

JAINISM IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Traditionally, Indian Philosophy, means the nine systems or, as some say, the nine schools of Indian Philosophy. Indian Philosophy includes all the philosophical speculations of Indian thinkers and seers, ancient and modern. The different schools of Indian Philosophy are very much different in their views regarding the soul, the world and the God. Their metaphysical and epistemological theories and therefore even the ethical doctrines are different. Even then, each schools is marked by its 'unflinching devotion to the search of truth'.

Indian Philosophy is essentially spiritual. It is the practical realization of spiritual truth and philosophy is 'an insight into the nature of the reality'. In India Philosophy is called 'Darshan' - a vision; a vision of the reality as a whole. The main schools of Indian Philosophy are : Mimamasa, Vedanta, Sarikya, Yoga, Nyaya, and vaishesika; these six schools are the orthodox schools or Astik Darshan. These are called orthodox not because they believe in God but because they accept the authority of the Vedas. Under the second group of heterodox systems or Nastika Darshan, the chief three schools are Carvakas, the Buddhas and the Jains. Here we are going to talk about Jainism in Indian Philosophy, but it should be mentioned that each system has its own place in the Indian Philosophy for its contribution. And so is Jainism having its unique place in Indian Philosophy. Like all the systems Jainism has its gradual development and philosophical literature expressing its ontological,

epistemological and ethical dogmas with the instrument of reason. Before we go in detail about Jainism and its position in Indian Philosophy let us just, very briefly, go through some of the salient features or common characters of these systems. They are as follows:

- All the systems springs from 'spiritual disquiet' and move to speculation in order to have an answer to the miseries of life.
- Thus all the systems have a positive goal or motive. Philosophy, therefore, is a "practical necessity" to understand the mysteries of Life and Death. The aim of all the schools is happiness through an enlightened life
- Jadunath Sinha in his 'Outlines of Indian Philosophy' says, "All schools of Indian Philosophy recognize the reality of the world.... The world is a spatio temporal and casual order. It exists in time and space, and is governed by causality. There is a uniformity of causation."
- Because all schools accept causality, the Law of Karma "is the general moral law that governs not only the life and destiny of all individual beings, but even the order and arrangement of the physical world." All schools believe 'as we sow, so we reap.' "The law of karma is the inexorable law of moral causation.
- Except the Charvakas, who do not believe in soul, as distinct from body and no life after death, there is, in all the other schools, Metempsychosis or Transmigration of soul as a corollary of Law of Karma. Thus, the idea of transmigration is common to all systems of Indian Philosophy except the Charvaka school.
- All systems talk about the futility and the miseries of Samsara (Life). Life, is transitory and the death is a certainty. Buddhism says there is suffering. This makes

some scholars to conclude Indian Philosophy as pessimistic. But this is not correct. Even if there is pessimism, it is at the initial stage and not final. All schools, in fact, are the ways to Liberation from the pain and suffering. Thus Indian Philosophy, though initially may be pessimism, is ultimately optimism.

The concept of Moksa or Salvation or Liberation is common in all the schools of Indian Philosophy. Different systems lay down different means to attain the liberation. But they all believe Liberation as freedom from birth and death, freedom from pain and suffering -freedom from Samsara.

It should be cleared that there are many other common ideas which we find common in all the systems or common in majority of the systems. Since we want to concentrate on Jainism let us now talk about Jainism as an independent system of Indian Philosophy.

Understanding Jainism:

With a brief introductory note on Indian Philosophy, its different schools and their common ideas, let us understand Jainism in Indian Philosophy. Jainism, or the philosophy of Jains is not just one of the schools or one of the systems of Indian Philosophy but is one of the oldest living religions and thought. It has proved to be as significant as, even more in some aspects than, Buddhism and Vedanta. What is it that makes Jainism and Jain religion so special and so significant? The answer, we get when we see some of its doctrines and codes its canons and literature, its practice and social structure. I will try to highlight some of these with reference to philosophical point of view, in the following pages.

