

# JINASENA AND HIS POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

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□ In any account of Jaina polity, poet Ācārya Jinaseṇa occupies the foremost place. Though he himself was a mendicant, he composed *Ādipurāṇa* upto 10,380 verses or 42 cantos and 3 verses in literary excellence, anyone will feel proud of. He set before himself the task of narrating the lives of 63 excellent men (*śalākā puruṣa*) but due to his death in the midst of composition, the task was accomplished by his able disciple Guṇabhadra-ācārya.

Though *Ādipurāṇa* is encyclopaedic in character encompassing biography, cosmology, philosophy, religion, ethics, polity and all that; it is also important from the point of view of Jaina political philosophy, for in it, is found the most complete and systematic account of Jaina political theory. For a student of politics, three of its cantos viz., the third, the sixteenth and the forty-second are important. In the third canto, Jinaseṇa describes Jaina view of cosmic evolution of the universe as well as life in the 'state of nature' (if we can use the modern term) or life prior to the emergence of society and state. In terms of Jaina mythology, the life described therein is that lived in *Bhogabhūmi* (or the period of land of enjoyment) or life upto the time of the fourteenth *kulakara* i. e., Nābhira-ja. The sixteenth canto is concerned with the life of man before and after the emergence of Kingship or under *Kulakara* and first King Ṛṣabhadeva or in *Karmabhūmi* (the land of action) and his initiation into various means of livelihood as well as the creation of the three social classes. In thirty-eighth canto, the Ācārya relates as to how Bharata, son of Ṛṣabhadeva and world ruler (*Cakravartin*) by that time created the fourth class viz., the *Brāhmaṇa*. In the last canto that Jinaseṇa composed i. e., the forty-second canto, duties of a temporal ruler are explained by Bharata to the subordinate rulers assembled around him.

By the caption 'Jinaseṇa and his Political Philosophy' it is not suggested here that Jinaseṇa was the first or original political theorist. It is only intended to convey that the finest exposition of this theory is found in his work. Jinaseṇa does not intend to take all credit to himself for this theory. In fact, it is Jaina *śrut* (heard) tradition reduced to writing. The tradition had been there since the first *tīrthaṅkara* Ṛṣabhadeva. It was narrated to King Śreṇika—Bimbisāra of Magadha by Bhagawāna Mahāvīra through his principal disciple (Gaṇadhara) Gautama, It is

in the name of Gautama that Jinasena has described this traditional account of Jaina political theory.

It would have been useful if details, such as date, place etc., of Jinasena are recounted here. Unfortunately, Jinasena did not mention his time and place. However, on the basis of evidence from other *Purāṇas*, Commentaries etc., scholars are agreed that Jinasena lived between 800-900 A. D. This date has also been accepted by Shri U. N. Ghoshal, author of '*A Short History of Indian Political Ideas*.' Regarding place some scholars connect our poet-Ācārya with Karnataka (in Vankapur), while some others credit him with living at Vatsgrāma (modern Baroda) or with Chitrakūṭa (modern Chittor). However, as he was a Jaina monk, who always remains wandering except the rainy season, it is too difficult to locate his fixed place. His disciple Guṇabhadra has mentioned in *Uttarapurāṇa* that King Amoghavarṣa I of Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasty, who had Mānyakheṭa as his capital, paid his respects to Jinasena. He (Amoghavarṣa I) is also reported a follower of Jainism. However, the two might have been contemporary. Besides, *Ādipurāṇa*, Jinasena also wrote *Pārśvābhyudaya* and *Vardhamānapurāṇa*, now lost. He also wrote *Jayadavalā* commentary (later part of it) in 40,000 verses in Sanskrit and Prākṛt on *Kaṣāyapahūḍa* and completed it in 837 A. D. Thus it would be seen that Jinasena was a literary giant.

#### KEYNOTE

The keynote of the political philosophy of Jinasena is that there is no creator of this world. The universe or its cause are really the souls that fill it and they are helped by *Karmas* in it or it is due to the agency of the *Karmas* that this world is full of mundane souls.<sup>1</sup> All such terms as God, Creator, Fate or Destiny are nothing but synonyms of the architect known as *Karma*.

