

Understanding and Control of Kashāyās (Toxic Emotions)

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Understanding and Control of Kashāyās (Toxic Emotions)

Introduction

Jainism has identified the control of Kashāyās¹ (emotions of anger, arrogance, deception, and greed), Nokshāyās (other related passions), and base impulses as the main determinant of one's spiritual progress.

In fact, it regards the erasing of these intertwined emotions all the way down to the micro-level from one's character as essential for achieving one's highest potential--i.e., Moksha (liberation).

It places so much importance on this topic that hardly any Jain ritual, prayer or worship is devoid of a plea to Tirthankaras to provide continual guidance and insight to overcome these emotions. Jain seers and sages have labeled them as highly destructive and advised their followers repeatedly to be constantly aware of them and direct their efforts initially at reducing their intensity and eventually eliminating them altogether.

Jainism's recognition of the vicious role played by Kashāyās, the benefits derived by lessening or eliminating them, and their inverse relationship with peace, harmony, and spiritual ascendance could comprise a major contribution of Jainism to mankind.

Spiritually speaking, the Jain religion links Kashāyās with the generation of new karmic particles and resulting bondage. The karmas in turn are characterized as the major cause of the cycle of birth and death and the bodily forms that a worldly soul goes through.

Its core teaching states that the damage caused by the Kashāyās has an immense impact not only on the present life but also on future lives as well. The less the intensity of these destructive emotions, the better the quality of life, lighter the karmic burden and faster the rise on the spiritual ladder.

¹ (The word Kashāya is made up of two words, Kash & Aya. Kash means Samsar or worldly life. Aya means gain. The literal meaning of Kashāyā is to gain samsar again & again, meaning as long as we have Kashāyās, the cycle of birth and death will continue. Anger, arrogance, deception, and greed plunge us in samsar. Therefore, they are called Kashāyās.)

It is no wonder that the Kashäyäs have been equated with inner enemies in the very first line of the most sacred mantra (Navkar Mantra) that many Jains recite daily from birth to death.

Types of Kashäyäs

Jainism has divided up Kashäyäs in 25 categories. **The primary ones are anger, arrogance, deception, and greed.** In addition, it has identified 9 other related passions-called Nokashäyäs. Nine Nokashäyäs include laughter, feelings of happiness and unhappiness, grief, fear, disgust, sexual craze towards men, women and bisexuals. They serve as a catalyst to invoke the primary emotions.

Each of the four primary emotions is further subdivided into four categories (thus making a total of 16). These 16 subgroups of Kashäyäs plus 9 Nokashäyäs make a total of 25. (Note: This group of 25 is labeled as CHARITRA MOYANIYA KARMA in karmic language.) The subdivisions of anger, arrogance, deception, and greed are based upon the intensity and duration of each of them. The intensity in turn depends upon the degree of attachment, underlying intention, strength of vigor, and means employed. The subdivisions are:

(a) Anantänubandhi Kashäy (Highly intense emotion):

This type of emotion stays with a person for an extended period and could be regarded like a deep groove cut into a piece of rock. It takes years for the groove to disappear from the rock. In the same way, it takes a long time to get rid of this type of extreme emotion and hence considered highly detrimental to one's well being.

(b) Apratyäkhyaniya Kashäy (strong emotion):

This type of emotion usually tapers off after about a year. It is likened to a mud wall that slowly melts away with the arrival of monsoon.

(c) Pratyakhyaniya Kashäy (mild emotion):

This type of emotion goes away after a few months. It is less intense than the previous category but more intense than the next category. It is compared with a line in the sand that disappears when a strong current of air passes over it.

(d) Samjvalan Kashäy (very mild emotion).

A person shows a mild form of reaction in a spur of moment under the influence of this type of emotion but becomes calm quickly. It is compared with a line in water created by a moving finger.