Jainism, is a complete system of philosophy and religion. It is complete in the sense that it has its own Metaphysics, its own theory of knowledge i.e. Epistemology (read 'Types of knowledge' in this book.) and, based on these two, its own rules of conduct

for the house holder as well as for the ascetic i.e. Ethics. Moreover, one of the unique contribution of Jain philosophy is its Nayavada - its Dialectics (Logic) explaining the Truth of an object which is always relative and never Absolute. The non absolutism or *anékantvada* is one of the profoundest approaches to reality and a sound solution to world peace. (Read 'Jain theory and practice of *anékantvada*' in this book). Again Jainism accepts the existence of Soul and its very rational, very scientific and very logical explanation of the soul in state of bondage and in state of liberation makes it very convincing to intellectuals. Here Jainism's explanation of Karma and Law of Karma, which is in great details and vividly precise, establishes the reincarnation theory on scientific arguments. Besides the Jain philosophy deals with astronomy and cosmology. Jainism has its own philosophy about the universe. Jainism does not believe in Creator- God i.e. the world, according to Jainism, is not created by God. It is since beginningless of time i.e. *anādi*. It has its own concept of Time and the measurement of time into ages i.e. *yugas*. Thus in many ways the Jaina Philosophy is complete and is quite competent enough to give explanations and solutions to mysteries of life and problems of the world at large.

In India, unlike in the West, we have philosophy and religion always going together. Here in India Philosophy is not isolated from religion, from God, from ethics and morality. And so is the case of Jaina philosophy. The religion of Jainas or very popularly we say Jaina Religion is also a religion with its unique features. According to E.Kant the three basics postulates of any system of religion are Freedom of Will, Immortality of Soul and God. Jainism satisfies these norms perfectly. Here also both the philosophy of soul and the concept of God in Jainism are unique and independent (Read the author's 'Jain Theism' for details). Many scholars have misunderstood Jainism as Atheism in the sense that it does not believe in God. In reality Jainism believes in Godhood which is attained by the perfect practice of the religion. The soul in its total purity i.e. without any impurity of karma is in possession of infinite

power, infinite knowledge, infinite bliss and infinite happiness which are the qualities of God. Thus we find God, of course a different concept of God, in Jainism which is worshiped by the Jainas most devotionally and that makes the religion of Jainas Theistic. I would like to say a few words here about Jain Theism. Jainism has its own ethics and a prescribed method of Sadhana or worshiping the God - the enlightened soul; Jainas call them *Tirthankaras* or *Siddhas*. The Theism of Jainism can be proved through its canonical literature as well as its actual practice. Like any religion Jainism is very rich in its theology as well as mythology just like its philosophy. A detailed proof and explanation of the concept and nature of Jain Theism (read Jain Theism in this book) is unique not only in Indian Philosophy but in the world Philosophy.

Jainism, in Indian philosophy, has touched every aspect of human activities, mental, physical and spiritual. In this context we should also consider Jainism as solutions to World Problems. The teachings of Lord Mahavira in particular and of Jaina religion in general are very relevant in today's world. The values in Jainism (read an article on values in Jainism for the Modern World in this book) are rooted in day to day practice i.e. in *āchāra*. These values can save the world and pave the life of peace and purity. What the unique contribution of Jainism to Indian Philosophy - to World philosophy is its concept of *ahimsā*. Ahimsa is not simply non-killing. It is complete non-hurting physically, mentally and vocally. The theory of non-absolutism i.e. *anékantvada* in one's thinking and the concept of Ahimsa in one's feeling generates Equanimity and Compassion. Anekanta in thought (in *vichār*) and Ahimsa in deeds (in *āchār*) make life peaceful, and loving. According to the author of this article, even if Jainism would not have any salient feature but these two, it would have been sufficient for it to hold an unique place in Indian Philosophy.

Let me end with a few words on "Jainism through sciences". Recent articles based on Jain Scriptures and researchers reveal Scientific secrets of Jainism. Albert Einstein, in his article entitled

'Science and religion' (1940) has expressed: "Science without religion is lame, Religion without science is blind." Jainism is Science with religion - neither lame nor blind. Jaina science encompasses every aspect of cosmos, including living and non-living entities. Thus Jaina way of life is a beautiful, harmonious combination of rational (scientific) approaches and moral (religious) attitudes. Jain philosophy in Indian philosophy, thus, is very rich and very proficient in so many ways.

Hear above we have seen some of the striking features of Jain philosophy. All of these are fairly well known to both, the Jainas as well as to the non-Jainas. Let me also quote somewhat less known but unique aspects of Jain Philosophy to which great scholars have drawn our attention:

- (1) "One of the curious features of Jainism is the belief in Variable size of the jiva (soul) in its empirical condition. It is capable of expansion and contraction according to the dimensions of the physical body with which it is associated for-the time being. In this respect it resembles, a lamp, - it is said, which though remaining the same illumines the whole of the space, enclosed in a small or big room, in which it happens to be placed. It means that like its other features, the jiva's non-spatial character also is affected by association with matter; The Jaina thus denies the unalterable nature of-the jiva which is commonly recognised by Indian thinkers.