Having denied the existence of any Creator, there is no place for any God-appointed king or any ruler having elements of God in him. Thus, the theory of divine origin of king is unacceptable to Jinasena. Even the first king viz., Ṛṣabhadeva was not a God when he was chosen a king by his fellowmen though after renunciation of this world and practising penance he became a liberated soul and was regarded as the first *Tīrthaṅkara* (originator or propounder of religion or religious path) or the first Lord or God. Jinasena has expressly written in his *Ādipurāṇa* that when Ṛṣabhadeva devised six means of livelihood for his fellowmen, he was a person attached to this world (*Sarāgī*).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the fourteen *Kulakaras* or Patriarchs that preceded him are not to be supposed to have been invested with any divinity. At the most, the

- १ चेतनाधिष्ठितं हीदं कर्मनिर्मातृचेष्टितम् ।  
नन्वक्ष--सुख--दुःखादि वैश्वरूपाय कल्प्यते ॥  
निर्माणकर्मनिर्मातृ कौशलायादिनोयम् ।  
अङ्गोपाङ्गादिवैचित्र्यमङ्गिनां संगिरावष्टे ॥  
तदेतत्कर्म-वैचित्र्याद् भवन्नानात्मकं जगत् ।  
विश्वकर्माणिमात्मानं साधयेत् कर्मसारथिम् ॥  
विधिः स्रष्टा विधाता च दैवं कर्म पुराकृतम् ।  
ईश्वरश्चेति पर्याया विज्ञेयाः कर्मवेधसः ॥

(आदिपुराण, ४/३४-३७)

2 Ibid, 16-180

*Kulakaras* and even *Rṣabhadeva* himself were pre-eminent and man of genius (*matikuṣala*) amongst their fellowmen. So naturally their portrayal in pen has to be somewhat on a higher scale and it is the requirement of any epic. However, this keynote should not be lost sight of.

In the absence of any external agent of creation there has to be some rational explanation of the continuance of this Universe and the activities of souls, matter etc., that comprise it. The explanation put forward is not only rational and logical but also points to a definite process of evolution both social and political.

### COSMIC PROCESS

Then, what is the mystery of this world ? According to Jainism, Reality (*sat*) is characterised by the three attributes of origination (*utpāda*), decay (*vyaya*) and permanence (*dhrauvya*). Take the case of gold, it is turned into ring and then again is turned into gold. It continues permanently. It simply changes appearance or mode (*pariyāya*). All souls (mundane) and matter (*pudgala*) pass through these three processes continually. This is what makes this world eternal and even endless. The element that helps these in transformation is time (*Kāla*) besides other elements of *Dharma* and *Adharma* which are responsible for motion and rest respectively. Space (*Ākāśa*) is there as medium of giving space to all the elements. However, we are concerned with the Jaina concept of time.

Time has two varieties the Absolute (or pure—*Niścaya Kāla*) and the Practical (*Vyavahāra Kāla*). Practical *Kāla* or time is represented by means of seconds, minutes, hours, years etc. From the point of view of development or degradation the latter is again subdivided.

### THE TIME-CYCLES

The practical time is divided into two cycles, i. e., *Utsarpiṇī* (evolutionary) and the *Avasarpiṇī* (retrograde). In the latter man's happiness, age, strength etc., are on decrease. *Avasarpiṇī* has six divisions spread over hundreds or even thousands of thousands millenniums. They are (1) *sukhamā-sukhamā* (Bliss-Bliss) (2) *sukhamā* (bliss) (3) *sukhamā-dukkhamā* (Bliss-sorrow) (4) *dukkhamā-sukhamā* (sorrow-bliss) (5) *dukkhamā* (sorrow) and (6) *dukkhamā-sukhamā* (sorrow-sorrow). In *Utsarpiṇī*, the order is just the reverse.

The Jaina account of the evolution of social and political man begins from the first *Kāla* i. e., the period of bliss-bliss. It may be interpreted to mean pre-society period of modern terms.

### GOLDEN AGE

Jainism postulates a period of golden age for man wherein he lived in pristine purity and idyllic happiness.

