

## JAINISM : A WAY OF LIFE

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*If one is always humble, steady, free from curiosity and deceit; if he abuses nought; if he holds not to his wrath; if he listens to friendly advice; if he is not proud of his learning; if he finds no fault with any or ought; if he is patient with friends; if he speaks well even of a bad friend when he is absent; if he abstains from quarrels; if he is polite, gracious, calm and endeavours to gain enlightenment—then he is named “the well-behaved”.*

—Uttarādhyaṇa Sūtra

The two wars have made the world very different. Those of us who lived and laboured before 1914 and after 1918 saw a great change in human outlook. With the end of the second war a different kind of world emerged in which the human individual has been deprived of his initiative to a very great extent. Karl Capek’s visionary robot of the twenties is now strutting on the world stage. Men are not able to call their souls their own; they are made to think along lines drawn for them; they are invited to feel and use emotions for the glory of their State; the citizen in many countries exists for the benefit of his own government and his personal life is greatly narrowed and restricted. Hitler, who is reported to have committed suicide after his defeat, seems to have emerged a victor. Hitlerism is to the fore in the countries which won the war. Russia’s roots in totalitarian soil have gained strength. The concept of the Welfare State is founded upon the idea that what is good for or bad for the citizen is to be decided by the State. What does he know about his own welfare !

The dignity of the human individual has fallen. Alas, man himself has contributed substantially to the loss of his liberty; he has allowed himself to be cajoled and pushed into the almost slavish position which now is his. He has done this for the most part not self-consciously. The starting point is traceable to his false attitude to his religion. Loss of knowledge of religion and its true principles has brought in blind belief, superstition and irreligious living. Instead of becoming a way of life man’s religion has become largely ritualistic observances, gesticulations and mummery. His spiritual and secular life are two different compartments. He is exploited by the politician today because he has allowed himself to be exploited

by his priest for numerous yesterdays.

A better world will not be built until a sufficient number of men and women turn away from the outer religion of rites and ceremonies to the inner religion of life. Not church-going but living by the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount constitutes true Christianity. And what is true of Christianity is equally true of every religion, including Jainism.

Time is precious; we cannot afford to neglect or to postpone the re-fashioning of our religious life. By "we" the human individual is meant. Popes or purohits or sadhus are not to be depended upon for religious reformation. They have their own vested interests. Priests are the opponents of the Prophets and the human individual needs Mahāvīra and the Tirthaṅkaras, and their peers of other religious schools. Men and women have to recognize that true religion is the Way of Life. What they feel and think, what they say and do must be according to the precepts of the Elder Brothers, the Christs, the Buddhas, the Tirthaṅkaras. Along this line alone must true religious renovation take place.

Is Jainism capable of imparting instruction in the science and art of living the life? We answer—Yes; emphatically—Yes. Of all the existing formal religious creeds Buddhism and Jainism contain the very best elements to enable men and women most promptly to become religious in the true sense of that word. It must be remembered, however, that both of these have a holy and hoary lineage.

The duty of the Jainas is to uphold the pure teachings of Mahāvīra and His illustrious predecessors. The world of today is in dire need of the moral precepts of those mighty philanthropists. The Jainas can do this, if a few Jainas, both men and women, combine to study together their own religious lore with a view to the personal application of the grand precepts, and then to promulgate by the spoken and written word what they have learnt, understood and practised. The old sayings and propositions have to be shown to be practical and profitable. The high standard of Jaina living must be shown to be superior to a standard of living depending on gadgets and the consuming of rich food and questionable drinks. The Jaina standard of high living would consist in simple living founded upon noble thinking.

Let us turn and point to some of the teachings of Jainism which are applicable even under modern conditions and which carry within themselves the seeds of betterment not only for the individual practitioner but

for the masses also. This war-torn world, governed by men of ambition and greed, will be saved in spite of itself by men of peace who carry in their hearts the instruction of the sages.

Ahimsā Paramo Dharmah

Non-Violence is the Highest Religion.

The central teaching of Jainism may be quoted in the words of *Puruṣārtha Siddhyupāya* : “*Ahimsā* is the non-appearance of attachment and other passions. Their appearance is *Himsā*—violence.”

This is called “the summary of the Jaina scripture.”