The above subgroups are shown in a tabular form below as illustrated in the scriptures:

<i>Kashāy</i>	<i>Anantānubandhī</i>	<i>Apratyākhyānī</i>	<i>Pratyākhyānī</i>	<i>Samjvalan</i>
<i>Anger</i>	line in rock	line in earth	line in sand	line in water
<i>Arrogance</i>	stone pillar	bone	piece of wood	cane
<i>Deceit</i>	Bamboo root	horn of arm	urine of cow	shaving of wood
<i>Greed</i>	fast color	grease	mud	water color

It is interesting to note that the primary emotions take many forms and shades in human life (and animals too), validating the subdivisions outlined in the scriptures. For example, anger may be expressed as a mild anger, angry outburst, emotional rage, hate, animosity and vengeance, while arrogance could take the form of self-importance, egotism, conceit, self-praise and jealousy. Deception may surface in cheating, dishonesty, distortion, hypocrisy, dirty politics, cunningness, fraud and trickery; on the other hand, greed could show up in the form of self-indulgence, delusion, discontentment, mad craving for money, sex, and power.

It is a common knowledge that our minds are filled with many of these emotions round the clock. Unfortunately, most of us do not recognize the havoc they inflict upon our thought processes and upon our behavior. Because of the critical impact they have on our short and long term future, let us examine them in a bit more detail and discuss the steps suggested by our seers to overcome them.

Anger

Anger is indeed one of the most powerful emotions. People react to life situations at times with anger rather instinctively—without realizing the consequences. They get angry, lose their sense of discretion, and some times, ruin relationships with their loved ones in a split second—the relationships that might have taken them years to build.

It is not only the social damage that anger inflicts upon us. It is also the damage to the body and mind. It is scientifically proven that when we get angry, our heart pumps faster, blood pressure goes up, blood flow quickens, muscles tense, and more sugar is added into the blood stream. Headaches, tension, stomach problems are also said to have been connected with anger.

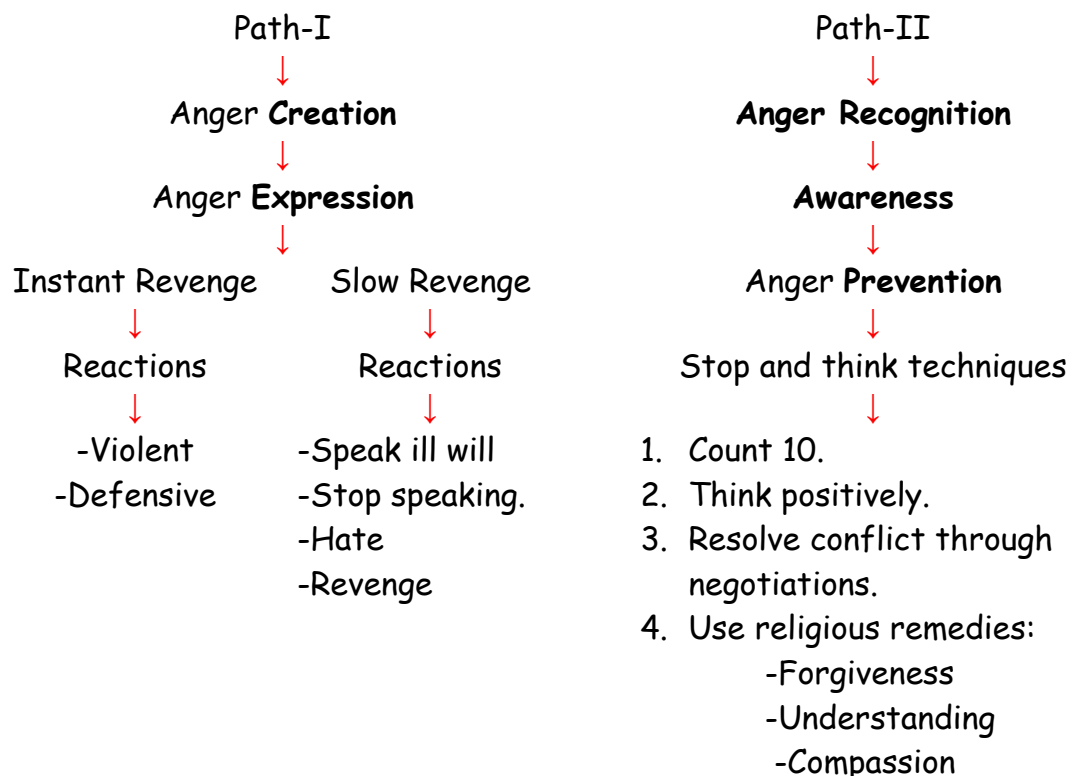
If we go one step further and analyze the long-term effects of anger, the implications are rather devastating because they show up in the form of heart disease, weakened immune system, and diminished life expectancy.