In the *Sukhamā-Sukhamā Kāla* or the first division of time-cycle, man was extremely happy, long-lived, not subject to disease and was as handsome as gold. He was not required to labour hard. His wants were met by the wish yielding tress (the *Kalpavṛkṣas*). In modern terms, this would mean that man was in close contact with nature with its vast resources. He did not know cultivation, nor any kind of art and craft. Population was scarce so he had no difficulty in meeting his wants.

In the *sukhamā* or second *Kāla* there was some reduction in the capacity of above trees and man did not enjoy that much age and strength.

### EMERGENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The third *Kāla* is marked by increase in the difficulties of man and he was continually in greater need of guidance. Hence there ensued a line of fourteen *kulakaras* (founders of family or clan) or patriarchs who were not kings or rulers but only pre-eminent men amongst their fellows guiding and helping them. Their contribution mainly consists in their advice to their fellows to live in a *kula* (family or clan). First of them, named Pratiśruti, told them as to how sun and moon are useful to them while the second, Sanmati, explained to them the importance of stars and various signs of the zodiac. The third, Kṣemaṅkara, asked his fellowmen to avoid ferocious animals like the lions etc., and to tame cows and the like. We can here see, perhaps, the beginning of pastoral life.

The *kalpavṛkṣas* were still meeting the wants of man but there were quarrels about the areas of reaping fruit. Their demarcation was done by *kulakaras* Simaṅkara and Sīmandhara. The seventh *kulakara* taught his fellows riding on elephants and horses etc. During the time of 8th and 9th *kulakaras*, men and women did not die as soon as they had a child due means devised by them. The twelfth *kulakara* devised ways to cross rivers etc., by means of boats. He also devised ways to cross mountains. The thirteenth and fourteenth *kulakaras* gave medical guidance to their fellows by way of cutting the umbilical cord and the like.

The period of fourteenth *kulakara* Nābhirāja was important for many significant events. In his time, there were rains and sprouting of eatable grain-plants etc. Even cotton grew. Nābhirāja pointed out to his men which plants or trees were useful and which were to be left out as poisonous etc.

Jinasena records that the *kalpavṛkṣas* were still meeting the needs of man though their power had been considerably reduced i. e., man had not so far taken to agriculture. Nābhirāja even taught him pottery.

During Nābhirāja's time, the period of *Bhogabhūmi* or land of enjoyment was on its last legs.

### AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY AND SIX MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD

Nābhirāja had a brilliant son named Ṛṣabhadeva. The people being disappointed from the *kalpavṛkṣas* came to Nābhirāja and requested to guide them in those circumstances as the *kalpavṛkṣas* were not copable to meet their needs. Nābhirāja in his turn, directed them to go to Ṛṣabhadeva. When the people requested Ṛṣabhadeva to solve their problem, he told them that *Bhogabhūmi* was over and they now have to grapple with the realities of *karmabhūmi*. Hence he devised six means of livelihood for them viz., (1) *Asi* or use of sword. Some people were to engage themselves in the work of protection. (2) *Maṣi* or writing. A few of them were to take up the job of writing accounts etc. (3) *Kṛṣi* or agriculture. He asked the people to plough the land with the help of bullocks. (4) *Vāṇijya* or commerce. A few of the people were to take up commerce. (5) *Vidyā* or teaching the arts like music and dancing etc., and finally (6) *Śilpa* or handicraft.

Thus began the age of agriculture, handiwork etc. It is perhaps on account of his devising agriculture that the identification mark of Ṛṣabhadeva, the first *Tīrthaṅkara* of the Jains, is bullock. It is invariably found below his image.



## EMERGENCE OF THE POLITICAL STATE

During the settlement of life through agriculture and professions perhaps developed conflicts. The man who enclosed a piece of land and declared that it was his, his right might have been challenged by some other fellow. Such and other conflicts also arose, which took the form of offences, even compelled men of those times to collect together and to go to Nābhirāja, so they again knocked at the door of Nābhirāja for advice. Nābhirāja advised them to seek the advice of his son, Ṛṣabha and perhaps after mutual consultation, they requested Ṛṣabhadeva to be their king who consented to be so and the first king was then consecrated by Indra.

