is ever and everywhere trusted and respected. He can be fearless and attain real contentment and happiness.

(5) *Supreme Purity*—Purity of thought and action is next only to goldliness. To be pure is to be free from all passions. Inner purity is the highest strength which nothing on earth can diminish. Life is short but purity of soul is immortal.

(6) *Supreme Self-Control*—Self-control in thought, speech and action is what makes for goodness in life. It drives away enmity and engenders friendship and good-will among all members with whom a person with this virtue comes in contact. It is the virtue of the brave. It is the mother of all virtues and even great saints have lost the sanctity of their lives by sudden loss of self-control.



(7) *Supreme Austerity*—Austerity can be internal and external. Repentance, fasting, meditation are some examples of austerity. Self-denial reduces external attachments and makes life meaningful. It is a quality which rehabilitates a mundane life in its real Self.

(8) *Supreme Renunciation*—This is one of the most difficult phases of human conduct for practice in life. It is the abdication of mine-ness that sows the seeds of spiritual greatness. When we are in mundane life, it is a real test of inner strength to renounce love of the body, of relatives and friends, and of everything else which one claims as his own.

(9) *Supreme Non-attachment*—The secret of this virtue is to know that the soul is distinct from the body, that everything else in the world is foreign to me and I am full of bliss, knowledge, potentiality etc. I am alone and I go alone from this world ; such firm conviction is the gist of this virtue.

(10) *Supreme Celibacy*—To discard all pleasures of sex and the other senses is the cardinal principle of this virtue. It helps in the preservation of the life-forces and physical strength. It elevates the soul and turns our mind towards the *Paramatman*.

This brief reference to the ten virtues which are required to be understood and practised during the whole life of an individual will prove that Jainism attaches the highest importance to purity of thought and conduct in society. The observance of these virtues every year requires an individual to renew his relationship of friendship by forgetting and forgiving the past faults that might have been committed during the course of the year. It may be pertinent to refer to the impressions of one Mrs. Emma Schubmehl, Legal Advisor and Curator of the Youth Welfare Work in Germany, when this Festival of Universal Forgiveness was observed in 1955 by Prof. Lothal Wendel and his friends in Bad Godesberg—"This is one of the most valuable and useful institution for a people. Everybody is invited to recreate himself and to renew his relations with his fellow creatures, with his relatives and with his friends but also with his enemies. Every thought of hatred must be examined and revised during these daysEverybody who aims seriously to deepen his insight has got the task to forgive and to try to understand.....And perhaps kindness and love, waiving all reproach will lift the other on a higher, more progressive level...I am sorry that in Germany we have not a day or a month of universal forgiveness... Such a day of universal forgiveness would favourably influence the social intercourse of humanity. All those personnel aiming at religious purity, all those who are active in politics and administration, should follow. The people of the world should also follow this generous institution of the Indian people and celebrate a week of universal forgiveness"¹⁵

Such ethical festivals and practices which are enjoined by Jainism are intended to sustain the morals of the society at large to keep every one alive to his social and personal obligations and consequently to maintain the morals of the country at the highest level. Morality cannot be enforced by the authority of law, as such a course will create only hypocrites who practise their vices in secrecy. Today the world has been laying so much emphasis, on the glories of science that we are gradually forgetting the wisdom of saints which alone can maintain the dignity of man and sanctity of his soul.

Anekantavada

All of us are born in one religion or the other and it is but natural that we try to find our salvation, if at all we are spiritually inclined, in our own religion. But experience tells us that unless we broaden our outlook by studying other religions, we are likely to remain fanatical and conservative in our social behaviour and public actions. Jainism has presented to the world two significant instruments of understanding and expression : one is *Nayavada* and the other is *Anekantavada*. The former requires us to analyse the different aspects of a tenet, doctrine or subject-matter to enable us to understand the same in all its aspects.

No aspect or point-of-view should be lost sight of. By overlooking certain aspects our understanding will be defective and our action based thereon will be faulty, if not harmful. There are many complex problems or questions in life and this doctrine of *Nayavada* cautions us not to reach final conclusions unless the problem or the question is analytically considered and evaluated by weighing the pros and cons of it. Religious truths and tenets ought to be examined from various angles; the truth behind each of them might be hidden and a superficial view might elude the truth.

