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NATURE OF DIVINITY IN JAINA PHILOSOPHY



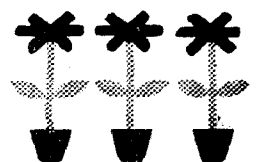
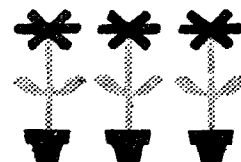
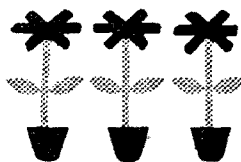
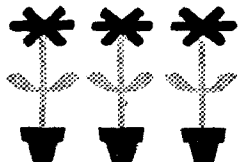
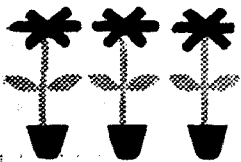
I. Introduction :

Religion, as a way of life and not merely as an institution, has been natural to man. It is man's reaction to the totality of things as he apprehends it. It implies an interpretation of nature and the meaning of the universe. It seeks to go beyond the veil of visible things and finds an inexhaustible fund of spiritual power to help him in life's struggle. And the 'presence' of God gave strength for man in his struggle in life. The ways of God to man and man to God have been rich and varied. It may be, as Prof. Leuba pointed out, that fear was the first of the emotions to become organised in human life, and out of this fear God was born. Perhaps love and gratitude are just as natural, as much integral parts of the constitution of man, as fear; and Gods were friendly beings. It is still possible that men have looked at Gods with a living sense of kinship and not with the vague fear of the unknown powers.¹ We do not know. But one thing is certain that in higher religions fear is sublimated by love into an adoring reverence.² From the fear of the Lord in *The Old Testament* to the worship of God 'with Godly fear and awe' is not a far cry.

In the Vedic period, we find a movement of thought from polytheism to monotheism and then to monism. The poetic souls contemplated the beauties of nature and the Indo-Iranian Gods, like Deus, Varuṇa, Uśas and Mitra were products of this age. Other Gods like Indra were created to meet the needs of the social and political adjustments. Many Gods were created; many Gods were worshipped. Then a weariness towards the many Gods began to be felt as they did not know to what God they should offer oblations.³ Then a theistic conception of God as a creator of the universe was developed out of this struggle for the search for a divine being. In ancient Greece, Xenophanes was against the polytheism of his time. Socrates had to drink hemlock as he was charged of denying the national Gods. He distinguished between many Gods and the one God who is the creator of the universe.

II. The Jaina arguments against God :

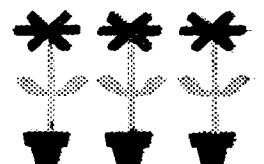
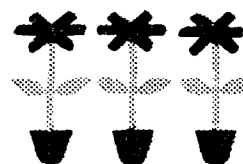
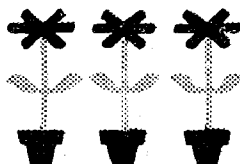
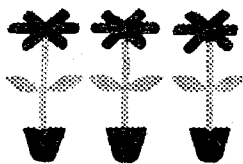
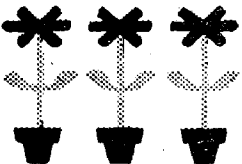
But the Jainas were against Gods in general and even the God as creator. They presented several arguments against the theistic conception of God. They deny the existence of a



Creator God and refute the theistic arguments of the Naiyayikas. The Naiyayika argument that the world is of the nature of an effect created by an intelligent agent who is God (Īśvara) cannot be accepted because :

1. It is difficult to understand the nature of the world as an effect as :
 - (a) if effect is to mean that which is made of parts (Sāvayava) then even space is to be regarded as effect;
 - (b) if it means coherence of a cause of a thing which was previously non-existent, in that case one cannot speak of the world as effect as atoms are eternal.
 - (c) if it means that which is liable to change, then God would also be liable to change and he would need a creator to create him and another and so on ad infinitum. This leads to infinite regress.⁴
2. Even supposing that the world as a whole is an effect and needs a cause, the cause need not be an intelligent one as God because :
 - (a) if he is intelligent as the human being is, then he would be full of imperfections, as human intelligence is not perfect;
 - (b) if his intelligence is not of the type of human intelligence but similar to it, then it would not guarantee inference of the existence of God on similarity, as we cannot infer the existence of fire on the ground of seeing steam which is similar to smoke;
 - (c) we are led to vicious circle of argument if we can say that the world is such that we have a sense that some one made it, as we have to infer the sense from the fact of being created by God.
3. If an agent had created the world, he must have a body. For, we have never seen an intelligent agent without a body. If a God is to produce intelligence and will, this is also not possible without an embodied intelligence.⁵
4. Even supposing a non-embodied being were to create the world by his intelligence, will and activity, there must be some motivation :
 - (a) if the motive is just a personal whim, then there would be no natural law or order in the world;
 - (b) if it is according to the moral actions of men, then he is governed by moral order and is not independent;
 - (c) if it through mercy, there should have been a perfect world full of happiness;
 - (b) if men are to suffer by the effects of past actions (adṛsta) then the 'adṛsta' would take the place of God.