Ācārya Jinasena has not thrown much light on the deliberations of the people before they elected their king. He has simply said that the people are prone to forget important events so in a poetic manner he has described in detail the *Rājyābhiṣeka* (consecration). But in some other context he has told us that without a king *Matsyanyāya* (the law of fish, according to which the larger fish devours up the smaller fish) would prevail in a kingless society, resulting the weak would suffer at the hands of the powerful. This must have been the logic and conclusion of all those assembled at that time to elect a king.

Thus, to me, it seems, the people of those days entered into voluntary social contract to use modern terminology. They decided to give up their increasingly unhappy state of nature and to constitute themselves into a political society.

In other words, Jaina polity has the credit of elective kingship the details of which are available. It is factual and not presumptive as the case with Rousseau, Locke or Hobbes.

### *Theory of Punishment*

The new king decided to continue the three forms of punishment which the previous *kulakaras* had prescribed. First five of them had prescribed 'Ha' (Alas you have done it !) as punishment. Whenever anybody committed an offence, he was confronted with 'Ha' from his fellows. The next five patriarchs laid down 'Ma' (do not) as one of the ways of punishment. The offender was told not to (do) commit the offence again. The last four *kulakaras* made 'Dhik' (shame on you !) as the mode of punishment. Whenever anybody committed an offence, he was cried shame.

During the regime of the next king, Bharata, son of Ṛṣabhadeva, offences grew in number and Bharata was required to devise other severe modes of punishment. These were—throwing into prison (*bandhana*) and death-sentence (*vadha*). Thus in Jinasena's account of Jaina political theory we also notice a systematic evolution of the modes of punishment according to intensity and frequency of offences of crimes.

### *Creation of Social Classes*

The idea of division of society in four classes is not savoury to Jainism. But for reasons best known to Jinasena, perhaps for placating the *Brāhmaṇa* influence of his time or due to some interpolation in his work, we find in *Ādipurāṇa* that the first king Ṛṣabhadeva, who later on became the first *Tīrthaṅkara* also was responsible for the creation of three social classes viz., the *Kṣatriya* (or the warrior class) entrusted with the duty of protecting the weaker people, the *Vaiśya* (or the trading class) to engage in trade and commerce and finally the *Śūdra* to serve the first and the second.

When Bharata after conquering the six divisions of *Bharatakṣetra* became the world-ruler and had amassed considerable fortune, he thought of making gifts. By an indigenous test prescribed by himself, he selected some people to be *Brāhmaṇas* and prescribed their duties as taking of gifts, worship, learning etc. This act of Bharata had the approval of Rṣabhadeva who had become omniscient at that time but the approval was given with some apprehensions. One noticeable feature of the creation of these four classes is that the *Brāhmaṇas* were the last to be created. The first social class to be created was that of the *Kṣatriyas*.

#### Principles of Taxation

Any political state to be effective has to rely on an efficient system of taxation. The first king laid down a very kind principle of taxation. He thought that taxes should be levied and collected from the people in a manner a cowherd gets milk from the cow. For, while doing so, he does not do any harm to the cow. Similarly, the people should not feel the pinch of tax levied by the king. As a cowherd tends his cattle by way of feeding, healing their wound and protecting the same in various ways, so should the king care for his subject. He should behave towards them with full responsibility and sense of service in lieu of the taxes at least otherwise also he has to be a perfect ruler.

#### Organisation of the State

After assuming kingship, Rṣabhadeva, the first king, made Ayodhyā (not to be fought against as the king and the people were so righteous) his capital for the construction of which Indra was responsible. Then, the king set up villages, towns (*pura*), ports (*pattana*) and even forts. He fixed their boundaries as well demarcated the various regions like Kalinga, Avanti, Kerala, etc. He put his whole kingdom under four *Mahā Māṇḍalikas* (like four governors) who were to control thousands of other vassals. Thus we find a beginning towards setting up of civil and military administration under the first king.