From the vantage point of the Karma theory, anger has very serious consequences too. The stronger the intensity and duration of this emotion, the stronger the karmic bondage-the bondage that causes dire consequences not only in this life but also beyond.

To overcome this emotion, first we need to understand the underlying **process**:

Provocation (anger initiator)

(Provocation Catalysts could come from past memories, interactions with others, disagreements, unfavorable situations, greed, and other sources.)



As the left side of the above chart depicts, the anger has two components: creation and expression. Most people follow path-I and upon provocation get angry and express their anger either instantaneously or slowly over a long period of time—sometimes for decades! The intensity of anger expression depends upon the person's psychological makeup and karmic burden.

Usually anger expressed in this fashion is destructive because it is accompanied with a number of other harmful emotions such as hate, sense of revenge, violence and many others that linger on in a person's psyche for a long time.

Obviously, we won't have to deal with anger expression if we stop it right before it raises its ugly head—i.e., from the very moment it pops up. It means the instant we start getting angry, we need to quickly recognize the emotion and take a detour (path II)! **If we realize it and become aware of it, then most probably we will be able to control it.**

This means we must allow our mind to stop from reacting fast. If we just pause, reflect and think for a while, it will be difficult to get angry! That is one of the reasons modern psychiatrists recommend counting 10 when we are about to explode, and suggest other ideas as well to tackle the anger provoking situations.

Now let us look at the religious remedies. First of all, almost all major religions of the world have identified anger as one of the major sins. The common antidotes recommended are **FORGIVENESS, COMPASSION, AND UNDERSTANDING**. It appears that the emphasis is on anger **CONTROL** and **PREVENTION** rather than **EXPRESSION**.

Those who came up with these spiritual cures had human weakness and foibles in mind and advised us to react to anger generating stimuli with a compassionate heart and an attitude of forgive and forget. The following Biblical passage and Jain composition on forgiveness express a similar thought:

*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving.
(Ephesians 4:31)*

*I forgive all souls, may all souls forgive me, I am on friendly terms with all, I have enmity towards none.
(Translation of Khamemi Savva Jive.... Jain Scripture)*

Arrogance

Arrogance is probably a more destructive human emotion than anger because the latter at least needs an external catalyst, while arrogance does not. We can hide the anger, but arrogance is apparent to all around us. Anger in many cases is transient in nature and it may subside in due course and may be easy to forget and forgive, but arrogance is an ongoing phenomenon fueling fire on a continual basis.

An arrogant person is constantly occupied in boosting his own ego and does not hesitate to employ devious means to earn undue respect, prestige or salutations.

If we study the history of mankind, we will find that it is replete with stories of people who fell from grace or were destroyed or ruined by arrogance. Here is a short story from Greek Mythology:

Icarus- main character of the story- arrogantly believed that he could fly with artificial wings; his arrogance lead to his literal downfall, however, as he flew so close to the sun that the wax with which his wings were fastened melted. In Western philosophy and literature, this story of Icarus is considered to be the classic example of arrogance.