The jiva's relation to matter explains also the somewhat peculiar Jaina view of knowledge, Knowledge is not something that characterizes the jiva. It constitutes its very essence. The jiva can therefore know unaided everything directly and exactly as it is; only there should be no impediment in its way. External conditions, such as the organ of sight and the presence of light, are useful only indirectly and *jnāna* results automatically

when the obstacles are removed through their aids. That the knowledge which a *jiva* actually has is fragmentary is due to the 'obscuration caused by *karma* which interferes with its power of perception. As some schools assume a principle of *avidyā* to explain-empirical thought, the Jains invoke the help of *karma* to do so"¹

(2) According to S. Gopalan it is the Jain doctrine of *Kevalajnāna* which is unique to Jainism. "It is unique because 'in all other schools of Indian philosophy the sense organs and the mind are not considered as obstruction in the sense in which Jainism holds them to be obstacles for perfect perfection" so that "The *Kevalajnāna* concept, from the point of view of Indian epistemology stands unique in that it is referred to as the consummation of all knowledge through the 'progressive removal of the obstructions caused by the sense organs and the mind."²

(3) "The Jaina philosophy, it has already been said, is realistic and pluralistic. There is a plurality of objects and *Jivas* (*atmans*) and all of them are real and the objects of our Knowledge also are real, but are not mere ideas. But the Jaina metaphysics is a metaphysics, of substance. Everything, including action, is a substance. One may find the idea of action being a substance to be very strange, but it is found in the modern theory that the stuff of the universe is only process. The Jainas conceive any existence as a substance. Action exists and is, therefore, a substance."³

(4) Satishchandra Chatterjee and Dharendra Mohan Datta draw attention to an aspect of the view of causation which seems to belong distinctly to the Jains.

"Regarding all the four substances — space, time, dharma and adharma — it should be noted that as causal conditions they all have a peculiar status. The causal conditions (*Kāraṇas*). may be distinguished into three chief kinds, agent (as potter is of the pot), instrument

(as the potter's wheel is of the pot). and material (as clay is of the pot). Space, time, etc., come under the category of instrumental conditions, but they should be distinguished from ordinary conditions of that kind, being more indirect and passive than ordinary instrumental conditions. Gunaratna gives them, therefore, a special name, *apekṣākāraṇa*. The stone on which the potter's wheel rests may be cited as a condition of this kind in relation to the pot. Space, time, etc., are similar conditions."⁴

(5) According to Hermann Jacobi, "That plants possess souls is an opinion shared by other Indian philosophers."

"But the Jains have developed this theory in a remarkable way. Plants in which only one soul is embodied are always gross; they exist in the habitable part of the world only. But those plants of which each is a colony of plant-lives may also be-subtle, i.e. invisible, and in that case, they are distributed all over the world. These subtle plants are called *nigoda*; they are composed of an infinite number of souls forming a very small cluster, have 'respiration and nutrition in common, and experience, the most exquisite pains. Innumerable *nigodas* form a globule, and with them, the whole space of the world is closely packed, like a box filled with powder. The *nigodas* furnish the supply of souls in place of those who have reached *nirvāṇa*. But an infinitesimally small fraction of one single *nigoda* has sufficed to replace the vacancy caused in the world by the *nirvāṇa* of all the souls that have been liberated from the beginningless past down to the present. Thus it is evident that the *samsāra* will never be empty of living beings."⁵

Conclusion:

The common as well as less common but unique aspects of Jaina Philosophy and thought, as identified by different scholars and mentioned here above prove the unique significance of Jaina Philosophy in context of Indian Philosophy. However this unique significance needs to be fully realized by being noted for further researches and due exposures in the literature of the comparative world religion and philosophy. These subtle and unique aspects of Jaina Philosophy strengthens itself as well the Indian Philosophy. In fact, these significant features are the gateways to enter into a deeper and higher understanding of Jainism - a great system of Indian Philosophy and religion.

Notes :

- 1 Prof M. Hiriyana, "Outlines of Indian Philosophy" (London : Gerge Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1932) P.158
- 2 S. Gopalan, "Outlines of Jainism" (New York: Hadsted Press, 1973) P.72.
- 3 P. T. Raju : "The Philosophical Traditions of India" (University of Pittsburgh press 1972) P-102
- 4 Prof S.C. Chatterjee and D.M. Datta, "An Introduction to Indian Philosophy" (University of Calcutta, 1968) P-99-100
- 5 James Hastings, ed. "The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics VII (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons) P.469