In our personal life, as in collective life everywhere, violence, open or disguised, is at work. War will never be banished and Peace will never be ushered in while violence courses in men’s brains. Jainism makes a unique contribution not in proclaiming a Religion with Non-Violence as its centre, but in fully elaborating the technique of becoming non-violent. This is what the world needs today. There is a genuine appreciation of Gandhiji’s Satyāgraha; but to understand and live it, some wise practical instruction is necessary. Similarly the creed of *Ahimsā* held up by Jainism is known to the world at large. But the world needs men and women who have practised *Ahimsā*, who live by it daily in all the affairs of life. Jainism has precepts which the world will more readily and enthusiastically accept when these are demonstrated by a few men and women who live the precepts without becoming monks or nuns.

The world of today does not need orders of monks and nuns; people are not willing to abandon the ties of home for those of heaven; they want to rise in their minds and hearts heavenward and live in the world to permeate it with the immortal influence. Therefore it is necessary for Jaina men and women to transform their homes into *Havalis* where the Power and the Learning and the Compassion of Mahāvīra and His illustrious predecessors can shine.

Next to the central doctrine of *Ahimsā* Jainism facilitates a life of self-exertion because it rejects logically the pernicious belief in an anthropomorphic personal God. Believers in an extra-cosmic personal God naturally fall into the sin of dependance on such a God, pray to Him, try to propitiate Him and seek favours from Him, thus debasing their moral propensities and their willpower. No blind believer in a personal God can say as the *Ratna-Karaṇḍa-Śrāvaka-cāra* asserts :—“A dog becomes a Deva by virtue. A Deva becomes a dog by vice. From Dharma a living

being attains prosperity and even such grandeur as beggars description."

If Jainism rejects the false doctrine of the personal God, it holds aloft the mighty and majestic truth of men becoming Perfect and Immortal God-Men, Tirthaṅkaras—those who have crossed over the ford. Not god and gods and godlings teach and help mortals, but Jinas, those who have conquered their mortality by destroying ignorance and passion. What Tirthaṅkaras have done, men can do today.

My Jaina brothers, you need to activate your inherent faith that Mahāvīra and the other 23 Jinas are alive and are able to help us. A more penetrating consideration into the subject of Tirthaṅkaras as Living Men who now and here love and labour for humanity will enlighten your faith and enable you to help yourselves and humanity in a rich way.

The Jaina community is well known for its wealth; it lacks not the spirit of charity. It has used its millions of rupees for alleviating suffering and misery; it has also not overlooked the spreading of the wealth of the Jaina-Dharma by publishing its texts and tomes; but something more fundamental and vital needs to be done. We need living of the Dharma not by monks but by lay men, not only in secluded monasteries but in homes, in shops and marts. To the financial gifts and the spreading of books which aid the human mind, should be added the active and vital power which emanates from pious men and women who study the lofty philosophy of the Jinas and practise its tenets. What does the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* say? "Self is the one invincible foe, together with the four cardinal passions, (viz. anger, pride, deceit, and greed) making five, and with the five senses making ten."

Pride is the seed from which sprout numerous vices. It is the first-born of Egotism. The *Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra* refers to sins committed by the proud; pride of caste, of family, of beauty, of intelligence, of success, of power, even pride of knowledge and, note, pride even of piety are condemned.

Who does not know that man has a dual nature—the lower is proud and selfish; its way of life is violent; the higher is non-violent—embodied *Ahimsā*. We have to fight, defeat and overcome the lower and the soldier who will wage war and vanquish the enemy is our own higher nature which is of the substance of the Holy Jinas, the Enlightened Tirthaṅkaras. They have developed the powers of that substance; we have still to do so.

"Though a man should conquer thousands and thousands of valiant

foes, greater will be his victory if he conquers nobody but himself.

“Fight with your self; why fight with external foes? He who conquers himself through himself, will obtain happiness.”—*Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*

Now the *Ācāraṅga Sūtra* has a very strange but encouraging teaching: “He who conquers one passion conquers many. And he who conquers many, conquers one.”

It is a strange law which all true mystics have pointed to: one moral weakness overcome and transmuted pushes out numerous cognate vices. Equally strange but true is the second clause. When numerous weaknesses are overcome our main, fundamental, moral and sin-creating weakness not only weakens but disappears.

Each man, each woman has in the lower, violence-fraught nature a foundational vice—pride, or lust, or vanity, or anger, or greed, or ambition, etc. For a whole incarnation the one besetting weakness works havoc. In the higher nature is wisdom with its dual aspect—knowledge and intuition (*Jñāna* and *Darsana* according to Jaina psycho-philosophy). It is by this Wisdom-Nature that the foibles, the frailties and the falsehoods of the carnal being are vanquished.