I know of a major US corporation that was doing very well for years. They copied a competitive product to grow even faster. The competitor claimed that the product infringed their patents but was willing to settle for only 200 million dollars. But being rich, the former was just too stubborn and arrogant. It fought in the court for almost 10 years, lost in the end, and wound up spending almost 9 billion dollars by the time the dispute came to an end.

These stories such as the ones described above support the common knowledge that the people who are affected with arrogance usually become 'blind' and stubborn, live in a dream world, and cannot see what others see. Nor do they realize that they have a serious mental disease.

Usually they walk around with a large ego, surround themselves with like minded selfish friends and they tend to see—with jaundiced eyes—arrogance in others, not in themselves! They are out to prove to the world how smart and superior they are compared to others.

Jain masters—who have identified this vice, among others, as dating all the way back to Lord Adinath's era—have suggested the use of **humility** and **politeness** in day to day interactions, and have structured many religious practices to fix the problem. They

are designed not only to soften one's arrogance, but also to soften other vices that are closely linked with arrogance, such as anger, deception, lust and greed—starting from early childhood.

The following practical steps can help us to recognize arrogance and rectify our behavior:

- Acknowledge the problem - The first step is the recognition and acceptance of the problem. Unless one accepts that there is a problem and is willing to do something about it, nothing can happen. If a sick person refuses to accept the fact that there is something wrong, he or she will not seek medical help.
- Do a reality check - One way we can deflate our ego is to see that there is always someone who is better than us no matter how inflated we feel about our wealth, power, knowledge, talent, appearance, and so forth. Karma theory (Cause & Effect) teaches us that the objects of our arrogance and good fortune are the fruits of our karmas from the past and could all disappear one day because every thing in life is transient and cyclic.
- Know that this too shall pass - Every time we go through an ego boosting situation, we need to think that nothing is going to last forever.
- Remind ourselves that truth has many angles and perceptions are relative - Like the blind men describing the elephant, we must remind ourselves that ours is not the only correct viewpoint. To find the right approach, we need to be polite and receptive enough to listen to the ideas and viewpoints from people with different cultures and backgrounds. Sometimes we will discover that we were way off in our approach! Being polite does not mean a total agreement with the view points of the opponent. It only means listening to the other party consciously. Listening with a spirit of reconciliation cannot co-exist with arrogance! This is one of the main messages of ANEKANTWAD—another cardinal principle of Jainism.
- Recognize the equality of souls - We need to respect all life and all human beings. Jainism clearly says: All souls are equal. This means that any temporary perception of superiority should not blind us and make us arrogant.
- Humility produces positive results - We need to understand that humility generates respect, co-operation and pleasant vibrations while dealing with our fellow human beings. Arrogance on the other hand invites contempt, dislike and hate. Our choice should be obvious.
- Arrogance obstructs and humility fosters resolution of conflicts. More problems have existed throughout history because of ego clashes. If we show humility to others in resolving a conflict, even our opponents will calm down and show a way to get out of it. On the other hand, if we are perceived as arrogant, our opponents will play hard ball and devise ways to teach us a lesson, thereby lowering the chances of resolution.

Deception

The human mind has an uncanny ability to craft devious means and cheat others to satisfy one's low level desires to procure more money, power, prestige or many other worldly objects. Greed and perverse knowledge (wrong beliefs) are the primary drivers of this emotion. They make the person resort to lies, stealing, fraud, dishonesty and hypocrisy.

The person with deceit does not hesitate to employ any unethical and immoral means to achieve the end objectives. He thinks one way, speaks something else and acts altogether differently -showing a lack of harmony between his thoughts, speech and action. The history of mankind contains many stories showing that deception does not work in the long run. Eventually the dishonest person gets caught and suffers from the social, monetary and mental consequences. Deception in general ends up in an ugly manner. It is just a matter of time.

The huge Bernard Madoff scandal that came to light recently is an excellent example of how far greed and deception can push a person down. Madoff yielded to these negative emotions. He caused pain and suffering not only to himself but also to thousands of his fellow human beings.