Anekanta, as the term implies, is the doctrine of many view-points, requiring an individual to have a harmonious view of things before he could get a perfect and comprehensive idea of truth or reality. This doctrine which is also known as *Syadavada* is subjected to severe criticism by some scholars. Some say that it is a doctrine of scepticism while some others say that it is beset with contradictions. It is obvious that analytical stand-points refer to partial truths and it is only their synthetic combination that will bring harmony into a coherent scheme of knowledge. The Jaina thinkers have illustrated this by a parable of seven blind men and an elephant. One blind man feels the legs and says that the elephant is like a pillar; the other feels its body and says that it is like a wall; the third feels its ear and says that is like a winnowing pan. Thus each one feels one organ and considers that it represents the whole truth. To have a clear picture of an elephant, all the view-points must be harmonized to understand the whole elephant.

I do not desire to refer to seven predications which help us to have a full knowledge of an object. Every philosophical doctrine must be examined in the light of the basic principles of that religion or philosophical creed; this according to Hermann Jacobi, is the happy way leading out of the maze of *ajnanwada* or ignorance. Referring to this doctrine, Dr. Radhakrishnan says : All that the Jainas say is that everything is of a complex nature and identity in difference. The real comprehends and reconciles differences in itself. Attributes which are contradictory in the abstract co-exist in life and experience. The tree is moving in that its branches are moving but it is not moving because it is fixed in its place in the ground. The human mind cannot comprehend the complexities of existence fully nor can human speech express it adequately. Therefore all statements can be true only so far as they go, in so far as the speaker's viewpoints is concerned. It is the inadequacy of human understanding that renders the different points-of-view possible."¹⁶

A simple illustration can be given about the personality of man. Let us take the case of a person who is a professor. He is a professor so far his students are concerned; to the management of his institution, he is an employee; to his wife he is her husband; to his son or daughter, he is the father; to his sister or brother, he is the brother; to his nephew, he is his uncle. In this way, any one position cannot be a complete description of a human being.

When applied to different philosophies in vogue, the doctrine arms us with a catholicity of understanding to convince us that truth is not anybody's monopoly with tariff walls of denominational religions. This doctrine, therefore, inculcates in a votary of another religion a deep sense of tolerance which is a part of the another important part of Jaina doctrine, viz., *ahimsa* which is fundamental to that religion. The *Anekanta* doctrine is very essential for human understanding and progress. It propagates the right mode of approach and enables us to know the whole truth by logical reconciliation and ascertainments. It saves us from mental errors, religious bigotry and verbal disputes. Different seers have taken different points-of-view about the Universe and God. Some subscribe to nihilism, others to realism, some to monism, others to dualism, some to idealism, others to materialism, some to theism, others to atheism and so on. Jainism does not quarrel with any of them; it only explains by saying that these assertions contain limited truth and they are expressions of different views looked at the Reality



from a particular point-of-view. Hence its message is to enlighten the enquirer about the other view-points and rise above the relative view-points of intellect and thinking.

Contributions of Jainism

Jainism has contributed immensely to the enrichment of all languages in India. Wherever its saints and writers went, they adopted the language of the masses as their means of communication. The result is that we find Jaina writers in Prakrit, Sanskrit, Kannada, Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, and so on. There is abundant secular literature in the forms of poetry, stories, *puranas*, and treatises on subjects like Medicine, Mathematics, Astronomy, Veterinary sciences and so on. Beauty, perfection, serenity, and spirituality mark the Jaina images, temples, pillars and paintings so as to make their Art a vehicle of devotion and piety.

The Tirthanakaras preached that human birth is the most invaluable acquisition for a soul; for, even the gods and goddesses must be reborn as human beings in order to attain *Nirvana*. Man's worth is not to be judged by his birth but by the virtues he possesses. For every human being, Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct constitute the path of salvation. Jainism has shown us a very simple way of life, which in the words of its great Saint Amitagati, reads :—

O Lord, may myself shall ever extend,
Loving friendship towards all living creatures,
Joyful reverence towards the virtuous,
Unalloyed sympathy for those in distress, and
An attitude of tolerance towards the perverted.

सत्त्वेषु मैत्री गुणेषु प्रमोदम्
क्लिष्टेषु जीवेषु कृपापरत्वम् ।
माध्यस्थ भावं विपरीत वृत्तौ
सदा ममात्मा विदधातु देव ॥

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