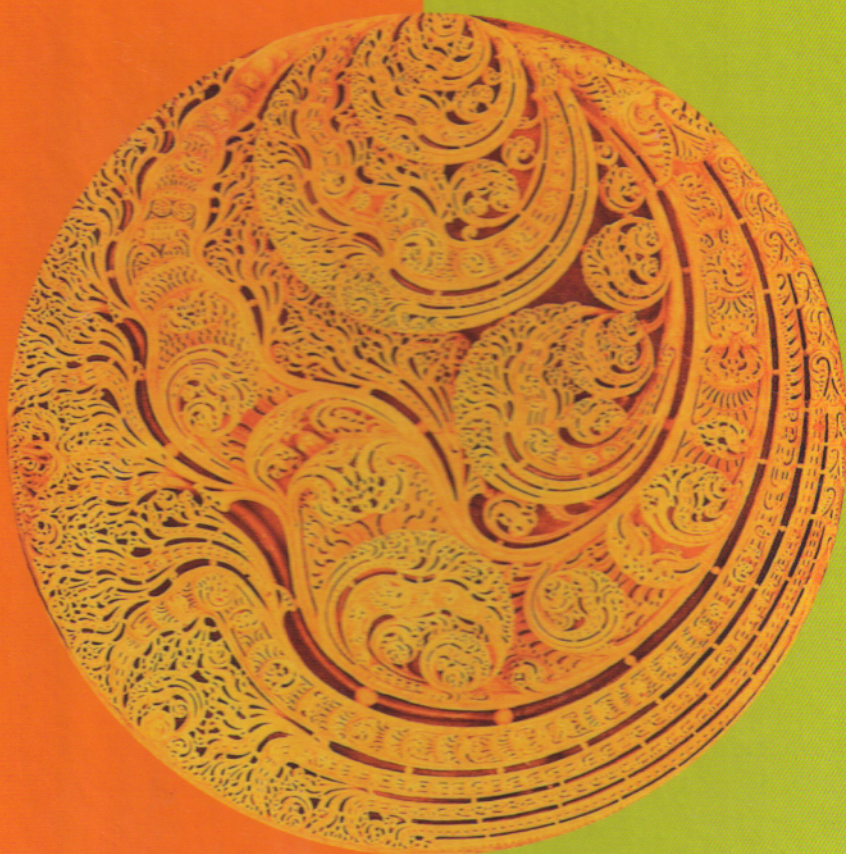


# *Jainism : The Cosmic Vision*



*Kumarpal Desai*

# **Jainism**

## ***The Cosmic Vision***

**Kumarpal Desai**

**Mahavir Foundation  
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## *Preface*

In 1969 I began writing my Ph.D. thesis on 'Mahayogi Anandghanji' and my interest in the Jain philosophy, as propounded by Yogi Anandghanji, was aroused. I was struck by its universality, its spiritual depth and its contemporary relevance. I had inherited the legacy of Samskar from my father Jaibhikkhu whose 300 books were largely based on Jain lore. I read those books avidly and that expanded my horizons.

I had many opportunities in and outside country to deliver lectures on Jain philosophy, and I had the unique honour to address the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago, Cape Town and the United Nations Chapel in New York. During the course of my lecture series, I visited different countries twenty-seven times. Through the columns in 'Gujarat Samachar' and the encouragement of its editor late Shri Shantilal Shah, I could reach a wider audience by explicating the fundamental principles of Jainism. About fifteen books have been published in English and a couple of books about Jain religion have been edited. The present volume comprises the lectures and talks delivered on different occasions.

Jain religion is a way of life and the present volume shows how it can be useful in dealing with the problems of the contemporary society. The lecture would not have seen the light of the day but for the love and affection of Shri Prafull Lakhani and the courtesy of Shrimad Rajchandra Seva Kendra.

The concepts of non-violence, truth, detachment, anekant and environment found in Jain religion can hold beacon light to the world and similarly the values such as restraint, vegetarianism, forgiveness are the need of the hour. If some of these get percolated to society and humanity at large, my efforts would not have gone in vain.

1-7-2008

– Kumarpal Desai



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## *Foreword*

‘Jainism – The Cosmic Vision’ is the latest among the highly illuminating books on Jain religion authored by Dr. Kumarpal Desai. It is refreshingly enlightening, informative and analytical on the multi-faceted aspects of Jainism.

The sixteen chapters taken together portray in an eloquent manner how Jain teachings have assumed considerable contemporary value not only as an ancient religious doctrine or sectarian discipline for the followers of the faith, but as a path-finder for evolving a spiritual ecological and ethical way of life and art of living for the wider humanity.

All through history, it has been witnessed that violence cannot be eradicated by violence; on the contrary it has served to aggravate it. Humanity needs to develop a mindset that Ahimsa integrated with Aparigraha and Anekant, as elaborated in Jain philosophy, alone can be the ultimate saviour of this strife-torn, terror-targetted and environmentally - polluted world of ours.

The choice today is not between violence and non-violence, but between non-violence and total destruction. The timeless message of Mahavira of love and compassion, live and let live, equanimity and synthesis, tolerance and peaceful coexistence has indeed deeply influenced India's cultural heritage and spiritual outlook.

Indeed, as the book brings out in a vivid manner how Mahatma Gandhi imbibed the message of truth, restraint and non-violence from his saintly Jain Guru Shrimad Rajchandra, and used it as a potent instrument for launching a successful and persuasive struggle against the British colonial rule without any trace of rancor, hostility or hatred.

The book provides yet another valuable input on the need of global

Jain diaspora getting together to formulate a global strategy and action programme so that ‘compassion in action’ as propounded by Jain religion reaches the needy and the deserving all over the world.

The issue of human rights and compassion towards animals has been dealt with in the wider back-drop of ‘Right to life’, Carl Sagan, the renowned American cosmic scientist has commented that Jain religion is the only religion that has put on the highest pedestal of thought and action the principle of ‘Right to life’ for not only human beings but all living beings as well as elements of nature in this universe. After all human destiny is inextricably interwoven with them in a divine web of interdependence.

My felicitations to Dr. Kumarpal Desai for this very welcome addition to the growing literature in English language on Jain religion in a global perspective.

**- Dr. N. P. Jain**

Former Indian Ambassador to  
Nepal, U.N., European Union, Mexico and Belgium

### ***Books by Kumarpal Desai***

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# **Jainism**

## ***The Cosmic Vision***

जो सहस्सं सहस्साणं संगामे दुज्जए जिणे ।  
एगं जिणेज्ज अप्पाणं एस मे परमो जओ ॥

– उत्तराध्ययन सूत्र, ९-३४

In war a man may defeat a million invincible enemies but conquering one's own self is the greatest victory.

– Uttaradhyayan Sutra, 9-34

## I

# The Value and Heritage of Jain Religion

---

**A**lbert Einstein remarked that the eternal mystery of the world is its intelligibility. True religion fastens to this element of intelligibility and creates a system of thought and action which leads to true harmony and bliss. And it is indeed so with Jainism.

Jainism is one of the oldest living religions of the world. The term *Jain* means the devotee of Jinas (Spiritual Victors). Jinas are called so because they have won victory over passions of attachment, aversion, etc. that defile the soul. As a result, they have attained omniscience and supreme bliss. They are enlightened human teachers. They are also called Tirthankaras (Ford-makers). Here in the context, ford means Tirthankara's words and teaching which help living beings to cross the ocean of misery or transmigratory existence. In every half-cycle of Time, there flourish twenty-four Tirthankaras. The twenty-fourth Tirthankara of the present half-cycle of Time is Vardhamana, known as Mahavira.

Mahavira was born in 599 B.C. in a royal family in Kshatriyakunda, a wellknown city of the ancient kingdom of Videha (modern Bihar). At the age of thirty, to find out the path to Ultimate Release from all misery, he renounced the world, embarked upon a spiritual career and lived a life of a Jain ascetic. After twelve years of severe spiritual discipline of self-control, austerities and deep meditation, he exterminated attachment completely and attained omniscience (*kevalajnana*). He became a perfected soul and prophet (*Tirthankara*). During the next thirty years of his career as a prophet, he travelled on foot from place to place giving his message of peace and goodwill for the welfare of all living beings, without any discrimination of race, class, caste or sex. Eleven men accepted his spiritual leadership and became his chief disciples (*ganadhara*). He founded the order of nuns with Chandanabala as its first member. The number of male and female ascetics increased and reached upto about 50,000. The lay followers were about half a million.

Mahavira's parents were followers of Parshva, the penultimate Tirthankara, who lived about 250 years earlier in Varanasi. The historicity of Parsva is proved by the modern historians and scholars. So Mahavira was not the founder of Jain religion. He was the rejuvenator, propagator and exponent of Jain religion which had been taught by Parsva and other omniscient teachers of the ever present and imperishable Jain tradition.

Initially, the followers of Jainism lived throughout the Ganges Valley. Around the time of Ashoka (250 B.C.), most of the Jains migrated to the city of Mathura on the Yamuna river. Later, many travelled westward to Rajasthan and Gujarat and

southward to Maharashtra and Karnataka, where Jainism rapidly grew in popularity.

The Jain canons contain some sixty texts and is divided into three main groups, the Purva (old texts : 14 books), the Angas (limbs : 12 books) and the Angabahya (subsidiary canons). Not all are extant. In addition to the threefold canons itself, there are extensive commentaries written in Prakrit and Sanskrit by the monk scholars. The Tattvartha Sutra, written in the second century A.D., belongs to this group. Its author Acharya Umasvati is held in high esteem by both Shvetambar and Digambar tradition. It, for the first time, presents in Sanskrit the entire canonical material on various subjects in aphoristic style and in classified form succinctly and systematically.

In Jainism, the essence of religion lies in an intuitive apprehension of the purity of consciousness. According to Jainism, the love of truth is inherent in each self, but it requires spiritual exercise for its manifestation. Once this love of truth is manifested, it will lead the self to liberation sooner or later.

The conduct of a person, in the Jain view, cannot be isolated from his way of life. For the true Jain, Truth and Values are inseparable. This is where right knowledge comes in. As Acharya Samantabhadra in his Yuktyanushasanam (Verse 15) says :

“Without knowing the real nature of things, all moral distinctions between bondage and liberation, merit and demerit, pleasure and pain will be absurd.”

The values of Jain religion are based on five vows viz.- non-violence, devotion to truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possession. The entire life style of the Jain Shravak and the Jain



*Sadhu* emanates from these vows and out of these, the foremost is non-violence.

*Ahimsa*, non-violence, has been the sheet-anchor of Jainism. *Ahimsa* is one of the basic virtues. No where else in the other religious traditions, this basic virtue has been so scientifically, scrupulously and thoroughly integrated with the main doctrine. Jainism is the only tradition which has consistently allowed this tenet soak into the very essentials of its teachings and practices. This singular uncompromising emphasis on *Ahimsa* is the special and exclusive feature of Jainism. In Jainism, *Ahimsa* is not mere human sympathy; it is empathy, the urge to identify oneself completely with other persons, other living beings and with the whole universe.

Bhagwan Mahavira said, “If you kill someone, it is yourself you kill. If you overpower someone, it is yourself, you overpower. If you torment some one, it is yourself, you torment. If you harm someone, it is yourself, you harm.” A wise man knows this and so he does not kill, nor does he overpower or torment anyone.

The heart of Jainism is non-violence. Positively stated, Jainism is a religion of compassion, universal love and friendliness. It aims at the welfare of all living beings and not of humans alone. It maintains that living beings are infinite, all so called empty spaces in the universe are filled with minute living beings. According to it, there are countless single-sense organisms that take the subtlest possible units of material elements – earth, water, fire and air – as their bodies. Fresh earth is alive, but when it is baked, it becomes dead. Fresh water from a well is alive, but when it is boiled or influenced by mixing

some other substance, it becomes dead. Vegetables, trees, plants, fruits, etc. do have life, but when they are dried, cut or cooked, they die. To avoid injury to them, as far as possible, man is advised to use them discreetly. He should resist from polluting water, air, etc. and thereby perpetrating violence to them. Worms, insects, animals, etc. help in keeping ecological balance, thus, they help mankind. And domestic animals have for ages been a constant and faithful aid to man in civilizing himself. From the ultimate standpoint of their original pure pristine state, all living beings are uniform in their nature. Jainism teaches us to look upon them as upon one’s ownself. Inflicting injury to them is inflicting injury to one’s ownself.

The Jain dictum *parasparopagraho jivanam*, that is ‘living beings render service to one another’ offers an endearing alternative to the modern Darwinian formula of ‘survival of the fittest.’ The life of a living being is a life of mutual cooperation and assistance. Industry, labour, service and sacrifice of innumerable living beings are there behind the sustenance and growth of an individual. Thus every individual is indebted to the universal society of all beings. Even virtues and meritorious qualities can never be cultivated and fostered in isolation.

This concept of *Ahimsa*, non-violence, has evolved from logical thinking and from experience. It has an almost empirical basis. It has emerged from the doctrine of the equality of all souls. Everyone wants to live, nobody likes to die. Violence enters first in thought, it then manifests itself in speech and then in deeds. That is why they say that war is born in the minds of men. The quest for *Ahimsa* is centred in *Anekantavada*, the philosophy which accomodates a multiplicity of points-of-view and of perspectives.

In Jain philosophy, *Ahimsa* is said to be the supreme religion and *Himsa* is considered to be source of all evils and of all miseries. *Ahimsa* is not limited to not harming the human beings, it extends to all living beings. This philosophy believes in the unity of life and regards all living beings as equal. He, who can be cruel to animals, can be cruel to human beings, too. Further, cruelty is not only an aspect of external behaviour, but it is also an inner evil tendency. He, who is cruel at heart, will behave cruelly towards animals as well as human beings. He, who is compassionate at heart, will behave compassionately towards all. Moreover, the Jain religion believes in the cycle of birth and rebirth. The soul is in one *Yoni* (existence) today; it may be in another *Yoni* tomorrow. It may be a fly today and a human tomorrow. This being so, man has no right to harm other living creations. One should behave sympathetically towards all, friends as well as foes. In fact there should be no enemy. Such is the importance of *Ahimsa* in Jain philosophy.

तुंग न मंदराओ आगासओ विसालयं नत्थि ।  
जह तह जयंमि जणसु, धम्म अहिंसा समं नत्थि ॥

[*Nothing is higher than the Meru mountain; nothing is vaster than the sky. Similarly, there is no better religion than Ahimsa.*]

It is one of the tenets of Jainism that all living beings desire life and not death. No one has the right to take away the life of any other being; to kill a living being is the greatest of all the sins. Life is dear to everyone, and we must have respect for life. Not only “*Live and Let Live*”, but “*Live and Help Others Live*” should be our principle. Just as the head of a family looks after the welfare of the members of the family, a human being, who enjoys the highest place in the evolution of life, should look after the welfare of other lower orders of creations.

The universe is full of living creations, big and small, and, therefore, it is impossible to exist without killing or injuring some of the smallest of the living beings. Even in the process of breathing, or drinking or eating, we almost unconsciously kill many sentient beings ? Therefore, according to Jainism the minimum of killing should be our ideal. Moreover, it is more serious where killing is done intentionally or through indifference. Therefore, great care should be taken in all our daily activities to see that the minimum of violence is committed by our deeds, speech and mind.

In the universe, there are different forms, different orders of life, such as, human beings, animals, insects, trees and plants, bacteria and even still smaller lives which perhaps be seen only through the most powerful microscopes. Jainism has classified all the living beings according to their sense organs.