But, if God were to create the world without any motive but only for sport it would be a 'motiveless malignity'.⁶
5. God's omnipresence and omniscience cannot also be accepted, because :
 - (a) if he is everywhere, he absorbs into himself everything into his own self, leaving nothing to exist outside him;
 - (b) his omniscience would make him experience hell, as he would know everything and his knowledge would be direct experience.⁷



6. It is not possible to accept the Naiyyayika contention that without the supposition of God, the variety of the world would be inexplicable, because we can very well posit other alternatives like (i) the existence of the natural order and (ii) a society of Gods to explain the universe.

But if a society of Gods were to quarrel and fall out as it is sometimes contended, then the nature of Gods would be quite so unreliable, if not vicious, that we cannot expect elementary co-operation that we find in ants and bees.

The best way, therefore, is to dispense with God altogether.⁸

We find similar objections against the acceptance of a theistic God, in Buddhism also. The Buddha was opposed to the conception of Īśvara as a creator of the universe.⁹ If world were to be thus created, there should be no change nor destruction, nor sorrow nor calamity.

If Īśvara were to act with a purpose, he would not be perfect and that would limit his perfection. But if he were to act without a purpose his actions would be meaningless like a child's play.

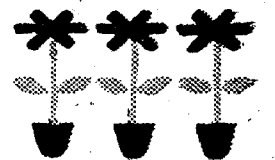
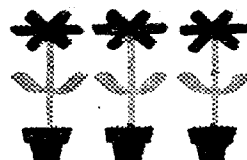
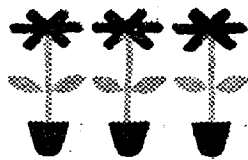
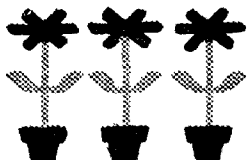
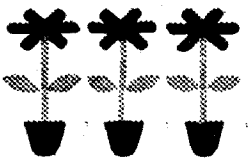
There is nothing superior to the law of karma. The sufferings of the world are intelligible only on the basis of the law of karma. Though the Buddha admits the existence of the Gods like Indra and Varuṇa, they are also involved in the wheel of Saṃsāra.¹⁰

We have, so far, seen that the Jainas, so also the Buddhists, were against the theistic conception of God. God as a creator is not necessary to explain the universe. We have not to seek God there in the world outside, nor is God to be found in the 'dark lonely corner of a temple with doors all shut'. He is there within us. He is there with the tiller tilling the ground and the 'pathmaker breaking stones', in the sense that each individual soul is to be considered as God, as he is essentially divine in nature. Each soul when it is perfect is God.

III. *The Jaina Conception of Soul :*

The Jainas sought the divine in man and established the essential divinity of man. This conception has been developed in specific directions in Jaina philosophy.

The existence of the soul is persupposition in the Jaina philosophy. Proofs are not necessary. If there are any proofs we can say that all the pramāṇas can establish the existence of the soul. It is described from the phenomenal and the noumenal points of view. From the phenomenal point of view, it possesses prāṇas; is the lord (prabhu), doer (kartā), enjoyer (bhoktā), limited to his body (dehamātra), still incorporeal and is ordinarily found with karma.¹¹ From the noumenal point of view, soul is described in its sure form. It is pure and perfect. It is pure consciousness. It is unbound, untouched and no other than itself. We may also say that from this point of view it is characterised by upayoga which is a hormic force. The joys and sorrows that the soul experiences are due to the fruits of karma which it accumulates due to the incessant activity that it is having. This entanglement is beginningless, but it has an end. The deliverance of the soul from the wheel of saṃsara is possible by voluntary means. By the moral and spiritual efforts involving saṃvara and nirjarā, karma accumulated in the soul is removed. When all karma is removed, the soul becomes pure and perfect, free from the wheel of saṃsāra. Being free, with its upward motion it attains liberation or mokṣa. Pure and perfect souls live in eternal bliss in the Siddhaśīla in the 'alokākāśa'.



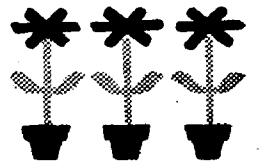
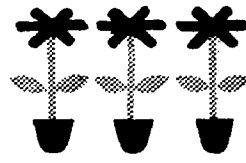
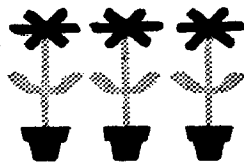
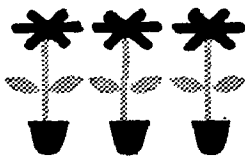
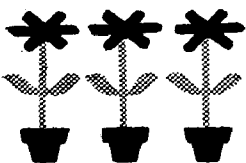
They are the perfect beings. There is nothing other which is as perfect. There is no other God. The freed souls are divine in nature, as they are perfect and omniscient.