Karmic consequences of deceptive behavior are horrendous. It is said in the scriptures that deceptive thoughts and behavior make one suffer not only in this life, but also cause one to be born as an animal in the next life. Since the root cause of deception is unlimited greed based upon ignorance, we need to step back and examine and correct our real character, motives, and goals in life.

The antidotes for deception are leading a simple life and maintaining a straightforward disposition. The "simple life" obviously entails harboring limited desires, which abrogates the need to resort to dishonest means. A straightforward person will act without a hidden agenda, have a much lighter karmic burden, and will live a more peaceful and serene life.

Greed

Greed is the most powerful and dangerous of all emotions and is the most difficult to control. It provides fuel for the fires of anger, arrogance and deception and is therefore considered the father of all sins (evil activities). It can stay with a person even after the other three primary emotions are wiped out. According to the Jain

scriptures, this emotion stays with a person all the way to one of the higher rungs of the spiritual ladder (10th Gunasthānak).

Gandhiji once said that there is enough in the world to satisfy every one's needs but not enough to satisfy every one's greed. Greed begets human desires; the greater the number of desires, the higher the mental turmoil and dissatisfaction. There is just no end to the craze and madness to seek more and more. The result is dissatisfaction, stress, tension and mental and health problems.

The cure prescribed the religion is CONTENTMENT, by limiting one's desires to a more reasonable level, and maintaining a balance between one's greed and needs.

Types of Nokashāyās

As stated earlier, the scriptures have identified 9 Nokashāyās. They are quasi kashayas that help generate the primary emotions.

They are:

1. Laughter based upon ill intentions.
- 2-3 Emotions of happiness or unhappiness are founded upon the experience of favorable or unfavorable circumstances that in turn are the product of our past karmas (Shātā and Ashātā Vedaniya Karmas). JAINISM recommends the use of equanimity in the face of either situation.
- 4 Grief: Distress and anguish shown at the loss of loved ones or the glorious past
- 5 Fear: Fear of authority, enemy, next life, loss of wealth, loss of life due to an accident, not being able to earn a livelihood, death, and loss of reputation.
- 6 Disgust and Contempt
- 7-9 Sexual passion towards female, male and a bisexual person.

Kashāyās, Nokashāyās and the Karmic Cycle

The Jain religion regards the entire spectrum of Kashāyās and Nokashāyās as nothing but the product of past karmas. Here is the way the cycle occurs:

1. When the past karmas come to fruition and an event occurs, people react with emotions rather blindly. Their emotional reactions are normally based upon ignorance and wrong beliefs (Mithyatva) and thus on an impure state of mind.
2. Emotions generated are of two broad categories at this stage: Rag and Dwesh or attachment and aversion.

3. Attachment gives rise to two primary emotions (deception and greed) and 5 Nokashāyās (laughter, feelings of happiness and 3 emotions related to sexual passions).
4. Aversion gives rise to the remaining two primary emotions (anger and arrogance) and 4 Nokashāyās (feelings of unhappiness, grief, fear and disgust).
5. Emotions identified above lead to verbal and physical actions involving violence, lies, stealing, sexual acts, possessions/wealth accumulation.
6. Mental, physical and verbal acts then lead to formation of new karmas leading to further bondage.
7. The bondage becomes a cause for a new cycle of birth, growth, decay and death.
8. Thus the cycle of worldly life continues to move indefinitely.

It may be instructive to note the relationship between the toxic emotions and verbal and physical acts of sins (step 5 above). In Jainism, sins such as violence, speaking lies, stealing, sexual lust and mad craze after money are considered to have their roots in Kashāyās and have proclaimed that there is a strong connection between the two.

One is a cause; the other is an effect. For example: violence does not start in a vacuum. Usually it is preceded by either a trace of anger or ego or greed or a combination thereof. Without violent thoughts, there can be no violent action. Even a giant war starts with a single angry thought on the part of an individual and then—before we know it—it catches a wild fire.