Jainism firmly believes that life is sacred, irrespective of caste, colour, creed or nationality and, therefore, not only physical or mental injury to life should be avoided, but all possible kindness should be shown towards all the living beings. This should be the true spirit of *Ahimsa*. Jainism believes that more weapons are in no way an effective answer to weapons. Lord Mahavira has emphatically declared in *Acharanga Sutra* that one weapon may be stronger or superior to another, but the path of *Ahimsa* or peace remains unsurpassed. Fire cannot be put out by fire. It is our duty to stop adding fuel to the fire. Jain scriptures say that a piece of blood-stained cloth cannot be washed with blood, we need water to do it. To achieve peace, world peace, we have to stop the race of armaments and we have to have an unshakeable faith in *Samyag Darshana* in the effective validity of *Ahimsa*. For

who can claim final and absolute victory in the race for armaments? Like Arjun, the nations believing in violent means shall have to declare, “Nor do we know which for us is better, whether we conquer them or they conquer us.” *Ahimsa* teaches us that recourse to armed force is an infallible sign of the brute in man, that war neither profits the victor nor the vanquished.

The second great vow is Truth. To speak the truth, one requires moral courage. Only those, who have conquered greed, fear, anger, jealousy, ego, vulgarity, frivolity etc., can speak the truth when required.

Jainism always advocates the generous view, the view that there can be a grain of truth in what the other persons say, *Anekantadrishti*, for truth is relative. As you have full faith in what is truth from your point of view, so too, one should make room for the view-point of others. Thus, *Anekantavada* (Theory of many-sidedness) enables one to tolerate and co-ordinate a wide range of points-of-view in a spirit of co-operation, even if, at times, these may be contradictory. This is the true method involving ceaseless endeavour to search out truth. To regard everything from a relative point of view and to see an element of truth in everything, this is *Anekantavada*. Not ‘mine is the truth’, but ‘truth is mine’ should be one’s motto.

*Anekantavada* is the heart of Jainism. It constitutes its most significant contribution to religious thought, and especially in the field of ethics. It teaches that the kingdom of truth can be reached through plurality of ways. It also teaches not to impose one’s own thoughts or views on others, and to try to reconcile the thoughts or view-points of others with one’s own. This principle, therefore, if, earnestly, is put into practice, shows us

how to overcome our personal view of things, which is often short-sighted, selfish and partial. It shows us how to remove discord and disharmony and establish concord and harmony in life, by being catholic and tolerant in our outlook and attitude towards others.

The principle of *Anekantavada* should be applied to every field of life. It shows how to respect candid opinions of all free thinkers of the world; the roots of modern democracy could be traced in this Jain principle. It establishes unity in diversity. It promises reconciliation of divergent or conflicting statements, thoughts, ideologies, systems, religions etc. The principle of *Anekantavada*, therefore, can be a great instrument for promoting peaceful co-existence and unity in the world.

Another great vow is the vow of non-stealing. Man should abandon all kinds of stealing. We should not take anything that is not given to us. Nor should we help anyone take what is not given to him.

The fourth great vow is that of celibacy. Bhagwan Mahavira added this great vow to the four of Tirthankara Parshvanath’s and established its distinct importance. He said that all physical and mental miseries of the world are caused by the thirst for sensual pleasures. For all sensual pleasures are ultimately harmful.

The fifth great vow is of non-possession. Possession is the source of evil. Possession is not only the acquisition or accumulation of things, but also temptation for and attachment to things. No wonder C. Rajgopalachari wrote, “Restraint is the mark of Indian Culture.” This sense of possession is the source of all the five evils viz. violence, untruthfulness, stealing, sensual pleasure and attachment. Today, we see that the chief

cause of the boundless miseries of the present world is man's uncontrolled tendency to possess. Man believes that possession brings happiness. But, in fact, possession is the cause of miseries and bondage. Possession enslaves man to external things. As the bee sucks honey from the flower without destroying it, so the welfare seeking man should do the least possible harm to another in his worldly life. Thus, expounding the five great vows Bhagwan Mahavira says, "As the wind blows across flaming fire, so ideal people observing these vows will pass through the *Samsara* (transmigratory existence) and attain eternal joy." Lord Mahavira has said that wants and desires have no end and only the sky is the limit for them.

Attachment to wordly objects results in the ever-lasting cycle of birth and death. Therefore, one who aspires spiritual liberation should withdraw from all attachment to pleasures which arises because of the indiscriminate uses of the five senses.

Jainism believes in the potential divinity of man. Given freedom for development, every individual can attain supreme spiritual progress. Hence, any interference with an individual's development would lead to spiritual degeneration. Violence is nothing, but such an interference with individual freedom, hence, it must be shunned in thought, word and deed.

Bhagwan Mahavira discarded the false importance of gender and caste and established the importance of good conduct.

कम्मुणा बंभणो होइ, कम्मुणा होइ खत्तिओ ।  
वइसो कम्मुणा होइ, सुद्धो होइ कम्मुणा ॥

[One is a Brahmin, a Kshatriya, a Vaishya or a Shoodra according to one's Karma.]

Thus, he led *shoodras* out of the darkness of slavery and lifted them up from beastliness to godliness. He said that a man or woman irrespective of his or her caste could practise religion. In fact, he said that a Monk should not have any self consciousness regarding his appearance, knowledge, penance or celibacy. This was Bhagwan Mahavira's profoundly revolutionary social vision. He changed the whole situation. This true insight given from the depth of his soul made a permanent impact on the society. Bhagwan Mahavira expressed his thoughts fearlessly and firmly and liberated people from the bondage of a certain class of people, from the practices of violence and mental slavery. He led the society out of the bondage of the caste system. It is really regrettable that even in some civilised countries, prejudice due to colour, race, or nationality still persists and keeps the people divided amongst themselves. Experience teaches us that colour or racial arrogance cannot continue to exist for long. Humanity has to be reminded again and again that the entire human race is, but one family, irrespective of differences of colour, race or nationality. "All humanity is one", is one of the fundamental teachings that Jainism offers.

There are three distinct contributions of Jainism to Indian Culture viz. Equality (*Sama*), Self-control (*Shama*) and Dignity of labour (*Shrama*).

The three jewels of Jainism, namely Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct depend upon the principle of equality. In the Bhagwad Gita the same principle is enshrined as the inner poise or the evenness of mind (*Samatvam*) or equal mindedness (*Sama Chittatvam* or *Samata*) and the man who attains this is called the one who sees with an equal eye

(*Sarvatra-sama-darshana*). This principle of equality must be attained both in thought and in action. In thought, it is the principle of *Anekanta*, in action, it is the principle of *Ahimsa*.

The one significant thing that we have inherited from Bhagwan Mahavira is the art of living. I would add that he teaches the art of dying too. The Jain way of living does not mean mere having and holding the breath; it means living a balanced life by keeping away from anger, hatred, wailing and complaining.

The basic *Nivrutti* stand-point, characterising Jainism, is laid out as the foundation on which the entire structure of Jain philosophy, with all its salient features, is raised systematically and homogeneously. Tapas or the sustained mortification and control over the body as related to the *Jiva* is elaborated and insisted on in the Jain Canons. Even the harsher and more rigorous features of tapas are stressed. *Upavasa*, *Sallekhana* and *Brahmacharya* have been the distinctive features of Jainism. Principally, Jain ethics specifies five minor vows (*anuvratas*), three social vows (*gunavratas*), and four spiritual vows (*shikshavratas*) to be carried out by the householder.

In addition to the five minor vows, the householder observes three social vows that govern his external conduct in the world. Then there are four spiritual vows that reflect the purity of his heart. They govern his internal life and are expressed in a life that is marked by charity (*dana*).

Jain thinkers have prescribed sub-minor-vows as precautionary measures. First, there is reference to the Shalyas or disturbing factors, such as ignorance, deceit and self-interest from which a person should free himself. The shalyas represent

the negative requirements for the perfect practice of the *vratas*. In addition, there are the four bhavanas (*virtues*) that represent the positive means of supporting the *vratas*. These qualities, which a votary of non-violence must possess, are *maitri* (love, friendship), *pramoda* (joy and respect), *karunya* (compassion) and *madhyastha* (tolerance toward living beings). Next, there are the twelve minor vows known as *anuprekshas* (reflections). Broadly stated, the twelve topics of meditation are designed to serve as aids to spiritual progress to produce detachment and lead the devotee from the realm of desire to the path of renunciation.

In this way Jain ethics prescribes thirty-five rules of conduct for the householder. By observing these rules, he comes to possess all of the twenty-one qualities that a fully developed individual must possess.

Having observed all the rules of conduct and having passed through the eleven religious stages (*pratimas*), the householder is now qualified to become an ascetic. The life of a monk is marked by a spirit of detachment. Through the practice of yoga and meditation, he finally attains the highest knowledge and becomes an enlightened soul. This is the ultimate end of human life according to Jain ethics.

Besides these, Jain ascetics lead a life of purity, celibacy, simplicity, selfless service and perfect austerity. They have nothing to claim of their own and all the living beings are their friends par excellence. One vow of spiritual discipline (*shikshavrata*) that the householder takes is that of hospitality to the monks (*Atithi-Samvibhaga-Vrata*). This involves the supply of food, books, medicine, etc. Acharya Samantabhadra calls the vow of hospitality a physical service (*Vaiyavratya*). It makes the



householder the parent of the monk. Monks who are sick, aged, and helpless are thus taken care of in their time of need. The ideal of such physical service was practised particularly in the area of medical help (*Aushadhi Dana*) and created a communal sense of security (*Abhaya Dana*).

Social service is a prominent outcome of Jain ethics. It prescribes six daily duties for every householder, viz. adoration of the deity (*Jina*), veneration of the *Gurus*, study of literature and scriptures, practice of self discipline, observance of fasts and the curbing of appetites and giving of charity.

Moreover, Jainism is a leading religion in providing hospitals for animals and birds. Its epitome of true spirituality is found when a monk, wrapped in contemplation, takes time to mend the broken wing of a little sparrow.

Women have been accorded equal status in the Jain religion. In fact, there were more women in the order of Lord Mahavira than men. The scriptures record many tributes to exceptional women. The care of women, especially in critical situations, is given a higher priority than that of men. Mothers of the Tirthankaras are given special honour through communal worship. Legends abound in which women of high spiritual merit, such as Brahmi, Sundari, Mallikumari, and Rajimati have come to the aid of men. Women have been recognized for their exceptional contributions in the field of education, culture and religion.

Jainism propounds that every man must first put a limit to the acquisition of property, and then entirely devote his time for public good. People engaged in independent professions such as lawyers, doctors, merchants, engineers, etc. must retire when they reach the limits fixed for them and thus make room

for others to earn. *Dig-vrata* and *Desha-vrata*, limiting one's activities within certain prescribed sectors and within certain boundaries in a country also contribute in a way to lessen economic conflicts. It is expected of every well-to-do person to give *Abhay dan* (The gift of fearlessness) to all those who are worried with the problem of food, shelter and clothing.

*Ahimsa* together with *Aparigraha* constitutes the ethical wholeness of self-control or self-restraint in social relationship; self-control is also the basis of higher spiritual life. It is happiness (*Shreya*) rather than pleasure (*Preya*) which is the goal of life. Thus self-purification (*Atma-shuddhi*) and not the acquisition of earthly or heavenly pleasures is the aim of life. The obstacles in the form of delusion, ignorance and craving must be rooted out by practising the different vows (*Vratas*) throughout life, hence, the importance of a realised soul rather than of some mysterious agency is emphasised.

Jain ethics are directed towards the liberation of the individual. Its orientation is therefore religious. Its end is the spiritualization of all areas of life in order to prepare individuals for the achievement of his ultimate goal. Its primary precept applicable to king and commoner alike is: Do your duty and do it in as a humane spirit, as you can.

Jainism permits no distinction between religion (*Dharma*) and morality because both are concerned with the well-being of an individual in the world. The practice of *Dharma* enables them to achieve this end. In the words of the well-known Acharya Samantabhadra, "Religion is something which takes the living beings out of the worldly misery and establishes them in the highest bliss." This interconnection between religion and morality imparts to Jainism its distinctive feature.

*Aparigraha* has an economic aspect according to which one should set a limit to one's own needs, it is also enjoined that whatever surplus, one may accumulate beyond these needs, should be disposed of through charities. *Aparigraha* is the only means whereby the growing gulf between the rich and the poor can be peacefully bridged and a fair distribution of wealth is achieved. Therefore, business dealings must be conducted in the non-acquisitive spirit of *Aparigraha*.

Jainism's ancient advocacy of vegetarianism is receiving global attention today, due to severe food shortages in certain parts of the world and to the researches of the scientific community. Vegetarianism is the only viable answer to world hunger. It is now a fairly well established fact that whatever is necessary or desirable for human nutrition in meats or flesh foods equally well found in and at times actually derived from vegetable products. Thus Jain ethics train good, dutiful and morally conscious citizens who can help in maintaining world peace. Jainism asks us to subdue our passions and always act with mindfulness and caution. The neglect of these ethical rules results in individual and national crimes. By stressing the importance of pure, simple and honest life for the householders, Jainism paves the way for the world peace.

The ethical code of Jainism is the most beautiful blend of *Achara* and *Vichara* (conduct and reflection). Almost all the usual group of virtues regarding conduct or *Achara* (like *satya*, *ahimsa*, *brahmacharya*, *asteya*, *aparigraha*) which are propounded in various religions finally owe their immense importance mainly to Jain tradition. Jainism fosters the inculcation of all these virtues in its votaries through a very wise and practical

hierarchical scale of *anu-vratas*, *maha-vratas*, etc. On the side of reflection or *Vichara*, it is Jainism which has stressed right from its very beginning *tattvachintana*. It is due to this insistence on *tattvachintana* in Jainism that we find that it is the Jains who have been almost the sole originators in literary compositions in most of Indian languages. Jainism has contributed ably and subtly to very many chapters in the history of Indian philosophy.

The contribution of Jainism to Indian thought and life has been very significant. Actually vegetarianism as a habit prevailing throughout the Indian continent, atleast in states like Gujarat and Rajasthan, is an evidence of the Jain influence. Indian literature, sculpture, architecture and painting as also every other aspect of life have been significantly influenced by Jainism. To do justice to all these will require a separate book. Here it is sufficient to say that almost every student of Indian culture or visitor to the Indian subcontinent has been considerably impressed by the sculpture and the arts of Jain temples, Jain paintings and the "inexhaustible stock of Jain literature".

The Jains played a very important part, first in the development of the ancient Prakrit language, as also of the Dravidian languages of the South, Tamil and Kannad. Somewhat later they adopted Sanskrit to elucidate the contents of the original prakrit canon and gradually produced a vast Sanskrit literature comprising valuable works on almost all subjects : philosophy, logic, grammar, lexicography, poetics, politics, mathematics, astronomy and astrology. Indian literature in all its branches is thus indebted to the achievements of Jain authors.

The Sanskrit literature of the Jains contains a number of major philosophical and literary classics which belong to the ancient heritage of India. Umasvati, Siddhasena, Divakara, Samantabhadra, Vidyananda, Haribhadra and Hemachandra made contribution which are enduring landmarks in the development of Indian thought and culture.