For the Jaina it is not necessary to surrender to any higher being nor to ask for any divine favour for the individual to reach the highest goal of perfection. There is no place for divine grace, nor is one to depend on the capricious whims of a superior deity for the sake of attaining the highest ideal. There is emphasis on individual efforts in the moral and spiritual struggle for self-realization. One has to go through the fourteen stages of spiritual struggle before one reaches the final goal in the ayoga kevali stage. These stages are the guṇasthānas.

IV. However, the struggle for perfection is long and arduous. Few reached perfection; and perhaps, as tradition would say, none would become perfect in this age. Among those who have reached omniscience and perfection are the tīrthankaras, the prophets, who have been the beacon lights of Jaina religion and culture. They have preached the truth and have helped men to cross the ocean of this worldly existence. They led men, like kindly light, to the path of spiritual progress.

Therefore, they need to be worshipped. The Jainas worship the tīrthankaras not because they are Gods, nor because they are powerful in any other way, but because they are human, and yet divine, as every one is divine in his essential nature. The worship of the tīrthankaras is to remind us that they are to be kept as ideals before us in our journey to self-realization. No favours are to be sought by means of worship; nor are they compentent to bestow favours on the devotees. The main motive of worship of the tīrthankaras, therefore, is to emulate the example of the perfect beings, if possible, atleast to remind us that the way to perfection lies in the way they have shown us. Even this worship of tīrthankaras arose out of the exigencies of social and religious existence and survival and possibly as a psychological necessity. We find a few temples of Gandhiji today, perhaps, there would be many more. The Buddha has been deified.

Apart from the worship of tīrthankaras, we find a pantheon of Gods who are worshipped and from whom favours are sought. The cult of the 'yakṣiṇī' worship and of other attendant Gods may be cited as examples. This type of worship is often attended by the occult practices and the tantric and mantric ceremonialism. Dr. P.B. Desai shows that in Tamilnad Yakṣiṇī was allotted an independent status and raised to a superior position which was almost equal to that of the Jina.¹² Padmāvati, Yakṣiṇī of Pārśvanāth, has been elevated to the status of a superior deity with all the ceremonial worship in Pombuccapura in Mysore area. These forms of worship must have arisen out of the contact with other competing faiths and with the purpose of popularising the Jaina faith in the context of the social and religious competition. The cult of Jwālāmālīni with its tantric accompanishments may be mentioned as another example of this motivation. The promulgator of this cult was, perhaps, Helācārya of Ponnur. According to the prevailing belief at that time, mastery over spells and mantravidyā was considered as a qualification for superiority. The Jaina ācāryas claimed to be master mantravādins.¹³ Jainism had to compete with the other Hindu creeds. Yakṣi form of worship must have been introduced in order to attract the common men towards Jainism, by appealing to the popular forms of worship.



However, such forms of worship are foreign to the Jaina religion. They do not form an organic and constituent features of the Jaina worship. The course of religion had to encounter many conflicting tendencies. Some of the tendencies have been absorbed and assimilated in the struggle for existence and survival. We may, here, refer to the inconceivable changes the Buddhist forms of worship have undergone in the various countries of the world, like the tantric forms of worship in Tibetan Lamaism.

We have still some Gods in Jaina cosmogony. They are the 'devas' the Gods living in heavens like the 'bhavanavāsi', 'vyantaravāsi', 'jyotiśvāsi', and 'kalpavāsi'. But they are not really Gods in the sense of superior divine beings. They are just more fortunate beings than men because of their accumulated good karma. They enjoy better empirical existence than men. But we, humans, can pride ourselves in that the 'Gods' in these worlds cannot reach mokṣa unless they are reborn as human beings.¹⁴ They are not objects of worship.

V. Struggle for perfection is a necessary factor in life. Sorrow and imperfection are a flavour to the sauce. They are necessary for onward journey in the spiritual struggle. The efforts of self-realization will have meaning only when this world becomes a vale of soul making and the life a real fight in which something is eternally gained.¹⁵ Life is to be considered as a struggle towards perfection, and not merely an amusing pantomime of infallible marionettes. We should realise that 'man is not complete, he is yet to be'. In what he is, he is small. He is hungering for something which is more than what he can get. In this struggle for perfection man need not depend on God or any superior being for favours, for he 'rolls as impotently as you or I'. Man has to depend on his own self-effort. The Jaina attitude is melioristic. Tagore writes, "In the midst of our home and our work, the prayer rises 'Lead me across'. For here rolls the sea, and even here lies the other shore waiting to be reached."¹⁶

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