Now, in waging this greatest of all wars there comes a temptation: because we do not like to fight our own vices, the force of violence (*Himsā*) inherent in our lower nature finds ways and means to gain expression and outlet and so we become violent to others. Violence in deeds and words, in emotions and thoughts. Myriad are the expressions of violence. In many ways we use violence: there is violence at home and at places of business as well as in recreation; there is civic violence; there is social and political violence; there is violence against classes and castes and creeds. National and international violence means wars. All widespread expressions of violence spring from the seed of violence in the lower man. And because we have within our carnal mind the seed of *Himsā*—Violence, we attract to ourselves many types of violence from others—relatives and friends, employers and employees, and also from organized groups who use violence.

The Jaina foundational teaching is *Ahimsā*, and so it advocates very clearly the doctrine of “Resist not evil;” or, better-phrased, “Resist without resisting.” Others may be and are violent; true Jainas are prohibited from retaliation. So, the *Daśa-Vaikālīka Nirvyūktī* instructs definitely: “Subdue anger by forgiveness; conquer vanity by humbleness; overcome

fraud with honesty; vanquish greed through contentment.”

The most prolific source of violence precipitating retaliation and generating hatred is speech. Words are living messengers and should be used thoughtfully. Angry speech, falsehood, bragging and the like are bad; but more dangerous, because more subtle and unrecognizable in their evil influence, are the words of persons who use religious lore for selfish ends.

“Though many leave the house, some of them arrive but at a middling position between house-holder and monk; they merely talk of the path to perfection. The force of sinners is talking.”—*Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra*

And again says the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* : “Clever talking will not work salvation; how could philosophical disputation do it? Fools, though sinking lower and lower through their sins, believe themselves to be wise men.”

So the greatest of all wars is with our selfish deeds, our false speech, our lustful feelings, our proud thoughts. And the warrior within, the Pure Kṣatriya, is our own spiritual soul—the possessor of knowledge and of intuitive perception. In this idea we gain an explanation as to why Mahāvīra and the other Tīrthaṅkaras were of Kṣatriya caste. The victorious Warrior attains to Brāhmaṇahood and so the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra* says that “the Noble Ones preach the Law impartially.”

Now, our ordinary human nature likes to postpone the commencement of the Inner Life. When this inclination arises we must repeat the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra* :—

“Know that the present time is the best opportunity to mend.

“The strength to start the Holy War against our lower and violent self is within.

“Freedom from bonds is in your innermost heart.”

—*Ācārāṅga Sūtra*

He who does not undertake this Holy Mission is not a Jaina, though he be born of Jaina parents and observe Jaina rules of eating and drinking and such outer manifestations.

“The virtuous heroes of faith have chosen the great road, the right and certain path to perfection.”—*Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra*

To entrench ourselves in right practice and develop right faith we must acquire the knowledge of true doctrine and, further, develop and feel devotion to those who know the Truth of *Ahimsā*.

Another excuse brought forward by men and women is this : “We have

our obligations, our dharma to parents and children, to earn our livelihood, etc.” The Jaina teachers answer: Make karma and dharma avenues to practise daily and hourly *Ahiṃsā*.

“Not desirous of fine things, he should wander about, exerting himself; not careless in his conduct, he should bear whatever pains he has to suffer.

“If beaten, he should not be angry; if abused, he should not fly into a passion; with a placid mind he should bear everything and not make a great noise.

“He should not enjoy pleasures though they offer themselves; for thus he is said to reach discernment. He should always practise what is right to do in the presence of the enlightened ones.”—*Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra*

It is fully recognized that to practise all this is most difficult. Our old habits, our educational and social upbringing etc., put many obstacles in our way but Jainism teaches that we could and should “practise the very difficult Law according to the faith.” (*Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*)

And how clearcut and strong is the *Puruṣārtha Siddhyupāya* :—

“Right belief is conviction in one’s own self. Knowledge is a knowledge of one’s own self. Conduct is absorption in one’s own self. How can there be bondage by these?

Sometimes people think that only when a Jaina man or woman gives up the world and becomes a monk or a nun can the Inner Life be lived. That is not the teaching. The householder, who earns his livelihood, and the housewife, who is the queen of the home, can and should attain to heavenly heights. Anyway, that ought to be a new dispensation, a new way of living the higher life.

This volume is published to honour the memory of a saintly teacher and reformer. The work of Shri Mahāvīra Jaina Vidyālaya owes a great debt to the Ācāryaji. As a devout follower of the great Masters of Jainism, he set an example which all of us should follow—by practising *Ahiṃsā*. Non-violence, with the Tirthaṅkaric *Vīrya*, the dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal Truth.