As regards the Jain influence in the South, the laborious researches of Burness, Buhler, Burges Hoernle, Jacobi and Lewis Rice have almost conclusively proved that the Jains profoundly influenced the political, religious and literary institutions of India. The Kural, an ethical poem of considerable importance in ancient Tamil literature, was composed about the 1st Century A.D., by Saint Tiruvalluvar, who was definitely a sympathizer of Jainism. It is also now almost certain that the Tolkappiyam, an authoritative work on Tamil grammar which is perhaps the earliest among the Tamil texts, was composed by a Jain. Among the other important Tamil works of Jain authorship may be mentioned, the Naladiyar and the like, composed during the early centuries of the Christian Era.

The “Augustan Age” of Tamil literature was the period of the predominance of the Jains in intellect and learning. Jainism became the religion of some of the Pandyan Kings. Nevertheless they retained in full their intellectual vitality which had in earlier times produced such classical works as the “Kural”, Valaiyapati, Silappadikaram and Jivaka Shinamani. Three of the five Tamil Mahakavyas were composed by Jain writers. Moreover, the Jains continued to enrich the Tamil vocabulary by introducing a large numbers of Sanskrit derivatives and bringing them into conformity with Tamil Phonetics.

The Jains rendered valuable and extensive services to Kannada literature also. Some of the greatest among the Jain poets flourished during the 10th Century A. D., the Golden Age of Kannada literature. Thus Ponna, a Jain Saint upon whom the Rashtrakuta King Kannara conferred the title *Kavichakravarti*, composed *Shantipurana* and *Bhuvanaika Ramabhyudaya* during the period. Next we come to the great poet Pampa who was regarded as the father of Kannada literature. Another great Jain writer of Kannada prose and poetry in that century was *Chamundaraya*, who besides being an able administrator and warrior, was a patron of Ranna, among others. It was he who had the colossal image of Gomateshvara carved at Shravana Belgola. Jain influence on Telugu deserves careful investigation.

Almost every decade during medieval times in Gujarat saw a progressive enrichment of Gujarati literature with remarkable creations, major contributions here being the books written by the Jain saints. Moreover, the unique service of the Jain Bhandars in preserving the manuscripts, especially those on palm-leaves, is very memorable. Besides book-writing, the Jains have carried out the laudable task of preserving and spreading knowledge.

The Jains were also great patrons of art. Indian art, both Northern and Southern, owes to them a number of remarkable monuments. And in architecture, their achievements are still greater.

As singular edifices illustrating the beauty of Jain art, both in design and elaboration of workmanship, one may cite the temples of Mount Abu.

In South India, too, idol worship and temple building on a grand scale may be attributed finally to Jain influence. The

colossal monolithic Jain statues of the South, such as that of Gomateshvara at Shravan Belgola, are among the wonders of the world. The grandeur of Jain sculpture is an outstanding aspect of Jain heritage. The inspiring dignity of Shatrunjay temples, the stately vastness of Shravan Belgola, the fine subtleties of Ranakpur tirtha and the artistic carvings of Delvada temples – are some of the unique examples of the Indian Cultural Heritage. The Jain literature, written in several Indian languages so as to reach many people, is a rich compendium of diverse interests. The writings of these acharyas have manifold attractions not only for those in Jain studies, but also for lovers of literature, history, culture, philosophy, and comparative religion. It is to this vast source that we now turn for an understanding of Jain beliefs of the universe, religion and mortality.

It was however, at the hands of Shalivahana, the great artist, who flourished in the reign of the connoisseur of art, the Mogul Emperor Jehangir that Jain art of painting attained its glory. In the private collection of Shri Narendra Singh Singhi of Calcutta, there is a manuscript *Shalibhadracharita* illuminated by this artist with more than 20 paintings, some of which are superbly executed. Jainism has thus significantly enriched Indian culture in the fields of ethics, philosophy, literature, science and aesthetics.

Lord Mahavira emphasized that man should not only care for the welfare and advancement of his soul, but also help the soul of all sentient beings towards the same goal by giving them protection and by helping them to march forward on the path of salvation. He who loses his soul, loses everything.

Self-help and self-reliance constitute the basic motto of Jain

religion. According to the Jain religion, *Atma* is the creator of weal and woe : the notion of exploiting others by way of labour does not occur in this system. One of the twelve vows of a Jain *Shravak* specifically mentions that he would never expropriate others means of livelihood. One has to appreciate the inner meaning and spirit of such preaching.

In a book entitled *Dharmabindu Prakaran* Haribhadrasuri has enjoined upon the Jain *Shravak* to make his living in a judicious way. The *Sadhu* way of life is the climax of the self-reliant life style of the Jains.

The Jains have a rich political heritage. There were Jain Kings, like Chola King in the South and Kumarpal in Gujarat. And their royal counsellor or the minister always happened to be a Jain *Shravak*. This was the tradition in Gujarat and Rajasthan generation after generation. Alongwith administration, these ministers always kept in mind the welfare of the state and enjoyed the total confidence of the rulers. The Jain *Shravakas* also always remained trustworthy and honest and never betrayed anybody. The names of Vastupal-Tejpal, Vimalshah and Udayan Mantri have become immortal for their royal devotion and religious steadfastness.

The life style of the Jain *Shravak* is also remarkable. When the Kings were given to enormous pastime, drinking and gambling, it is noteworthy that the Jain community could remained aloof from all these vices. It was because of their strong will power, moral devotion and honesty that Jain *Shravakas* were appointed as Ministers by the Kings. Honesty is characteristic trait of the Jain *Shravak* heritage. Temperamentally the Jains are averse to vices. The ancient

Acharyas themselves conducted a drive so as to keep the Jain gentlemen away from seven vices that is alchoholism, non-vegetarianism, gambling, hunting, theft and keeping harlots. Ultimately this has come to stay as the symbolic life style of Jains through the centuries.

The Jain Sangh has been a democratic system for the last 2600 years, where every individual member of the community is heard and attended to. This democratic functioning amongst the Jains is almost unique.

The social heritage of the Jains is equally remarkable. The inscription of Chittodgadh bears evidence to the fact that Emperor Kumarpal gave donation for Shiva temples. The temples at Sopara constructed by Vastupal refer to a mosque built by Vastupal. Jagdushah gave land to the Muslims. Vijay Vallabhasuriji Maharaj was helpful in the construction of a gurudwara. Buddhisagarji Maharaj provided inspiration for constructing hostel for Harijans.

For world peace, Ahimsa becomes an absolute necessity. It must be practised throughout the world in every city, village and town. Man must be made conscious of the supreme value of his soul and the utter uselessness of destructive weapons and armaments.

Nowadays people seem to think that religion has little importance in modern life, and that it cannot play any significant part in shaping the character of the people. To this, we could say in the words of Joseph Gear, "Those who have lived among the Jains find them very kindly people, and better men because of their religion."

We should unite at this crucial juncture of world history and carry on ceaseless efforts to save humanity from extinction. It is essential that we try our best to revitalize our religious and moral principles and unite to ensure peace and harmony. Jainism preaches amity towards all beings, compassion for the miserable and detachment towards possessions.

In order to discourage violence, Bhagwan Mahavira proclaimed that the entire human race is one. एक्का मणुस्सजाई। At a time when communalism, hatred, violence and terrorism have become rampant in contemporary times, this preaching of Bhagwan Mahavira should be our true ideal. Indeed, we have many ideals before us, but it is time to practise them.

If a world religion of this order is made to emerge, I have no hesitation in saying that most of the tenets of Jainism will always find a lace of pride in it. The Greeks used to say, "Call no man happy, until he is dead." Whereas Jainism, on the other hand, claims : "Call every man happy who lives his life following truthfully the principles of Jainism."

The message of Jainism has even a greater relevance today. By following this path, it will be possible for us to make a meaningful use of the wonderful inventions of science and technology and make them truly blissful and create global society free from hunger and hate – at peace with itself and with its environment. Thus there will be a heaven on this earth. What more does a human being want ?





## 2

## Essence of Jainism

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### JAIN BELIEFS

**N**ature of reality (*sat*) : Jainism maintains that reality has infinite characters or aspects and its nature is constituted of substance and modes (forms). Reality is neither substance alone nor alone modes. Substance persists through changing modes. Modes come into existence and perish. So Jain thinkers define reality as characterised by the trio of origination, destruction and persistence. Even soul is not an exception to it.

**Non-onesidedness (*anekantavada*)** : Corresponding to the infinite characters or aspects of reality, there are infinite views. Different views grasp and present different aspects of reality as they are governed by different conditions of purpose, intention, relevance, etc. Each view, though does not contain the whole truth, contains the partial truth. So no view should be rejected. Every view should be respected. Man should not indulge in dogmatic absolute assertion, disregarding other

views and mistaking the partial truth for the whole truth. He should recognise a spark of truth present in different views and attempt a synthesis of them all, in order to arrive at the comprehensive truth. This theory of standpoints and their synthesis fosters intellectual tolerance and nourishes friendliness.

**Six substances (*sad-dravya*)** : Jainism recognises six substances, viz. soul (*jiva*), matter (*pudgala*), medium of motion (*dharma*), medium of rest (*adharma*), space (*akasha*) and time (*kala*). Soul is the only sentient substance. The rest are insentient (*ajiva*). Time, medium of motion and medium of rest act as assisting the causes of change, motion and rest respectively. Space acts as a universal container in which all other substances are contained. Space is infinite. All other five substances are eternally confined to a particular portion of the infinite space. This portion is called universe (*loka*), while the remaining empty pure infinite space is called the region-beyond-the-universe (*aloka*).

**Soul (*jiva*)** : There are infinite souls, each living being having a separate soul. The nature of soul is consciousness or sentiency. It is fundamentally different from matter (physical body). It expands and contracts according to the size of body it assumes in different births. It knows things, performs activities, enjoys pleasures, suffers pains, and illumines itself and other objects.

**Law of Moral Causation (*karma*)** : All souls are inherently or potentially equal. The inequalities we notice in the world is due to the fine karmic matter that veils the natural qualities of souls from beginningless time. The karmic matter is attracted

towards and bound to the soul on account of its mental, vocal and bodily activities and dissociated from it as soon as it bears its fruit. When acts are performed with intense passions, the karmic matter obscures the quality for long and gives bitter fruits. So ultimately passions are the root-cause of misery and bondage. When passions are totally exterminated, all the bound karmic matter gets totally dissociated from the soul and ultimately the soul attains its pure state or liberation. The theory of moral causation necessarily implies rebirth. Every act must necessarily be followed by its consequence. If the consequences of our acts have not been experienced in the present life, they necessarily demand a future life (rebirth) for their fruition.

**Liberation (moksha) :** Liberation means the attainment of pure state of infinite knowledge and infinite bliss. This state is attained on the complete dissociation of the soul from obscuring karmic matter. And this complete dissociation is achieved by stopping (*samvara*) through self-control, the inflow of new karmic matter into soul as well as by complete premature voluntary elimination (*nirjara*) of the bound karmic matter through special austerities and pure meditation. As soon as the soul becomes absolutely free from the burden of karmic matter, it moves upward (because upward motion is natural to the soul) and reaches the summit of the universe where it rests for ever (because beyond the upper limit of the universe, there exists no medium of motion to assist it to move upward further). Liberation is attained through human body only. There is no possibility of fall from the state of liberation. For Jains the liberated perfected soul is God. They do not believe in one world-creator God.

To attain liberation, it is necessary to have the following three qualities known as three Jewels (*Ratna-traya*) :

1. Spiritual inclination or faith in self-evident spiritual truths, viz. I (soul) exist, I am afflicted with miseries, there are causes of miseries, I can totally exterminate these causes, and as a result I can free myself absolutely from all miseries. This is called *samyag-darshana*.

2. Spiritually wholesome knowledge (*samyag-jnana*) : All knowledge that is associated with and directed by spiritual inclination or faith is spiritually wholesome knowledge.

3. Spiritually wholesome conduct (*samyak-charitra*) : The conduct that inspired by the spiritually wholesome knowledge is necessarily spiritually wholesome conduct.

The three combined are the means of liberation.

## JAIN PRACTICES

For spiritual evolution Jain aspirants are required to observe five vows of non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possession. Observance of these *vratas* by monks and nuns is done rigorously and perfectly, and hence their vows are called *mahavrata*. On the other hand, observance by householders being partial, their vows are called *anuvrata*. In addition to these five *anuvratas*, householders practise seven supporting vows. The five prime vows are :

### (1) Abstinence from injury to life (*pranati-pataviramana*) :

This is the fundamental vow from which all other vows stem. Ascetics abstain from all killing, while householders from intentional killing. For food, the destruction of the higher forms of life from two-sensed beings upward is strictly forbidden to

all the Jains. So they are strict vegetarians. Many devout Jains observe further restriction on food by not consuming figs, honey and root vegetables to avoid killing of infinite minute beings. Again, this vow demands that vowers should desist from taking up occupations that involve cruelty to animals and humans.

**(2) Abstinence from falsehood (*mrushavada-viramana*) :**

Ascetics abstain from all falsehood, gross and subtle. But householders abstain from five gross falsehoods relating to persons, animals, immovable property, deposits left with them, and evidence either in or out of court. Truthfulness is not speaking what is only factually true, but speaking what is factually true as well as good, pleasant and wholesome.

**(3) Abstinence from stealing (*asatta-adana-viramana*) :**

This vow consists in not taking what is not given by the owner. Monks and nuns may accept a thing given by its owner, only if it is in accord with monastic rules.

**(4) Abstinence from sexual activities (*maithuna-viramana*):**

Ascetics abstain from all sexual activities. For householders this vow means refraining from all illicit extra-marital sexual activities.

**(5) Abstinence from possessions or attachment (*aparigraha*) :**

Monks and nuns have renounced all possessions. Whatever things they use for the sustenance of their body and for the performance of religious activities in the strict accordance of the monastic rules are not owned by them, nor do they have any attachment for them. For householders this vow means limiting their desire of possessing, and hence actual possessing.

The following are the seven supporting vows householders are required to observe.

**(6) Vow of limiting the area of one's activities (*digvrata*) :**

The vower limits the area within which he will move, conduct trade and business; and will use things produced in that much area only. The vow checks the unimpeded spread of desire and activity.

**(7) Vow of limiting quantity of things one uses (*bhogopabhogaparimana*) :**

Householders use eatables, water, clothes, etc. This vow means to limit the quantity of eatables, water, clothes etc. that the householders use. This refrains one from keeping things more in quantity than necessarily required. The observance of this vow puts restraint on the free play of desire and discourages hoarding.

**(8) Vow to abstain from purposeless harmful activities (*arthadanda - viramana*) :**

Householders bring unnecessary evils upon themselves without any purpose, by indulging in thoughts, words or deeds in which there is no benefit to society, to their friends, or to themselves. Giving evil advice, offering means of destroying life, aimlessly digging ground or striking a standing animal with a stick, yielding to unwholesome contemplation, etc. are instances of purposeless, harmful activities. They should be assiduously avoided.

**(9) Vow of remaining completely equanimous for a fixed period of time (*samayika*) :**

The vow consists in sitting at one place and on one seat for

48 consecutive minutes in a peaceful mental state, not allowing passions of attachment, aversion, etc. to rise in the mind. For this period of time, the vower contemplates on the nature of self, reads spiritual works, conducts self-examination, etc.

**(10) Vow of reducing for a limited period of time the limits of the area set forth by the vower himself in the sixth vow (*desavakasika-vrata*) :**

The objective of the vow is to increase the refrainment from worldly activities and to suppress or contract the concessions the vower himself has kept while taking other vows.