The same reasoning applies to other vices. Jainism says that if you control these deadly emotions, the control of physical behavior would follow automatically. This is very profound, as here the Jain philosophy is showing a way to bring about a spiritual transformation at the individual level that in turn leads to a better society.

Contemporary Societal Ills

Wars and terrorism in different parts of the world, financial collapse, and global warming are some of the major ills that have impacted the lives of millions all over the world recently. If we analyze each of them, we can easily trace the root causes back to the use of poisonous emotions. Iraq war probably was based primarily upon arrogance and anger, birth of terrorism on anger, hate, and deception, financial meltdown on arrogance, deception, and greed, and global warming on greed. Even we look back at the past; we will find the same common thread. Unfortunately, the political and business leaders who make decisions base their decisions to satisfy their personal egos without giving a due consideration to the spiritual aspect.

Had they abided by the Jain principles and diminished the extent to which the toxic emotions and base impulses had infected their behavior, the societal concomitant harm could have been mitigated and the world would have been a much better place.

Discussion on how to control Kashāyās and break the Karmic Cycle

The root causes of the toxic emotions are ignorance and wrong beliefs. JAINISM has recommended many ways to address these causes and structured daily rituals (spiritual practices) as well.

The first step suggested to remove ignorance revolves around knowing, understanding, and forming a firm conviction about the true nature, identity and power of our own soul (swarup/inner self). A highly learned Jain Guru wrote centuries ago the following in Samaysaar- a highly regarded composition:

"I am really one, pure, without any ownership (of anger etc.), and full of knowledge and perception. By staying and being absorbed in such self (soul), I lead all these (anger etc.) to destruction."..Acharya Kund Kund (Translation by Paras Mal Agrawal)

Because we do not understand the wisdom contained in the above quote, we equate soul with body. Because of this fundamental error on our part, we tend to mistake the latter for the former. This ignorance manifests itself in the way we think and act. The correct approach is (1) to consider that the emotions, our body, and karma are all different from soul (2) to be cognizant of this fundamental truth every moment.

In reality, that is not what happens. Typically, when we receive a stimulus, the mind jumps, takes the charge and orders the body to take action without the soul (self) being cognizant.

The simple solution is to slow down before reacting to any stimulus. This will allow our soul/consciousness to take the lead and utilize its intrinsic qualities of forgiveness, humility, straightforwardness, contentment, charity, and compassion.

The scriptures maintain that the fire of anger can best be extinguished through the exercise of compassion and forgiveness, arrogance through humility, deception through straightforwardness and greed through contentment.

The best way to slow down our reactions to day-to-day stimuli is through the practice of meditation. It is through meditation that we focus on our inner self, calm our minds, and reflect upon how we react. Once our mind becomes tranquil, we can start reacting positively to stimuli with a correct attitude.

We can start appreciating our real nature and listening to what our inner voice is telling us. At this stage, we can start drawing out from our dormant divine qualities, and getting answers to our questions from within.

At this point, our own experience can lead us to start thinking about the karmic cycle that governs our lives and to start developing a strategy to break this cycle through the control of emotions. This means that the next time we run into a pleasant or an unpleasant situation, we will not react in the same way.

We can start reflecting that everything that happens is due to our own past karmas and that no useful purpose is served by blaming and punishing others for our troubles. With this frame of mind, perhaps we can start controlling our mind and acting dispassionately so as to minimize the formation of new KARMAS.

When we read the stories of Lord Mahavir, we realize that this is the path he followed, as he won over the inner enemies of defiling emotions and achieved liberation.

The remedial process of eliminating the toxic emotions and base impulses is simple to comprehend; and yet, when a real situation arises, most of us fail miserably. We simply forget the core message and our mind just overpowers us. We react instinctively without giving much thought to the situation at hand and then regret afterwards. The emotional thoughts are generated at the mind level without us being conscious of them. Because the mind plays tricks with us, we need help from wherever it is available.