#### World-ruler

Jinasena has also very elaborately described the world-conquest (*digvijaya*) of Bharata who later became the world-ruler (*cakravartin*). The conquest of Bharata of all the territory from Himavāna mountain to the sea in the east and from the southern sea to the western sea has been highly eulogized by Jinasena. But Jinasena is not alone in this praise on Bharata. Numerous non-Jaina *purāṇas* acknowledge in unmistakable terms that this country (India) is named *Bhārata* after this illustrious son of Rṣabhadeva, Bharata. But did Jinasena provide any justification for world-conquest of Bharata? The answer is in the affirmative. The *cakravartin* could do so on account of his meritorious actions (*punya*). Ācārya Jinasena has clearly said that it is *punya* that makes one *cakravartin* and it is *punya* that makes one *Tīrthaṅkara*.<sup>1</sup>

#### Duties of a King

In the last canto that Jinasena wrote before his death, five duties of a king are enumerated by Bharata to the kings assembled around him. These duties are—(1) *Kulānupālana* (preservation

१ पुण्याच्चक्रधरश्चियं विजयिनीमैन्द्रीं च दिव्यश्रियं ।

पुण्यात्तीर्थकरश्चियं च परमां नैःश्रेयसीञ्चाश्नुते ॥

पुण्यादित्यमुञ्च्छ्रियां चतसृणामाविर्भवेद् भाजनं ।

तस्मात्पुण्यमुपाजयन्तु सुधियः पुण्याज्जिनेन्द्रागमात् ॥

(आदिपुराण ३०/१२६)

of the race.)<sup>1</sup> (2) *Matyanupālana* (preservation of understanding), (3) *Ātmānupālana* (protection or preservation of self), (4) *Prajānupālana*, (protection of the subjects) and (5) *Sāmañjasatva* (propriety).

*Kulānupālana* is preservation of the purity of the race by the king by being careful in accepting offering (remains of these) and garlands etc., from people including Sādhus of other faiths lest they be poisoned etc. They can accept such things from a *Muni* because *Rājarṣi* and *Parmarṣi* are cognate.

They are so because the first lord created the *kṣatriya* class, his own class, first for the protection of people with conviction that in *karmabhūmi* people will need protection and so there should be others to protect them.

*Matyanupālana* means the knowledge of what is good for the king in this and the other world. This can be achieved by destroying *avidyā* which is nothing but false knowledge (*mithyā-Jñāna*).

Preservation of the self (*ātmānupālana*) can be achieved by resort to *dharma* as it protects one from all sorts of troubles. *Rājya* is an evil because even the son and real brothers are constantly conspiring against the king. It constantly breeds evils and there is hardly an iota of happiness. The king should at least in his last days take recourse to *dharma* and meditate on the true nature of his soul etc., lest he dies of poison, arms etc.

The fundamental duty of a king is *prajānupālana* or protection of the people. This he should do in the manner of a cowherd. He should resort to *anurūpadaṇḍa* or mild punishment lest even the ministers turn against him.

Propriety (*sāmañjasatva*) on the part of a king is protection of the good (*śiṣṭa*) and control (*nigraha*) of the wicked. In doing so, he should not spare even the prince.

#### The Ideal King

Bharata was the embodiment of all virtues. He was *Rājarṣi* according to Jinasena. He was a pious man and was emulated by his subjects.<sup>2</sup>

In this way, we get the detailed and exhaustive description of Jaina polity in Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa*. It discusses the political development from pre-historic times to the fully developed states and kingdom. He describes the cosmic process of evolution and denies the creator of universe as a special power i. e., God etc. So he also discards the notion of God-gifted kings. It is the special feature of Jinasena's political philosophy, which is according to Jaina tradition, found nowhere except the conviction of modern science. So it can be said that Jinasena's political philosophy is most scientific.

□

1 I am inclined to translate *kula* here as 'race'.—(The author)

२ (क) इत्यादिराजं तत्साम्राट् अहो राजर्षिनामकम् ।

तत्सर्वभूमित्यस्य दिशासूच्छलितं यशः ॥

(आदिपुराण ४१/१५५)

(ख) धर्मशीले महीपाले यान्ति तच्छीलतां प्रजाः ।

अताच्छील्यमतच्छीले यथाराजा तथाप्रजाः ॥

(आदिपुराण ४१/६७)