**(11) Vow of observing fast and living like a monk for certain days (*poshadha*) :**

The objective of this vow is to make the householder relish the nectar of the life of total refrainment from all worldly activities.

**(12) Vow of sharing with deserving guests (*atithi-samvibhaga-vrata*) :**

To offer necessities of life (food, medicine, etc.) to the saintly monks as also to the benevolent noble persons engaged in the service of the people is the meaning of the present vow. The vow also means to help the miserable and the poor.

## SIXTEEN SOTERIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

**1. Transitoriness :** According to the first sermon of the Tirthankara, it is the nature of modes (transformations, composite things) to originate and to get destroyed while it is the nature of substance to continue for ever. Wealth, prosperity, youth, power, strength and associations with loved ones – all these are impermanent as they depend on past karmas. Having

cultivated equanimity towards life and death, union and separation, happiness and misery one should deeply reflect on the eternal soul.

**2. Utter helplessness :** Worldly objects, friends, kinsmen, loved ones – all have their limitations. They cannot share one's diseases, grief and death. They cannot free one from one's fear. Supreme Doctrine (*Dharma*) propounded by the attachment-free Deity is the sole refuge in the world and one should seek refuge in it alone.

**3. Transmigratory Existence :** Tirthankaras (Builders of ford-of-Religion which leads one across the ocean-of-transmigratory-existence) have declared that this transmigratory existence involves constant and infinite misery. All its effects and all its associations or courses are miserable. One wrongly regards absence of misery as happiness. Feeling of my and mine and egoism gives rise to attachment and aversion. Attachment, desire and expectation lead to misery. Longing for delicious food, fear, lust and acquisitiveness causes a living being wander in the fourfold transmigratory existence for infinite times. So having become contented and equanimous, one must engage one's mind in virtuous concentration.

**4. Absolute Aloneness :** In this transmigratory existence, a being is born alone, and alone he dies. One alone has to experience the good or evil consequences of one's auspicious and inauspicious past deeds. One should constantly reflect : 'Nobody belongs to me, nor do I belong to anybody, my soul alone belongs to me.' So having turned inward, one should fix one's mind on virtuous concentration.

**5. Fundamental Separateness :** The soul and the body are utterly separate. Who am I ? I am not this body. The relations that are due to it are also not mine. I am the immortal soul who

is by nature endowed with infinite knowledge, infinite bliss and infinite power. None can torture me, pierce me, cut me, burn me or kill me. Then, why should I have any fear ?

**6. Impurity of the body :** The body is the receptacle of impurities. It is filled with filthy substances like flesh, blood, excrement, urine, bones, etc. It is the home of diseases. It makes pure things impure. Its beauty is superficial and skin-deep. So having abandoned attachment towards one's own body and other's body as well, one should abstain from doing evil activities for its sake.

**7. Karmic Inflow (Asrava) :** Asrava means the inflow of Karmic matter into the soul. And secondarily, even the causes that effect the inflow are also regarded as ashraava. These causes are five – (1) Wrong understanding (*mithyatva*), (2) Non-refrainment from violence etc. (*avirati*), (3) Fourfold passion (*kashaya*), (4) Negligence (*pramada*); it includes eightfold pride, longing for the pleasure of worldly objects, passions, idleness and indulgence in talks arousing feeling of attachment, (5) Mental, vocal and bodily activities. Karmic inflow is of two types, viz. auspicious and inauspicious. One should stop the inauspicious Karmic influx by abstaining from evil activities, cause the auspicious one by performing virtuous activities, and keep the ultimate goal of absolute self-purification constantly before oneself.

**8. Stoppage of the inflow (Samvara) :** *Samvara* means the stoppage of the inflow of Karmic matter. And secondarily, even the causes that affect the stoppage are also called *samvara*. The causes in point are – (1) right inclination or understanding (*samyaktva*), (2) self-restraint (*virati*), i.e. observance of the vows of the monk or the householder, (3) vigilance or mindfulness (*apramada*), (4) victory over the afflictions (*parishaha-jaya*), (5)

cultivation of ten meritorious qualities (*dharma*), viz. forbearance, modesty, uprightness, purity, truthfulness, restraint, austerity, renunciation, non-attachment and continence, (6) wholesome restriction of mental, vocal and bodily activities (*gupti*), (7) five self-regulating careful activities of mind, speech and body (*samiti*).

**9. Partial dissociation (Nirjara) :** *Nirjara* means partial dissociation of Karmic matter clung to the soul. It is of two types, viz. involuntary and voluntary. The Karmic matter gets dissociated from the soul as soon as it rises and gives its fruit. This dissociation is called involuntary dissociation as it is not effected by voluntary efforts of the soul. The Karmic matter which has not risen to give its fruit, but remains dormant is dissociated from the soul by the voluntary efforts. As this dissociation is affected by voluntary efforts, it is called voluntary dissociation. The voluntary efforts here meant are the twelve-fold austerity. Of the twelve austerities, six are external and six are internal. The six external austerities are as follows : to give up all sorts of food for a limited period of time or till death (*anashana*), to eat less than what is needed to fill the belly (*unodari*), to limit the items of food (*vruttisam-kshepa*), to give up stimulating or delicious food (*rasaparityaga*), to stay in lonely places free from all disturbances (*viviktashayya-sanasamlinata*) and to place one's body under stress through cold or heat, through adopting diverse postures and the like (*kayaklesha*). These external austerities help and strengthen the practice of the internal ones. By the practice of the internal austerities, one can achieve the dissociation of more Karmic matter. The six internal austerities are as follows : atonement; to repent and atone for the sinful acts (*prayaschitta*), veneration; to respect and honour the teachers and elders (*vinaya*), service; to render



service to teachers, elders, the sick etc. (*vaiyavruttya*), study; to study scriptures and other works conducive to spiritual development (*svadhyaya*), to prevent one's body from doing unwholesome and evil acts, to renounce all attachment to one's body and to give up all egoistic thoughts (*kayotsarga*), and mental concentration; to renounce all the distraction of mind, to concentrate mind on wholesome objects and to cultivate trance states (*dhyana*). These internal austerities are capable of destroying (dissociating) infinite Karmic particles.

**10. Deep reflection on Religion (Dharma) :** In this worthless worldly existence, the only thing worthy of one's attention is the Religion (the Doctrine) propounded by the Lord who, having conquered attachment and aversion, attained omniscience. It is so because it saves beings from falling into low existence, puts them on the right path of salvation and ultimately emancipates them from the whirlpool of fourfold existence. One should repeatedly concentrate on Religion which is constituted of right inclination, right knowledge and right conduct.

**11. Deep reflection on the nature of Universe (Loka) :** One should deeply reflect on the nature of Universe (*loka*) and Empty Space (*aloka*). Auspicious and inauspicious past Karmas cause us to go to heaven and hell respectively. But our ultimate goal is to reach Siddhashila (Abode of the liberated) and rest there. We should never lose sight of it. We must cultivate this type of wakefulness.

**12. Rarity of right faith :** Human birth, good family, healthy body with unimpaired sense-organs, hearing of the true Doctrine, etc. are very difficult to attain. And it is to be borne in mind that the succeeding one is even more difficult to attain than the immediately preceding one. Of them, a good spiritual

teacher and faith in his words are extremely difficult to attain. Infinite Tirthankaras had flourished in the beginningless past, yet, this being has remained unenlightened even to this day. It is so because for that abundant auspicious Karmas-causing-auspicious-karmas-in-their-train and merit – are needed. One should strive for the cultivation of required merit or qualification.

**13. Reflection on universal friendliness :** In the infinite past births at one time or another, one happened to have close and loving relationship with each and every living being of the entire universe. Having remembered this love and affection, as also having forgotten wrongs done by them one should develop a feeling of friendliness towards them. Others have their souls as one has one's own. All souls are similar in nature. So one should view others, as one views one's self. One should behave with others, as one would like others to behave with one. One should conquer attachment and aversion and cultivate equanimity. One should curb passions. One should wish the well-being of all beings. One's own well-being or good is contained in the well-being or good of others. So one should cultivate a feeling of universal friendliness. One should never bear ill-will or enmity towards others.

**14. A feeling of gladness :** One will gradually develop those very qualities in one's self if one feels great joy on seeing good qualities and progress of those superior to oneself. The Master has declared that (in accordance with the internal mental state) one may or may not attain the good result of one's good act, but one who approves and praises the good act is certainly benefitted. This is the reason why one should honour the Lord Arihanta endowed with all spiritual qualities, saints, patriots, Jain lay followers, philanthropists, donors, followers of the path

of salvation, etc., constantly recall their good qualities to one's mind and derive pleasure from it. At least one should not indulge in backbiting, slandering and reproaching others.

**15. Compassion :** Having compassion on the miserable, the poor, the helpless and the wicked, one should ever strive to remove or lessen their hardships and sufferings. One should render all possible assistance and service to them. One should help them financially according to one's capacity. One should always reflect as to when one will attain the spiritual capacity to free the beings from evil activities that cause misery. One should never be hard-hearted and cruel.

**16. The feeling of indifference :** When one comes across a person, who does not adopt a wholesome path inspite of one's right instruction and advice, but on the contrary disrespects and despises one, one should not be angry with such a deluded, perverse and egoist person, but should maintain an attitude of neutrality (indifference) towards him. Of course, under such circumstances, it is very difficult to maintain an attitude of neutrality. One should pray the Lord that we may attain more and more capacity to maintain an attitude of neutrality when our attempt at reforming a person or a group of persons ultimately comes to utter nought.

These sixteen soteriological reflections are spiritually beneficial to one's self and to others as well. They endow one with new spiritual vision or attitude as opposed to old worldly one. They purify the soul and manifest its natural love for truth. This natural love for truth is strengthened by them.



### 3

## **Towards A Truly Global Society**

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**T**oday when the whole world is involved in widespread violence, it will have to heed to the principle of non-violence with sincerity, devotion and respect more than what was shown to it in the past. Violence at the individual level and also at the level of the whole universe is increasing day by day in one form or the other. From every six rupees collected by way of tax from the starving millions, atleast one rupee is being spent on the army and on armaments and what one gets in return is fear, terror and insecurity. The same super powers which have created these weapons of destruction have now to enter into mutual treaties to eliminate them. Countries, which on one hand are talking of peace, are preparing for war on the other hand. Ahimsa or non-violence is not a supreme precept, it is more a way of life which gives shape to humanity and to human beings. The most ancient Jain scripture *Acharang Sutra* says, "Not to kill or harm or destroy any animal, living species or being is the purest, permanent and most eternal religion." The very first

chapter of this ancient scripture details the causes and instruments of violence. The essence of Tirthankara Mahavira's thoughts on Ahimsa can be gauged from his following words –

***“You are the one whom you want to strike, you are the one on whom you wish to establish your command, you are the one on whom you are in anguish, you are the one who wants to kill. That is why a wise person never strikes anyone, never controls others, never causes any pain to others.”***

Ahimsa is the very foundation of the Jain religion. The Jain religion has given great prominence to it and has given a considerable thought to it. Ahimsa as a principle has evolved out of the feeling of equality for all beings. All beings crave to live. No one likes to die. All desire happiness. No one desires pain or sorrow. Even the thought of violence results in violent acts. That is why the Jain religion considers violence or non-violence in the context of the one who indulges in it. Wherever there is negligence, there shall always be violence. False words and wrong action are also examples of violence. To harm anyone or to indulge in corruption is also violence.

The seed of violence is first sown in thought and then is reflected in words and action. That is why it is said, “war is born in the hearts of men”. Acharya Umaswati says, परस्परोग्राहो जीवानाम् ‘Parasparopgraho Jivanam’ which means that each living being lives because of the mutual cooperation among the beings. The concept of Ahimsa enunciated by Lord Mahavira is very comprehensive and embraces all beings in it. It believes in the unity of life. It treats every living being with utmost equality and respects it the same way. If there is cruelty against animals, there can as well be cruelty against human beings.

Cruelty is not merely a form of external act, it is part of one's evil thinking. One, who is cruel, will demonstrate and practice cruelty against every being – may it be human beings or animals or even insects. Man has become so cruel and crude, that even when he wants to testfire his gun, he would kill someone without any hesitation or remorse. Man today emulates animals in respect of cruelty. This is the age of physical strength – nay, animal strength. In the US, once a father scolded his son for some wrong doing. The son suddenly retorted by saying, “I will shoot you.” Thus in every aspect of his life – may be newspapers, films, T.V., books – there is violence. In such a situation, the feeling of non-violence will guide the world in the right direction in which humanity should go in future. One who has compassion in his heart, will show compassion to every being.

Mahavira's concept of non-violence appealed to Mahatma Gandhi, two thousand five hundred years later and he applied it to all walks of life. In 1946 he stood unarmed with compassion in his heart before a furious mob which was carrying lethal weapons. The mob had to bow down before this half-naked Fakir. Non-violence had won, violence was defeated. Lord Mountbatten had then said, “What we could not accomplish by dispatching a full army brigade was accomplished single handedly by this one man, thereby saving the entire eastern side of the country from complete annihilation. One remembers Prof. S. R. Bhatt's statement in which he had said, “The seed of the thought that was sown some two thousand five hundred years ago was reaped by Gandhi (The Thought of Ahimsa). As if there was an invisible traffic between Mahavira and Gandhi.”

This principle of Ahimsa will have to be adopted in practice

by human beings. The Jain religion and philosophy steadfastly emphasise the integrity and totality of life. It has a holistic view towards life. It is a religion that teaches assimilation and not division. Hence a member of the family and an employee of the shop – both must be treated on par. Today the man in the temple and the man elsewhere have become two separate entities, different from each other. That is why to integrate the two separate personalities into a single, undivided one, we will have to inculcate the spirit of *Ahimsa* among the people the world over.

If *Ahimsa* saves ants, small and big ones, it should not kill man. Otherwise, it would be paradoxical. It would not be acceptable that one, who treats the members of the family with affection, does not do so in the profession. A woman, who is a kind mother at home, cannot be thought to be cruel outside. The practice of *Ahimsa* should not be limited to the four walls of home, it should be allowed to spread far and wide covering all walks of our life. It should be accompanied by love and compassion for all. Bhagwan Mahavira extended it to cover even the most poisonous snakes who are always ready to strike and bite even without any provocation.

Violence is directly related to the craze for accumulation and possession, so that in the world of tomorrow exploitation and corruption would manifest themselves as new forms of violence. To obtain benefits by exploiting the poor, the weak, the downtrodden, the helpless is not only a manifestation of social injustice, but it is one form of violence and deceit. Non-violence presupposes the coexistence of different religions, philosophies, thoughts and minds in peace with each other.

That is why Santbalji has said, 'It is the Jain religion which has given to the world such precious gifts as non-violent culture and the thought of peaceful coexistence.' The world today and the one that would follow need such thoughts and feelings. Jonathan Swift at one place writes, 'We have just enough religions to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.' If we accept the feelings expressed in this statement by this great writer, we can cross all hurdles that are created by religious fundamentalism, religious intolerance etc. and can safely reach the objective of 'Religious fellowship'. As terrorism in various forms is spreading its tentacles all around, the world can still be saved with the help of the cult of non-violence. It is from this cult of non-violence that the fragrance of truth, celibacy, non-possessiveness and non-stealing can be spread. We should not forget that the foundation of all this was actually laid by Tirthankara Mahavira centuries before.