One person who can provide such help and make a profound change in our daily kashaya-laden behavior is a spiritual guide (sadguru). He can steer us in the right direction, help us see the truth and more importantly our faults, provide feedback and put us on the right path. He can also work on our belief system and continually serve as a role model for us to follow.

In addition to getting help from a spiritual mentor, we also need to stay in the company (satsang) of religious people for positive reinforcement and engage in self-study on a daily basis. Another step worth looking at is the development of an attitude of detachment (Vairagya).

This idea is summed up in the scriptures very clearly under the axiom of Anitya Bhavana or Reflection of Impermanence. It states that all material things in life are temporary, transient in nature and come with an expiration date, a date that is out of our control. Pondering over this truth plus 11 others written in the scriptures should

serve as a reminder of the way things really are and enlarge our perspective. They are designed to make us detached and passion-free in our approach to solving the daily problems of life.

The practice of the following major rituals is yet another technique to control Kashāyās.

- Samayik (48 minute meditation to improve self awareness) - This daily ritual calms the mind and one's inner self. It also improves clarity of thought and helps us gain equanimity.
- Pratikraman (Introspection and asking for forgiveness for one's mistakes) - This is an extremely powerful tool because it provides an opportunity to acknowledge one's faults and seek forgiveness. Lasting for approximately 1 hour, this ritual is recommended for every morning and evening. If not feasible, then a longer version is recommended every fortnight, every 4 months, or once every year at the minimum.
- Daily reminder of 12 Bhavanas (Reflections)
- Paryushan (Festival of Forgiveness) observed for 8 days every year.
- Das Lakshana (Festival of spiritual attributes) observed for 10 days every year.

The above practices—if carried out consciously and regularly—have the power to make one passion free. They have the power to bring out divinity from us and make us more humble in our dealings with other human beings. Every one of them has a purpose and has an additive value, the sum total of which could have a profound impact on us.

I asked a Jain scholar about 35 years ago if he had any simple advice for me to control emotions. His answer was short but very powerful. He said: "Watch your thoughts." I did not understand the message at the time, but looking back, I feel his message showed a deep insight.

His message said loud and clear: "Thinking is every thing. Every thought has karmic consequences." Perhaps he knew that most human minds are driven by Kashāyās and watching and recognizing them would be an excellent first step towards winning them over.

Concluding Thoughts

The Jain religion is one of very few religions that have analyzed the root cause of human suffering and offered an effective cure for mankind. **It views the problems at the macro level as a reflection of what is happening at the micro level inside most of us.**

That is the rationale behind its focus on the inner spiritual transformation of each and every sentient being—paving the way for happiness for all now and eventual liberation from the cycle of death and birth. This approach indeed holds the key to change the whole world. Unfortunately, the ancient Jain philosophy has remained unknown to date to the majority of people on the face of the earth.

When we read or watch the news about the daily events in the news media, we can observe that most of them are occurring because of the rampant use of toxic emotions by people. Driven by these emotions, the world in more recent times has turned upside down/inside out.

It is bogged down in violence, stealing, greed, hatred, sex, religious fighting and terror. Hundreds of people are getting killed every single day. Millions of people do not get even a single good meal to eat in a day.

In this kind of environment, JAINISM offers a practical and ethical philosophy and tools for living a passion free, restrained, tolerant life, full of love and compassion. A lifestyle marked by the constant awareness of the destructive role played by the toxic emotions and their control in our thoughts and behavior will help us to be more compassionate, forgiving, humble and peaceful in living with fellow humans.

This could create peace, friendship and harmony throughout the world. The need of the hour is for us to understand and practice this philosophy with an open mind. Perhaps President Obama recognized this point when, in the course of presenting his official remarks on Diwali on October 14, 2009, he offered the following reflection on Jainism: "In Jainism, [Diwali] celebrates the attainment of Nirvana by Lord Mahavira, one of a long line of spiritual leaders known for achieving enlightenment by freeing themselves of base human impulses and emotions."

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