The Jain philosophy and thinking on diet have its roots in the practice of non-violence. Diet is closely connected with our mind and its processes. Our food habits have a great impact on our mind and thought; that is why we are asked to keep a vigilant eye on them. It has thrown significant light on the benefits of fasting and on simple food habits. Their importance has now been accepted even in the sphere of health and physical fitness. Nature cure is the first step in that direction. Even *Ayurved* acknowledges its importance. In the Jain religion, there is a common practice of fasting for days together at a time. Even in the West, patients are made to fast for 90 days at a stretch to cure them from certain diseases. Dr. Kerington opines, "Fasting gives inner strength to the heart. If one wants the heart to be strong, the best way to achieve it is by fasting, for, on the

one hand it gives rest to the heart and on the other it purifies the blood without any medicines.” Further, fasting also reduces the extent of evil designs, desires and inclinations.

Jain religion also glorifies the cult of vegetarianism. These days vegetarianism is spreading fast in the West and it has been adopted by many artists, actors and the likes on a large scale. Vegetarianism is the corner stone of the Jain religion.

Today when heart diseases, blood pressure and such other dreaded things are fast spreading, vegetarianism can be of great help. It is necessary to examine dietetics afresh from the scientific point of view. In the ancient times, it was based on spiritual thinking, now it is based on experiments as is the case with all natural sciences.

Experiments can be repeated and adopted by each other, while experiences cannot be. Today in the US, the doctors advise taking food before sunset. This has been mentioned in our ancient scriptures. The movement of the atom, the origin of language, communication through the oral media – all were considered then. The system and practice of meditation and contemplation of the ancient times could cure physical and mental diseases of man. The experiments based on *Prekshadhyan* are the best examples of it.

For peace to the mind *Pachhakhan*, for high level meditation *Kausagga*, for introspection *Pratikramana*, for inner purification *Paryushan*, for bravery and gallantry the feeling of forbearance – it is only when these are practiced in the world that we can get a vibrant man of tomorrow. When Henry Thoreau, the American thinker, held a man by his hand, the latter started crying. Because the touch of the hand was felt by the other as a piece of dead wood, lifeless.

The Jain religion prescribes four things to attain superior status of being and to be full of vitality – charity, chastity, penance and love.

“माणुस्सं खु सु दुल्लह ।”

An ancient rule says, ‘Oh man ! How difficult it is to be human !’ Man is not born, he is to be awakened from within. After the birth of a child, the next birth is that of man.

The anti-apartheid American leader Martin Luther King dreamt of the day when man is known not by the colour of his skin, but by the strength of his character. To quote him verbatim, 'Not by the colour of the skin, but by the content of his character.' The Jain religion gives no cognisance to the colour or the creed of man.

“न वि मुंडिण समणो न ओंकरेण बभणो ।  
न मुणि रण्णवासेणं, कुसरीयेण ण तावसो ।।”

Man is known not by the accident of his birth, but by his actions and character. A man does not become a Brahmin merely by recitation of *Omkar*, nor does he become a saint by merely residing in the forest. One does not become a Jain sadhu merely by shaving one's head clean. The Jain religion says, one can become a brahmin by the observance of celibacy; one can become a saint by the dint of his knowledge and a Jain Sadhu by practising equality with all. In its *Namaskarmantra*, it does not salute an individual, but it salutes the Tirthankars – those who have the qualities of a teacher, a Guru.

Bhagwan Mahavira says, ‘You will get salvation not by taking refuge or shelter under me, but by taking refuge under the religion.’ Today the world is full of pollution. The destruction of trees on a massive scale has led the world to



severe drought conditions. A large number of living species have already been destroyed and extinct, while a few others are on way to annihilation, it is necessary to pay attention to what the Jain religion says. The Jain monks do not eat green or fresh vegetables on particular days. This shows how the Jain monks are deeply wedded to ecological balance.

Truth has been given a significant and a unique place in the Jain philosophy. It enjoys the second most important position as a vow. The *Prashna Vyakaran* says, 'Truth is God.' The *Acharang sutra* says, 'One who stands solidly for truth in his life will conquer even death.' This is experienced by man within himself. The entire life of Mahavira is a testimony of his rich experiences. He tells his disciples that they need not consider him the most knowledgeable person in the world. Anyone, who accomplishes his objectives, can attain the highest position of knowledge. Even Bhagwan Mahavira himself had attained the highest position after he had passed through a cycle of 27 lives and also twelve and half years of penance.

What more can be said of a person who has been wedded to truth? Even fire cannot burn him, nor can waterpools drown him.

The Jain philosophy has extensively thought of truth and righteousness in human life. 'What I pronounce is the truth' has never been its approach. When one takes such an extreme, sectarian and rigid attitude, it is transformed into one kind of violence. It has a broad-based attitude in which it is conceded that there can be an element of truth even in what others have to say. Ultimately, truth is relative. What you visualise as truth may carry your own conviction. Similarly, what others visualise as truth may be allowed to carry their convictions. such a broad-

based approach carries with it equality, tolerance, synthesis and the feeling of coexistence. It reflects a consistent and on going effort in search of truth.

When one looks at things from different angles and when one locates an element of truth in everything, it leads one to *Anekant* i.e. many sided or many faceted approach. Not that 'what I say is the only and the ultimate truth'; but 'what is truth is mine' is the correct approach. One should not be rigid and dogmatic towards one's own approach, but one should also be generous enough to concede that what others perceive may also have an element of truth. Thus, the philosophy of *Anekant* perceives an all sided view and is based on equality, tolerance, assimilation and co-existence. It is the right approach for reaching the truth. *Anekant* approaches everything relatively and tries to find the truth in every situation. In the life of Bhagwan Mahavira, many instances can be found where 'what is truth is mine' has been accepted. He had even persuaded Gautam, his most learned colleague to apologise to Shravak Anand.

During Mahavira's time, there were many controversies and many opinions expressed. Everyone tried to dispute the opinions of others so that one can prove that what one says is the only truth. But, Bhagwan Mahavira showed the path – accommodation of others' views rather than to refute others' views. He appealed to disciples to become *Anekanti* in place of *Ekanti*. Only when you will do this, that you will be able to perceive truth in its most clear and beautiful form. In this way he tried to fight the war that was raged between various opposing opinions, ideologies and one's own understandings. To bring home the truth behind what he was saying, he gave

the illustration of the seven blind men who were trying to know what an elephant was like. It is only when human beings adopt *Anekant* that half the sorrows of life would disappear. Vinobaji considers the concept of *Anekant* as Mahavira's greatest gift to the world.

Albert Einstien discovered the Theory of Relativity applicable to the physical world, while Bhagwan Mahavira propounded relativity in our everyday life 2600 years ago. Acharya Jinbhadra explains the concept of *Anekant* in the following words – “the disputes and contradictions remain intact between different opinions as long as one does not look to the truth through assimilation and coordination. The dispute between various opinions is the product of one's own faults and weaknesses.”

Nowadays people seem to think that religion has little importance in modern life, and that it cannot play any significant part in shaping the character of the people. To this, we could say in the words of Joseph Gear, “Those who have lived among the Jains find them very kindly people, and better people because of their religion.”

We should unite at this crucial juncture of world history and make efforts to save humanity from extinction. It is essential that we try our best to revitalize our religious and moral principles and unite to ensure peace and harmony. Jainism preaches amity towards all beings, compassion for the miserable and detachment from possessions.

In order to discourage violence, Bhagwan Mahavira proclaimed that the entire human race is one. एक्का मणुस्साई। At a time when communalism, hatred, violence and terrorism have

become rampant in contemporary times, this preaching of Bhagwan Mahavira should be our true ideal. Indeed, we have many ideals before us, but it is time to practise them.

If a world religion of this order is to emerge, I have no hesitation in saying that most of the tenets of Jainism will always find a proud place in it. The Greeks used to say, “Call no man happy, until he is dead.” Whereas Jainism, on the other hand, claims : “Call every man happy who lives his life following truthfully the principles of Jainism.”

The message of Jainism has even a greater relevance today. By following this path, it will be possible for us to make a meaningful use of the wonderful inventions of science and technology and make them truly blissful and create global society free from hunger and hate – at peace with itself and with its environment. Thus there will be a heaven on this earth. What more does a human being want ?



4

## Compassion Towards Animals

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In the present times, those, who have compassion for animals, talk of protection to be given to animals, while, those, who observe cruelty being meted out to animals, believe that the human race itself would in future be put in jeopardy due to such treatment given to animals. Nature and animals may probably be able to exist without man, but man cannot live in isolation from nature and animals. That is why projects like “Save the tiger” and “Save the elephant” have been undertaken to protect the animals and to preserve their rights. Quite a few species of animals are on the path towards complete extinction and a few species are in the category of being endangered. Half of the tropical forests which have been the habitat or abode of wild animals have been destroyed in the beginning of this century. How many species live on this earth is only a matter of conjecture, but estimates of their number approximate between 5 million and 30 million. Out of these only about 1-2

million have been identified and biologists believe that several millions are on road to extinction in this century itself, while 15 millions of the remaining are likely to be extinct during the next few decades thereafter.

*Ahimsa*, non-violence, has been the corner-stone of Jainism. *Ahimsa* is one of the basic virtues. Nowhere else in the other religious traditions has this basic virtue been so scientifically, scrupulously and thoroughly integrated with the main doctrine. Jainism is the only tradition which has consistently allowed this tenet to enter into the very essentials of its teachings and practices. This singular uncompromising emphasis on *Ahimsa* is the special and exclusive feature of Jainism. In Jainism, *Ahimsa* is not mere human sympathy; it is empathy, the urge to identify oneself completely with other persons, other living beings, and the whole universe.

Non-violence is the heart of Jainism. Positively stated, Jainism is a religion of compassion, universal love and friendliness. It aims at the welfare of all living beings, and not of man alone. It maintains that living beings are infinite, all so called empty spaces in the universe are filled with minute living beings.

According to it, there are countless single-sense organisms that take the subtlest possible units of material elements – earth, water, fire and air – as their bodies. Fresh earth is alive, but when it is baked, it becomes dead. Fresh water from a well, etc. is alive, but when it is boiled or influenced by mixing some other substance, it becomes dead. Vegetables, trees, plants, fruits, etc. do have life, but when they are dried, cut or cooked,

they die. To avoid injury to them, as far as possible, man is advised to use them discreetly. He should desist from polluting water, air, etc. thereby perpetrating violence to them. Worms, insects, animals, etc. help in keeping ecological balance thus they help man. And for ages domestic animals have been a constant and faithful aid to man in civilizing himself. From the ultimate standpoint of their original pure pristine state, all living beings are uniform in their nature. Jainism teaches to look upon them as upon one's own self. Inflicting injury to them is inflicting injury to one's ownself.

Jain religion, which puts maximum emphasis on *Ahimsa* i.e. non-violence, strongly advocates compassion towards animals. Let us first try to understand the approach of the Jain religion towards animals and other living beings. The Jain religion believes that animals, too, have souls and it respects animals, as much as, it shows respect to human beings. Not only that, but it believes that man and animals both possess equal potential to achieve salvation. That is why the dictum of the Jain religion is : जीवावहो अप्पवहो - "the killing of an animal is equivalent to killing of the ownself."

The sixteenth Tirthankara, Shri Shantinath Bhagwan, set an excellent example of balancing the rights of various animals in the kingdom of nature. Once he was caught in the middle of a dilemma. A pigeon came rushing to him for shelter, trying to save its life from a hawk. The hawk swooped down on the pigeon, to feed herself and her hungry family. What would Shri Shantinath Bhagwan do? If he saves the pigeon, the hawk dies of hunger. If he feeds the hawk, the pigeon dies. He did not

want either of them to suffer. So he found a solution by offering the sacrifice of his own flesh to the hawk, so neither hawk nor the pigeon would have to die. Jainism opened a line of thought which will have to grapple with such tricky problems.

The Jain religion prescribes a religious ritual called *Pratikraman*. As a part of this ritual, one has to seek forbearance or pardon for all the sins one may have committed. Among the daily rituals that every Jain man and woman has to practice or observe, one of them also includes the vow to avoid confining animals in cages, harming them with weapons, cutting down or piercing the parts of their body, inflicting unbearable physical burden on them and depriving them of food and water. Similarly, the first and the foremost of the vows of the Jain religion called *Anuvrata* and *Mahavrata* includes compassion towards all living beings, including animals. This is followed by the exhortation to show kindness and pity to animals and not to practice any type of cruelty towards them. The Jains consider this to be the true religion. The Jain scripture *Bodhpahud* states that true religion exists only where mercy towards all is practised.

This is distinctly noticeable in the life of the 23rd Tirthankara Neminath. While he was on way going to marry a beautiful woman called Rajimati, he heard the shrieks of cattle which were confined in cattle-enclosure. He enquired from the chariot driver as to why so many cattle have been confined in the enclosure. The chariot driver told Neminath that they are to be slaughtered for the feast that has been organised to celebrate your wedding. This shocked Neminath who never

wanted this type of thing to happen as a part of his proposed marriage ceremony. He, therefore, set the bonded animals free first and then went back. He then sacrificed the pleasures of married life and material life permanently and went to Girnar for penance.

This event, from the life of the 23rd Tirthankara, teaches us never to do any physical harm to any living being. That is why the first among the 18 sinful acts indicated in the Jain religion is the vow of *Pranatipat*. Killing of any living being or taking away anyone's life is called *Pranatipat*. Similarly, the act of compassion, the *Karuna Bhav* is also given highest importance by the Jain religion as a means of salvation from the circle of life and death. That is why the Jain religion preaches compassion to every living being-big or small. The episode of the meeting between the Jain monk Hirvijaysuriji and Emperor Akbar in AD 1583 is a testimony to the compassion preached by the Jain religion towards every living being.

On seeing Hirvijaysuriji approaching, Emperor Akbar descended from the throne and went to him and bowed to him. His three princes also bowed and paid their respects. In honour of Suriji's arrival, very costly carpets were spread in the royal palace, but Suriji refused to walk on them. Akbar was surprised. Hirvijaysuriji explained that Jain saints were forbidden to walk on land covered with cloth because that might kill the ants and other insects moving under the cloth. Akbar ordered the carpets to be removed and indeed there were many ants and insects underneath.

As Akbar came to know that Suriji had made the journey

of so many miles on foot from Gandhar Port (Gujarat) to Fatehpur, he was greatly surprised.

Emperor Akbar, by way of deference to Suriji, requested him to accept gift of some gold and silver. Thereupon Suriji said that he would not accept anything. Suriji added that if he was keen to offer anything, he should order to set free the birds and animals kept by him in the cages. Suriji also added that he should prohibit large-scale fishing in the huge pond named Dabad and should also issue a mandate to stop violence of any kind by anybody during the Jain festivals of *Paryushan*. Akbar issued orders as was desired by Suriji. Moreover, Akbar added 4 days on his own accord to the 8 days of *Paryushan* festival and ordered to stop the killing of animals for a total of 12 days. The mandate was also conveyed throughout his empire including Gujarat, Malwa, Ajmer, Delhi, Fatehpur, Lahore and all the way to Multan. The Emperor also issued a mandate not to indulge in any sort of animal-killing in the vicinity of pilgrim places like Girnar, Taranga, Shatrunjaya, Kesariyaji, Abu, Rajgruhi and Sametshikharji.

Compassion in the Jain religion means one should feel the same agony in your heart when you experience that some one else is suffering. It advocates empathy. One should have the same affectionate feelings for the soul of others, as one would have for one's own soul. Similarly one should crave the same thing for the soul of others as one would crave for one's own soul. Thus the Jain religion tries to achieve the feeling of oneness with the smallest of living organisms. The life and soul of every other living being is as much valuable as the life and soul of oneself. Hence we should have intense feeling of



consideration and companionship for every living creature on this earth. Acharya Haribhadrāsuri rightly says, the feeling of lasting consideration and companionship for others generates sacred feelings in our soul. This kind of consideration and feelings of companionship for every living organism on this earth leads one to practice sentimental and emotional closeness not only with human beings, not only with flora and fauna, but also with the earth, air and water, inspiring one to practice non-violence towards every creature.

The Jain Agam Acharang Sutra while describing the ideology of the Jain religion viz-a-viz all the living organisms in the universe states that every organism possesses the inborn craving for sustained existence and, therefore, has a natural love and affection for its own life, every being craves for happiness, wants to be away from pain and agony and hence a prudent man never takes the life of others. Thus what one detests for oneself should be considered by him detestful for others also and when that is so, one should not inflict pain on others.

True non-violence is one which inspires us to make a ceaseless effort for seeking the happiness of the whole universe through deeds, thoughts and words. That is why the ruler of Gujarat, Kumarpal who occupied the throne in 1143 had said, the biggest sin in our life is to commit violence towards other living organisms. No one should be benefitted by committing an act of violence on others. Inspired by his Guru Hemchandra-charya, Kumarpal pronounced *Ahimsa* (*Amari*) as his cult. This probably must be the first declaration of non-violence on this earth. He prohibited animal slaughter and declared that anyone

indulging in violence against any living organism would be severely dealt with. He saw that even butchers gave up the profession of slaughtering animals for earning their bread. He asked them to take food from the Government kitchen, if they did not have any alternative source of living. Inspired by this, even the neighbouring kingdoms also followed the footsteps of King Kumarpal. They, too, prohibited sacrificing or killing of animals wherever it was done in the name of survival of the self or religion or festivities. The slaughter houses run in their respective kingdoms were also ordered to be closed by the kings. The sacrifice of animals in the name of religion that was being practised in the temple of Goddess Kantkeshwari was also banned by the ruler. That is why Kumarpal finds a lasting place in history as an ideal ruler.

The meaning is clear. Bringing the animals in this world through artificial insemination, raising them in confined space and under artificial environment, forcing them to eat food that is full of hormones, antibiotics, and other chemicals, depriving them of natural life, inflicting upon them the pain of cruel experiments and killing them at an early age—all of these are considered sinful acts and must be avoided, as preached by Jainism.

It goes further. Performing or consenting to such acts is also considered equally sinful. The sale of animal flesh, leather, ivory or anything that harms animals directly or indirectly is also undesirable, according to the same sutra.

Those, who inflict pain on animals, suffer *karmic* punishment i.e. punishment for their sinful deeds. For instance,

such persons are condemned to be sent to hell after death or may have to undergo sufferings in the next birth or life. That is why it is said that one, who is wise and rational, does not indulge in violence of any kind. The Jain religion considers inflicting of pain or even indulgence of criticism of others as different forms of violence. If one cannot extend even a single moment in the life of others, one has no right to take away any moments in the life of others through violence. When one hurts the feelings of others or uses bad words for others, also indulges in violence, though of a different form.

The Jain religion also considers it an evil act of violence not only when one indulges in it directly, but also when one supports or encourages others to practise it. Thus the Jain concept of violence is very broad and it encompasses violence not only through deeds or action, but also through words, speech etc. The word *Jayana* in the Jain religion implies that one should be careful in not inflicting any form of violence on any organism – big or small. Even when violence is perpetrated on the smallest of the living being because of our idleness or negligence, it is not permissible or acceptable in the tenets of the Jain religion. Hence even that type of violence is also prohibited by the Jain religion. Not only the violence by deeds, but violence in thought is also prohibited. Further, sticking rigidly to one's opinions or summarily rejecting the opinions of others is also one form of violence. The Jain religion takes into consideration the concept of non-violence in the context of diet or food also and prescribes for its followers a completely vegetarian diet. *Acharang Sutra* of the Jains says that no one

should commit violence against any animal, organism or being and that alone is the purest and the most durable form of religion. The very first chapter of the *Acharang Sutra* refers to the causes and instruments of violence. When any one indulges in violence against mute and dumb animals, it is not only against the tenets of society and religion, but it is also violence against self and one's own soul.

The Jain religion has a new approach to compassion towards animals when it says that when you torture an animal or persecute it, or make it unhappy, your acts are not directed so much against the animal, but in reality it is directed against your own self. Man is today experiencing the effects of his own deeds. He has fallen or uprooted hundreds of trees with the result that rains have now become scanty, disturbing the cycle of nature. Man has been killing and slaughtering animals on a large scale which has brought disaster to his very existence. Hence protection of animals is necessary for mankind to protect himself. The happiness of animals is a necessary concomitant of the happiness of man. In the same manner, the existence of animals is a necessary concomitant of existence of man on this earth. A very simple rule propounded by the Jain religion in the context of compassion towards animals is 'what you sow, so you reap.' If you harass others, you, too, would be harassed and you will have to suffer the pangs of it. Violence and torture have made animals supportless. If you continue to harass and torture mute or dumb animals, it would one day boomerang and would result in a retaliatory assault on you. One should first decide what one wants to get or achieve in life and give everything generously to others. If you want to be happy, distribute happiness to all without reservation.

If you crave for peace in life, distribute peace generously to all.

If you do not wish to be unhappy in your own life, do not make others unhappy.

If you do not want to suffer in life, do not make others the target of suffering.

If you indulge in violence, you will be the target of violence by others against you.

The *Prashna Vyakaran Agam* says, the slaughtering of an animal or violence against others will result in perpetual unhappiness to you and that, too, not only in this life, but also in the subsequent ones. Unless you undergo suffering on account of the violence that has been perpetrated by you on others, you will not attain or achieve emancipation.

Alden Nowtan in his poem say-

*Care More for other than for yourself.*

*Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you.*

*Gentleness is the hall-mark of spiritual culture.*

*The hand that gives gathers.*

*It does not cost to be kind.*

*Killing the least, living the best.*

*Nothing good ever comes of violence.*

*Whenever a human being does something  
to relieve the sufferings of an animals,*

*God makes a little holiday in his heart.*

What is important is to allow animals to live and to make them happy. What is more important and significant is that if you want to be happy and live in good health, you will have to make all others happy in this world.

In the all-pervading principle adopted by the Jain religion which encompasses not merely human beings, but everything else also and it advocates non-violence towards animals and towards all other organisms – the religion prescribes merciful action and deeds towards all living creatures.

Consider the unflinching loyalty with which animals sometimes obey human beings ! Similar are the relations between man and other living organisms, establishing love, loyalty and dedication. Those, who have experienced the warmth of feelings that are expressed by the milch animals, beasts carrying load, animals who assist the warriors on the battle field, animals who protect homes, message-carrying birds etc. will always remain conscious of their duties towards them. That is why animals have been given a prominent place along with the great Tirthankara by the Jain religion.

To emphasise this, animal figures have inscribed just below the seat of the idols of the Tirthankara - e. g. the bull is inscribed below the seat of the idol of the first Tirthankara Rishabhadev, while the lion is found inscribed below the seat of the last Tirthankara Mahavira.

As a result of the close association between human beings and animals, the latter have come to be used in descriptions of human behaviour and qualities. For example, the swan is associated with knowledge and learning; the parrot is used to convey a sense of scholarship; the crane on the other hand symbolises the deceitful nature of people; the ruddy goose or Sheldrake symbolises young lovers.

That is why the philanthropic acts, such as, the

construction of cattle shelters are given importance by the Jain religion. These cattle shelters take care of the sick, the weak, the old and the deserted cattle. Grain flour is sprinkled at places where small insects like ants are found in large number. Raised platforms are specially constructed for birds where they are fed with grain. These are constructed at such heights that other animals do not harm the birds. There are special places reserved for small insects where they can live without being crushed. Quite a few people keep sick or injured animals in their homes and give them the necessary treatment. The tradition of feeding cows and dogs has been in existence in India since ages. Attempts are on to prevent cow slaughter, hunting of birds, export of frogs, use of monkeys, hare and such other animals in laboratories, while efforts are being made to preserve the rights of animals. In India now special ambulances are being arranged for animals. In the town of Vadodara in India, there is a special Animal's Ambulance Group. It has purchased a van and converted it into a small ambulance. It carries a first-aid box, oxygen, cages for birds, paper rolls, blankets, rubber socks and a register. There are four such vans which are used to take the sick, the deserted and the injured animals to the veterinary doctors even in times of emergency. The organisation offers such services from home to home.

Charity must begin at home i. e. the genuine show of sympathy and compassion for animals, birds etc. must begin from the homes of each individual citizen. If there is a zoo at home, it must be dismantled. There should be a ban on the sale of animals captured illegally. The markets where animals and

birds are sold, the practice of sacrificing animals for religious purposes, the violence perpetrated against animals in the name of festivals - all these should be banned. Instead of killing dogs and pigs by poisoning them, they should be sterilized. The laws pertaining to cruelty against animals must be strictly enforced. Animals must be provided with natural habitats, should be allowed to possess natural fertility and should also be given good diet. Animals should not be allowed to be wrongly used for entertainment, sports, circus-shows and such other purposes. The public media should not exhibit on their screens the scenes of cruelty being done to animals. People in general, should be enlightened towards the rights of animals. Every individual should keep their rights in his mind in his day to day life. For instance, the practice of using camels for entertainment purposes at the sea shores in Mumbai so prevalent some years before, had to be discontinued under pressure of public agitation and the animals were then sent back to their natural abode. Special compassion clubs should be organised in schools and colleges in which stories describing love and affection towards animals should be told to the students. The students should be made aware of the sale and purchase of animals for wrongful purposes. Regular visits to animal farms and zoos should be organised for children. Students should also be enlightened about the laws preventing cruelty against animals, and regarding their strict compliance. Protection and preservation of animals and birds are also important things which should be effectively achieved.

I conclude my discourse by residing the poetic composition of the wellknown dramatist George Bernard Shaw

which summarises my theme of the day—

*We are the living graves of murdered beasts,  
Slaughtered to satisfy our appetites,  
We never pause to wonder at our feasts,  
If animals, like men, can possibly have rights,  
We pray on Sundays that we may have light,  
To guide our foot-steps on the paths we tread.  
We're sick of war, we do not want to fight,  
The thought of it now fills our hearts with dread,  
And yet, we gorge ourselves upon the dead.  
Like carrion crows, we live and feed on meat,  
Regardless of the suffering and pain,  
We cause by doing so, If thus we treat  
Defenceless animals for sport or gain  
How can we hope in this world to attain  
The PEACE we say we are so anxious for ?  
We pray for it, O'er hecatombs of slain,  
To God, while outraging the moral law,  
Thus cruelty begets its offsprings — war.*

We may not have generations any more, but we do have  
a few years to accomplish the task.

*[Lecture delivered at the Parliament of the World's Religion,  
Cape Town, South Africa on 2nd Dec. 1999]*



## 5

### Vegetarianism

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My visit to Belgium, lying at a far off corner of the European continent, has proved to be very memorable. My challenging meeting with Stella Maria, Chief Keeper at the hotel and her two friends Paul and Rene is an unforgettable experience for me. When we entered the city fully committed to non-vegetarianism, I asked Stella Maria who was looking after my stay in the city, “Can you please arrange for vegetarian food?”

One striking feature about the foreign lands is the smiling manner with which everyone whom you ask any question satisfies your query. In case, you fail to understand and repeatedly ask the same question, the smile never disappears.

She had a smile on her face as she listened to my query. She said : “Please tell me if you are an Indian. I feel sorry, but I have observed that Indians are the most fussy people about their food. Vegetarianism is, I think, the food made of leaves and vegetables.” I, too, had a smile on my face as I replied : “Who told you that a vegetarian lives by



leaves and vegetables only ? I think, you don't know about the concept of being a 'vegetarian'."

Stella Maria said, "It is so simple. He that eats vegetables is a vegetarian."

I said, "Vegetarian doesn't mean this. It has originated from a Greek word *vegetas* which means totally healthy, fresh and vigorous. It means that our food provides complete energy for the body and keeps the physique healthy. Far from being stale or stinking, it is ever fresh and gives vitality to the organism."

Stella did manage for my vegetarian food, but she was not satisfied with my definition and explanation. I asked her to have some another meeting at some other time.

She said, "Besides me, my friends Rene and Paul are as well deeply interested in it. They will also join us. They are doing research about various experiments on vegetarianism being carried out in different countries. They have also been trying some of them on themselves."

These two names alerted my attention.

Soon I told her that I wanted to see the unique paintings of Peter Paul Rubens. In fact, Rubens' paintings were another attraction for my visit to Antwerp. The house, in which this all-time great artist was born on 28th July 1517, has now been purposefully converted into a museum of his beautiful paintings. I had read very little about the life and works of this artist, but I was thrilled with the idea that I would be able to see the paintings themselves. While making his paintings, Rubens happened to be overwhelmed with so much joy that he could quickly and easily finish a painting even in serious moods and bright colours.

Stella agreed to arrange a visit to his memorial.

I asked her, "Do you know that this unique artist like Rubens was himself a vegetarian ? Since he wanted to make immense paintings, he wanted to maintain physical fitness, so he never allowed even the meat-smell nearby him. He believed that meat was hard to digest. It made the mind and body dull. Everyday he used to work till 5 o'clock in the evening, then he would go for horse-riding. On returning, he would relish vegetarian food."

She was amazed with the details I provided during the talk. I had obtained this information from the data collected by French author de Pills whose source was Phillip Rubens, painter's nephew.

Then I had a meeting with Stella, Rene and Paul. In the course of our conversation some strange issues were also raised.

Disclosing her embarrassment, she said, "I hope you will excuse me for such a query, but if all the human beings were to turn vegetarian, I think the entire world would be overcrowded with animal beings, out-numbering the humans to a minority. Man would not have a place to stand and the earth would be a huge animal farm inhabited by sheeps and goats and hens alone.

"I think you're missing the basic issue", I said and added, "The meat requirement for the non-vegetarians is ensured by rearing the animals in the farm. Some artificial remedies are also applied so as to enhance breeding and ensure more number of animals and thereby more quota of meat ! If they are left to their natural and free way of life on this earth, their number shall diminish automatically."

“How’s that ?” Paul doubted.

I said, “My dear friend, the cycle of Nature operates in accordance with the surrounding region and environmental circumstances. The ways of Nature are almost wonderful. It gives us, as much as, we need. If you ever try to deprive her of anything, it shall be you that shall be ultimately deprived. All the animals have a habit to breed their species in view of the food quantum and living space available to each of them. This is astonishing, but true. The only exceptional animal is man ! Sheeps and goats and hens are also like other animals. If artificial insemination is not applied, their number shall decrease naturally and Stella shall have nothing to worry or afraid about the earth being a huge poultry-farm.”

Our discussion on vegetarianism in a beautiful city like Antwerp would seem strange to somebody; it might appear to be a futile exercise. But Stella was interested in vegetarianism and Rene liked vegetarian food, only Paul was a staunch non-vegetarian. The way in which an individual is nurtured plays a decisive role in shaping his or her mental make-up. Indeed, Brusso, the great philosopher, has said that a child by birth is vegetarian one, but the parents divert him to non-vegetarianism. By temperament man is vegetarian. People of Greece, where civilization had its earliest dawn, were mostly vegetarian. Pythagoras was himself an active worker of vegetarianism.

Our discussion covered many issues. Sometimes some traditional belief picked up from here and there would be forcefully submitted as an argument, sometimes non-vegetarian complex, inherent through the years, would burst out into frustration.

Paul was vehement when he argued, “The most essential thing for man for survival and health is protein. This protein requirement is ensured from meat and eggs. Protein deficiency makes people weak and cowardly. Thus non-vegetarianism is inevitable for human health.”

In turn, I put him a question, “Will you please tell me how much protein a human body needs ?” Then I added further, “In case protein is obtained from meat and eggs alone, how does the most mighty animal, the African elephant ensures its protein requirement, even though it is a vegetarian animal ? Which meat food provides vigour to a strong bull or an energetic horse ?”

My presentation nonplused Paul. I continued further, “Dear friend, man’s protein requirement is only 4 per cent.”

Rene interrupted and said, “I believe it. The issue of protein requirement is exaggerated by meat and egg producers. Latest research has also disclosed that most human body doesn’t need more of protein.”

I picked up my point and added, “You shall be surprised to know that a bowlful of vegetables or spinage would give you more quantum of protein than what 1 kg of meat would provide and that, too, at some risk !”

Stella was too quick to catch my word ‘little risk’ and soon she asked, “As for protein requirement, how do you evaluate vegetables as having little risk from meat ?”

Rene was knowledgeable and he seemed to support my point. He said, “Vegetables and spinage provides you protein alone whereas, besides protein, meat provides you fat and cholesterol which are harmful to human health.”

Stella exclaimed, "Oh, this would mean that protein ensured from vegetables is better and cheaper than protein obtained from meat."

I said, "This has been conclusively proved some 40 years ago. The simple truth is that meat-producers have been hiding this fact. During the 50's, experiments were made on the rats, with financial assistance from meat-industry. Two scientists associated with the experiment project arrived at the conclusion that rats nurtured on Vegetables had a speedy growth and development. After this conclusion was arrived at, the meat industry started facing difficulty. There was a counter effect. Pressure was put on those two scientists to change their statement. One scientist claimed that his experiment is limited to the race of rats only. It is not applicable to any other race. The second scientist claimed further that experiments on rats do not have any similarity with those on human beings. Whatever may be the conclusion, meat producers tried day and night to ensure that facts do not come out in the open.

Rene said, "Today there is a crusade against animal fat and animal protein. Cancer and heart attack are major diseases of the present age. Non-vegetarian diet is the important solution for them. So, countries like America also opposed this. A well known thinker, Karlyle has claimed that one cannot change the next era by ethics, but you can change it by dietetics."

I said, "A well known writer of England, Bernard Shaw once said that man digs his own grave by his own teeth. He has made his own stomach a dead animal's cemetery."

Stela became quiet. Pole's excitement was still not under

control. It is difficult to resolve the old knot. She pleaded with an old and known argument forcefully, "If the whole world becomes vegetarian, the human race would be engulfed in the vessel of starvation. On the one hand most of the people of the world are non-vegetarians, on the other hand corn does not grow to such an extent that people of the world can easily get vegetarian food."

Stella said, "I also agree with you. If there is not enough corn to feed today's world, how is it possible to feed the overpopulated world of tomorrow ?" Countering their arguments I said, "As at present, many countries suffer from starvation, poor countries of Africa are in a pitiable condition. Even in India poor people live in starvation-like conditions. Talking about India, there is an annual production of 230 lakh tons of meat in the country. In case, there is one amarginal decrease of 10 per cent, it would be of immense benefit. If surplus land being available as a result of this 10 per cent decrease is diverted to food production, it would be greatly advantageous. As for America, if foodgrain cultivation is carried out in the farms in which cattle-breeding is for meat-production, it would provide food to people five times more. And there is an added advantage that it would also eliminate the threat of animal-killing endangering the human assistance itself.

Paul exclaimed, "How is this ? "

Stella added, "This would mean that if you want to save human race from starvation, you shall have to shun non-vegetarianism and turn to vegetarianism."

Rene said, "Would this put an end to killing of many animals ?"

Paul was jocular in his tone when he said, "In that case man would be extremely coward. A tiger-hunter is really a brave man !"

I rejected his logic and said, "Excuse me, but I fail to understand your definition of bravery. A tiger-hunter keeps himself away at a very safe distance, occupying a seat on a raised platform on a tree and that, too, in the company of marksman and you would call him a brave man ! In terms of intelligence, the tiger is as good as a small child. In no case, such tiger-hunting would be an act of bravery."

Stella had another argument. She said, "May be all that you say is right. But I fail to understand that a man would not eat meat for the sake of flesh of his body."

I said, "In fact, our body is made for vegetarian food. Carnivorous animals do not have longer infesting, as we humans do have. Humans have flat chewing teeth, they have hands to hold their food-items and their saliva is alkaline - all these suggest that man is basically a vegetarian animal and his body is most suited to vegetarian food as against non-vegetarian food. One of the researchers of Academy of Medicine, Paris has derived a conclusion that a vegetarian needs five-times less time than a non-vegetarian to get relaxed. Besides the physical one, there is mental advantage also. He also adds that a vegetarian's capacity to face and solve the problems and difficult issues of life is two to three times more than that of a non-vegetarian."

Paul had another aggressive argument for pro-non-vegetarianism; he said, "I think, you don't bother about the human food. It is very strange that you want to starve the

humans and sustain the animals. Our country Belgium is totally non-vegetarian and two of our food dishes viz. carbonades and waterzooi are popular all over the world and these dishes, a craving for the foreigners, are made of beef and fish. Here the people are fond of relishing different species of fish. Vegetarians, like you, won't get suitable food anywhere. Poor vegetarian ! Some of them have to eat potato-chips on the road-side, but the tomato sauce on the chips is a non-vegetarian item. I think, you don't intend to starve this country by your sophisticated arguments favouring vegetarianism."

Paul's argument was very aggressive. Stella's displeasure against Paul's offensive method and angry mood was evident on her face. It seemed that she did not like the disrespect that was shown to one whom they had invited as a guest. However Paul was right in saying that 'the whole of Belgium was full of non-vegetarians'.

But I was very quite and polite. I said, "Mr. Paul ! When you eat meat of any animal, I think, you don't believe that you eat it's meat alone, you are also gulping down all the vegetables that the animal has so far eaten. One interesting and specific calculation has revealed that when you enjoy a dish of a 1 kg. of meat, you gulp down 10 kg of vegetables simultaneously, but unwittingly. This would mean that a single non-vegetarian eats away the meal of ten vegetarians. In terms of an entire life's food-stuff of an individual, a single non-vegetarian eats away food-stuff fifty times more than that of a vegetarian."

Stella added, "It would mean that non-vegetarians are the root cause of starvation on this earth."

Rene had also something to say. He said, "You talked about the starvation resulting from food being eaten away by

the non-vegetarians. But I feel that the non-vegetarians have not only caused starvation on this earth; they have done other damage as well. Am I right ?”

I gave new ideological turn to Rene’s argument and said, “Mr. Rene, you should also consider the issue of pasture-land being provided to the animals so as to satisfy meat-requirements of the non-vegetarians. In my own country, I have seen lands being barren and denuded because of being used as pasture-land. The entire Aravalli mountain in Rajasthan thus looks dry and barren. Now of course our government has undertaken a project to raise grass on this mountain, with the Japanese aid.”

Stella Maria said, “This means that man should shun non-vegetarianism not because of pity, religion or sympathy towards animals, but for the sake of his own existence and for the mother earth.”

I was now enthusiastic, I said, “My very contention is this. Have you ever seen the sheeps grazing on the farm-land? They pull out the grass from the very root with the result that in course of time the land becomes worthless for farming and ultimately it adds to the total barren land of the world.”

Paul was now very uneasy. He said, “Your contention is that non-vegetarianism is harmful for mankind and so also for the earth and land. Have you any other evil to abuse it ?”

I said, “Dear friend, how many evils should I mention ? A large section of the population do not get adequate drinking water while slaughtering the animals in the slaughter-house needs immense quantity of water. No country having a scarcity of water can afford such a huge wastage.”

Rene said, “In everything, you say you have some calculations to support it. How about water being used for non-vegetarianism ?”

I laughed and replied, “The calculation in this count is that production of 1 kg of meat requires 50 times more water than would be needed for 1 kg of wheat !”

Stella almost screamed, “Oh ! This wastage of water is too much to be excused.”

Then I added, “Stella, the story does not end there. The limbs and other parts of the animals having been slaughtered are thrown into the flowing waters of a river, pond or canal. They rot and stink in those waters and pollute the flowing waters so much so that any human or animal would have fatal disease if he drinks such water.”

This touched Paul and he was really moved. He said all of a sudden, “How horrifying, how harsh and merciless is such an act ? This non-vegetarianism eats away living humans on the earth. Dear friend, so far I have only enjoyed non-vegetarianism. But now I assure you that I will take no other food but vegetarian.”

Rene was very happy. Stella had some curiosity in her eyes to know more about this. We decided to discuss the issue while enjoying the vegetarian food.





## Kshamapana

खामेमि सव्वे जीवा, सव्वे जीवा खमंतु मे ।  
मिती मे सव्वभूएसु वेरं मज्झ न केणई ॥

[I ask all sentients to forgive me my misdoings. May all sentients forgive me my offences. I love all sentients. I bear animosity towards none.]

**P**aryushana, the greatest Jain religious festival, gives us this message : We should speak words of forbearance and direct a loving glance towards all.

After seven days of penance, rises the Samvatsari day, the day of accomplishment.

The seven days of austerities and the purification of the soul culminate in asking for forgiveness.

After practising penance, charity, introspection and pratikramana for seven days, the hearts of the devotees become clear like the skies : cloudless and clean, as if touched with rainbow colours after heavy rains. The rainbow lines of lust, anger, pride and conceit now do not spread their charms to

obstruct them. As new waters pour themselves into rivers, mud and mire are washed away. Similarly, as the spirit of non-violence (*ahimsa*), non-absolutism (*anekanta*) and non-possession (*aparigraha*) rises from life at the time of Samvatsari Pratikramana, the waters of forgiveness rise up.

Some people stand on the shore. They get only shells and pebbles from the surface. They have no courage or desire to dive into deep waters. The austerities of all those who do not dive into the waters of penitence, of generosity, to be immersed and purified, bear no fruits.

They truly propitiate who forgive and ask forgiveness.

Today every home, every family is ablaze. Some minds are angry and some hearts are offended. Jealousies sting here and animosities burn there. Do we wish to keep the fire burning all through life or receive the healing balm of the waters of forgiveness ?

The decision is to be taken today. That is the only justification for celebrating the festival. Bhagwan Mahavira has told an ingenious story of a man who lost nine hundred and ninety-nine rupees for a cowrie : “Once upon a time a man went abroad to earn money. He worked hard and earned a thousand rupees. He set out on his return journey in good company. He put 999 rupees in a long, narrow purse and tied it round his waist and kept one rupee apart.

He changed the rupee for cowries. He decided to meet all expenses on the way home with these hundred cowries. After a long journey, he was now nearing home and his village was only a short distance away. He then sat down to take his meal. Through negligence, he dropped a cowrie there. He resumed

his journey. On the way he remembered having lost a cowrie through carelessness. Moreover, he would have to get change for another rupee for want of a cowrie.

But he had a purse of 999 rupees tied round his waist. It was not safe to return alone with the purse. He dug up the soil at a particular spot and buried the rupees there and returned to fetch the cowrie.

He searched for the place where he had halted. He ransacked the place where he had his meal. At the place where he had drunk water, he put his hands into the mud, looking for the cowrie. But nowhere was the cowrie to be found. He ran back to the former place only to find that someone had meanwhile taken away the rupees that he had buried there. He lost both the cowrie and the nine hundred and ninety-nine rupees.”

Bhagwan Mahavira says that as the man lost nine hundred and ninety-nine rupees for the sake of a cowrie, so man loses his valuable soul for the sake of his desires. He loses the dignity of the soul for the sake of the body that is worth only a cowrie.

### **Significance of Samvatsari**

In the propitiation days of the *Paryushana-parva*, we need to search the soul. Let the body which is worth a cowrie, along with the passions that inhabit it, be lost, but let us search the valuable soul. *Paryushana* is the festival (*parva*) when we should examine the soul, search the soul. Forgiveness is its culminating original incantation. The festival (*parva*) of penitance and spiritual love has come today for the soul roaming in the darkness of animosity and the fire of jealousy, with an evil desire for retaliation, on the festival *Deepavali*. We draw up the

balance sheet of profit and loss. *Samvatsari* is an annual festival. On this day the account of good and bad deeds of the whole year should be settled and sincere efforts should be made to get free from bad deeds. In the *Agam* scriptures, there is the story of three merchants. With an equal capital they set out for trading. The first merchant doubled the capital and returned. The second merchant got entrapped in depression of prices and returned only with the original capital. The third merchant incurred a loss. Instead of gains, he lost the original capital.

All the human beings, all the *jivas* in the world are like these three merchants. The first type of *jivas* preserve the original capital of humanity and moreover they attain reverence. They practise good conduct, keep vows and attain emancipation.

The second type of *jivas* do not attain emancipation but preserve humanity. They practise good conduct. The *jivas* of the third type lose even the traces of humanity. They practise bad conduct and are consigned to hell.

### **Fault-finding and Inner Search**

Today we should search the self. Who does not err ? To err is human. Errors are committed sometimes unconsciously, sometimes by force of *Karma* and sometimes through misunderstanding. We may or may not wish, but we have quarrels and distresses in life. All these errors are no doubt earmarked on the slate of *Karma* and the effort to clean the slate, before the errors are cemented on it, is true forgiveness. In his previous *bhava* (birth) as Triprushtha Vasudev, Bhagwan Mahavira poured overheated lead into his servant's (*shayyapalak's*) ears. Ages passed by. The servant (*shayyapalak*)

of the previous birth came as a cowherd and thrust straight long thorns into Bhagwan Mahavira's ears. This happened during the twelfth year of his penance. This incident shows that if animosity is not calmed and quietened in time, it produces very horrible results. The real way of celebrating the *Samvatsari* festival lies in seeing one's own faults, in rising above the mud of attachment and aversion that lies at every step, in being awakened to one's errors. If a man does not get awakened to his errors and enjoyments in time, he is put into a very bad plight. He becomes untruthful, addicted, attached and full of harm to others. Regarding the plight of such an ignorant man, *Dashavaikalika Sutra* says :

निच्चुखिङ्गो जहा तेणो, अत्त-कम्मेहि दुम्मइ ।  
तारिसो मरणंते वि, नाडराहेइ संवरं ॥  
(- दश. अ. ५)

[As the ever-fearing thief comes to grief as a result of his own bad deeds, so the ignorant person comes to grief on account of his own misdeeds and even when his end comes near, he cannot restrain his sense organs.]

An old woman of eighty was lying on her death-bed. She was breathing her last. Somebody told her, "Granny, now ask everybody's forgiveness." Then the old woman said, "I will ask forgiveness of everybody except my second son because I don't want to see his wretched face." Thus even at the age of eighty, even when one is breathing one's last, the mind is pre-occupied with past hurts of anger and spite. At the end, even when *navakar mantra* is being spoken to him, man tightens the knot of his animosity and retaliation.

Thus, these days of *Paryushan* are the days of introspection. Man constantly roams outside. It is easy to see the outside world. For it, eye-sight would do, insight is not needed. Our

sense organs are also inclined towards the outer world. But the days of *Paryushan* are the days of looking inwards. In daily life, we offended a number of sentient beings. We happen to be unjust, disrespectful or offensive to them. We bear animosity or hostility. Considering all this, we should retrace our steps from the wrong path. To ask their forgiveness, to abandon animosity towards them, to love them – is the aim of forgiveness (*Kshamaapana*).

### Godliness in Humility

The incantation (*Mantra*) of forgiveness (*Kshamaapana*) includes both forgiving and asking forgiveness. Before asking forgiveness, one has to climb down from the perch of arrogance. Greatness or smallness does not prevent one from asking forgiveness (*michchhami dukkadam*). Here all preferences, prejudices, status and dignity cease. The best illustration of asking forgiveness is found in the life of Bhagwan Mahavira's chief disciple, Gautama, who was a treasure-house of knowledge and a model of saintliness. Once Bhagwan Mahavira's chief disciple, Indrabhuti Gautama, was returning bare-footed and bare-headed after begging for a meal. Humility was glowing over the face of Gautama who had conquered the directions and the ends of the four quarters. All arrogance of knowledge had melted. This great disciple of Mahavira believed – "What is true, is mine." He did not believe – "What is mine, is true."

Walking along the main road, Gautama knew that Bhagwan Mahavira's lay-disciple, Ananda, who was on fast unto-death, was lying on a *darbha* (sacred grass) bed. Gautama, the merciful, called to see Ananda Shrivaka, the owner of eighteen crores of gold-sheets and six *Vrajas* (herds) of ten

thousand cows each. When Ananda saw this chief disciple of Mahavira, he bowed down and asked “Bhagwan, can a layman attain clairvoyance ?”

“Surely, while living his worldly life, a monk’s devotee can attain the third great knowledge-clairvoyance.”

Ananda’s face lighted up when he heard this. He said, “Bhagwan, I have attained clairvoyance. By virtue of it, I can see fifty *jojans* (50 x 8 = 400 miles) deep in the Lavana sea to the east, the west and the south. I can directly recognize all things as far as *Saudharmakalpa* in the sky and as far as *Lolachchua* hellish abode in the other regions.”

Ananda’s voice smacked of experience. Members of his family, who had collected around, heard this with surprise. Gautama Swami thought for a while and then said, “Ananda ! A shravaka can attain clairvoyance, but it cannot be so far-reaching as you said. Your statement is delusive. You should immediately practise penance for it.”

Shravaka Ananda had full faith in his contention. He said, “Bhagwan ! Does Bhagwan Mahavira’s dispensation perscribe penance for him who tells the truth ?”

“No.”

“Then you should practice penance. You made a wrong statement,” said Anand with confidence.

This statement of the monk’s devotees confused Guru Gautama for a while. People began to say that Ananda had crossed the limits of polite speech : on the one hand, there was Gautama, the greatest of monks, and on the other hand, there was Ananda, the layman. An ocean is an ocean and a lake is a

lake. Guru Gautama is an ocean of knowledge. A lake has its limits. Can an ocean have a boundary ?

Gautama, the great ganadhara, was very eager to know the truth. He soon went to Bhagwan Mahavira and narrated the incident. He asked in humility, “Bhagwan ! Who should practise penance for this – I or Ananda ?” Without the least hesitation, Mahavira, the great justifier and propounder of truth, said, “Gautama ! You should practise penance for this. You should immediately ask Ananda’s forgiveness.”

As a wild storm shakes all the trees in a forest, so there was a violent commotion in the atmosphere. What a judgement ! God Himself asked his chief disciple to beg pardon. No concession, no moderation ! In case Gautama of vast knowledge made a mistake, he could be asked privately to practise penance. But to go to a *shravak* to beg his pardon was improbable, impossible. Between Gautama and Ananda the difference was great. The *Shravak* who had a little knowledge of religion and religious rites, and Gautama who had explored the vast ocean of religious principles were poles apart.

The world wondered, but Gautama, who had conquered pride and arrogance, went straight to Ananda and said, “Ananda, you are right. I ask your forgiveness (*michchhami dukkadam*) for my wrong statement.”

Tears flowed from Ananda’s eyes. Joining his hands in supplication he said, “You have brightened my last hour. What humility befitting a man of knowledge ! What modesty, difficult to attain even after a number of *bhavas* (births) ! Victory ! Victory of Lord Mahavira ! Victory of Gautama of vast knowledge !”

While begging pardon one should be humble and modest. 'That is why Bhrami and Sundari, the two savant sisters of Bahubali, said to him, "My brother ! Alight from the elephant." These words reminded Bahubali of his great fault. "Her younger brothers, who had taken the diksha earlier, were senior to him in respect of knowledge. This is why Bahubali ought to bow down to them." Bahubali went on raising his degree of austerities. But the small thorn – "I am elder" – would not let Bahubali's severe austerities fructify. But when he knew his fault, Bahubali begged pardon from the bottom of his heart. The next moment his austerities fructified.

Forgiveness and the earth are alike. Thus, forgiveness is the joy of life and the spring of penance. When spring comes, nature is in full bloom. The spring of spiritual merits blooms in the life of the man who adopts forgiveness in life. Today forgiveness has become a formality. By force of habit man says, 'Thank you', in ordinary dealings of life. But this is only a formality, only a habit. With a number of people, it is a habit to say 'Thank you'. If a man turns the tap on and water comes from it, he says, 'Thank you'. But this is an ordinary type of forgiveness. The forgiveness that we talk of in paryusana days comes from a vastness of heart, from an abundance of good qualities and tranquility of mind. One of the meanings of the word, 'forgiveness (Kshama)' in Sanskrit is 'the earth (pruthvi)'. The man living on earth digs it deep and constructs a mine there. But the earth bears all this. The earth is considered to be a symbol of forbearance. That is why the Mahabharata says, "Violence is the strength of the wicked, penalty is the strength of kings, service is the strength of women and forgiveness is the strength of the virtuous." In the Mahabharata, we read that

at midnight, after the victory of the Pandavas, Ashvatthama came secretly and brutally killed Draupadi's five sons. The ocean of victory turned into deep lamentation. Instead of cheering, loud wailing was heard on all sides. Seeing this cruel killing of her sons, Draupadi often became unconscious and fell on the ground. Bhima and Arjun ran to arrest Ashvatthama, the killer that had got away. They arrested him from a wild jungle and presented him before Draupadi.

Shri Krishna said to Draupadi, "This is the killer of your sons. What should be the punishment for his crime ? A single blow of Bhima's mace or Arjun's weapon can separate, can remove his head off his trunk. How shall we punish him ?"

Draupadi burst into tears. The murder of her five sons had filled her heart with pain. She sobbed and said, "How terrible is the pain of a son's loss ! I actually have experienced the same pain. I don't wish that his mother should experience the pain. Don't kill him. How agonizing is the pain of a mother's heart ! I won't have Ashvatthama's mother experience the pain. Release him."

### **Formal Forgiveness (Dravya Kshama)**

And Ashvatthama, the murderer, was released. This is the grandeur of forgiveness. The animosity and retaliation in our heart should be tranquilized before we ask forgiveness. He, who becomes tranquilized, deserves to be propitiated. This means that you cannot practise spiritual austerities before asking forgiveness. We often make errors and develop animosities in life. If our hand touches someone and we say 'Sorry', or conventionally post a card of forgiveness, it is a formal forgiveness. Such formal forgiveness is a matter of



routine in life, but it is inconsequential. Forgiveness for show is a vanity. Some say that absence of anger is forgiveness. To grow angry first and then to ask forgiveness is not forgiveness. Bhagwan Mahavira compares anger to a flaming fire. In the *Puranas*, anger is said to be the gateway to hell. In the *Koran*, anger is said to be Satan's son. In the *Bible*, anger is said to be a volcano burning every man to ashes. Anger expresses itself in four stages. In the first stage, a person senior in respect of age, status or wealth grows angry with a junior person. A mother-in-law grows angry with the daughter-in-law, a guru grows angry with his disciple and father grows angry with his son. For a slight reason they grow angry. The second stage is that of suffocation. When a person is unable to express his anger openly, he becomes mentally upset and seeks an opportunity for retaliation. The third stage is that of weeping. This is a helpless condition of anger, when feelings of anger cannot be expressed or contained, person bursts into tears. The fourth stage of anger is excessive tranquillity and it is found in gentlemen and great men. They transform anger into tranquillity. They do not wish to retaliate.

### **Anger is Like Fire**

Anger is said to be blind. It means that anger destroys itself. Chandakaushik, the snake, was an ascetic in his previous birth. He grew angry with children who had completely destroyed his garden. So with an axe in hand he ran to strike them. But he came upon a ditch. Kaushika, the ascetic, did not see the ditch, and the axe in his hand recoiled on him and killed him. A similar incident happened during Bhagwan Mahavira's period of penance. He came to the rich city of Vaishali. For meditation he selected a blacksmith's desolate low-roofed

house. The sick blacksmith had gone to live elsewhere for change of air. But the blacksmith recovered and returned. He saw that a monk had taken possession of his house. He thought that surely somebody has taken occupancy of his premises in his absence. He, who believed that 'All land is God's land', had taken possession of his land.

The blacksmith had recovered from a long illness. He had become irritable. Moreover, as soon as he stepped into his house, he saw this. Wild with anger, the blacksmith lifted a weighty sledge-hammer. He thought of hitting the weighty sledger-hammer hard on the monk's head so as to kill the monk in a moment. Some tried to dissuade the blacksmith, some tried to prevent him, and some warned him of the great sin of killing a monk. But as they tried to calm the blacksmith, his anger rose. At last, it was a question of life and death. The blacksmith lifted the weighty sledge-hammer and began to brandish it. Mahavira stood firm as before. No fear. No tremor. Resolute like Mount Meru he stood full of equanimity, engrossed in meditation. The monk's tranquility provoked the blacksmith all the more. He vigorously brandished the sledge-hammer. In a moment he would strike the monk and the latter would fall dead. But a strange thing happened !

As the blacksmith began to brandish the sledge-hammer, his hand started trembling. He was so excited that he wished to kill the monk there and then. The blacksmith's hand was arrested. Instead of being brandished forth, the sledge-hammer receded. It recoiled on the blacksmith who, just recovered from illness, killed himself through anger. Mahavira stood firm in meditation as before.

Anger hurts the angry person himself. How perverted a man becomes when he grows angry ! His eyes are dilated and emit sparks. Sometimes he stamps his feet and sometimes he utters foul language. He, who is angry, defiles not only the other person, but the whole atmosphere. That is why Shakespeare said that anger is deep like the sea and quick like the fire. Saint Tiruvalluvar says that fire burns whatever goes near it, but the fire of anger burns the whole family. An angry man closes his eyes and opens his mouth wide. Anger expels discrimination from the mind and bolts it out. Such anger can be compared to a stone thrown at a beehive; it soon gets transformed into enmity.

A great man was returning from a riverbank, after having a bath. A *Chandala* (sinful man) splashed water on him. The great man flared up and began to abuse the *Chandala*. He bathed again. When he came out of the river, the *Chandala* went to bathe. This enraged him all the more. He said, "Why do you need a bath ?" The *Chandala* said, "It is necessary to wash away a *Chandala*'s touch. When you were abusing me, the great *Chandala* of anger was inhabiting your mind. I bathe to wash away that foul touch of yours."

Thus, anger makes a man a great *Chandala*. It commits the offence of violence and destroys joy. Anger comes like a wave and develops into a great ocean engulfing man's mind. From a small seed of anger, a great banyan tree of enmity shoots up. Through a small hole, it enters the mind and pervades everywhere. Anger turns a man into a demon. In order to know it, we should find out the seed of anger. After the seed has been found, we should stop fertilizing it. This is what saints have done. Tukaram, the saint, never grew angry. Someone is said

to have declared a prize for making him feel angry. A man took up the challenge. He went to the place where Saint Tukaram was singing hymns and sat in his lap. Tukaram began to caress him like a small child. That man tried another trick. He jumped and sat on the back of Tukaram's wife in order to anger him. Tukaram said to his wife, "Take care lest he should fall." His trick failed. Thus, only he, who knows the root of anger, can forgive.

Anger is alien to the soul, forgiveness is natural to it. Anger is enmity, forgiveness is friendship. Anger kills, forgiveness saves. When the soul performs ablutions in the nectar of forgiveness, all obstinacy, quarrels, enmity, treachery, etc. melt away. If anger is harboured, it gets transformed into enmity. For births to come, enmity keeps man submerged in anger. "Enmity is fight, *Kshama* is restraint. Enmity is destructive, *Kshama* is conducive to progress. Enmity disjoins, *Kshama* joins. Enmity unfair, *Kshama* is fair. Enmity argues, *Kshama* confesses. Enmity is perversity, *Kshama* is culture. Enmity is whirlpool, *Kshama* is a lotus. The surest remedy for the poison of enmity is forgiveness."

### Three Categories of Men

In view of the pace of life today, forgiveness is more important than ever before. In the cultural context of today, there is a greater need for forgiveness today than ever. In the times of Bhagwan Rishabhdev, men were simple and dull. By nature they were simple, but intellectually they were dull. A disciple went begging. He got 32 *vadas*. (A *vadun* is a fried eatable.) He thought, "Out of these sixteen some are to be given to the guru. Let me then eat sixteen fresh *vadas*."

He walked a little way further and thought, "If I show these to the guru, he will give me half of them. Let me then eat eight *vadas*." Then the disciple walked on, halted and ate half of the *vadas* each time. At last there was, but one *vadun* left with him. The guru asked the disciple, "Why is there only one *vadun*? What became of the other *vadas*?" Then as the disciple ate the *vadun* he said, "This is how I ate them." The disciple was simple by nature, but intellectually he was dull.

During the period from that of the second Tirthankara to that of the twenty-third Tirthankara, people were simple and intelligent. In the times of the twenty-fourth Tirthankara, Bhagwan Mahavira, and in later times, people are found to be crooked (*vakra*) and dull. Today simplicity has been all but lost. Simplicity is taken for silliness and roguery is taken for cleverness. Man's intellect has reached great heights, but his heart goes on contracting. Forgiveness without simplicity is formal. So, in these days of crooked-dull people, we need to cultivate the virtue of forgiveness. When we say, "May all sentient beings forgive me my offences!", we need not have any inferiority complex. We should feel ourselves uplifted. Pride should melt. We should have a firm conviction that the other persons are just like us in all respects.

In the times of Bhagwan Mahavira, Chandapradhyota, the lustful king, broke into the house of the royal sage Udayan who lived a lotus-like life. He came riding on a ferocious elephant, named Analgiri, carried off from Udayan's palace a beautiful maid-servant and a sandalwood idol from his temple. These were not ordinary things, the maid-servant and the idol. At the time of her death, Udayan's dear wife Prabhavati had asked the king to worship the idol and to take care of the hunch-backed

maid-servant. Seeing this idol, Udayan gradually tried to reduce his wailings over his wife and the delusion of samsara. The hunch-backed maid-servant, who worshipped the idol, became temple attendant. Meanwhile, a gentleman from the Gandhara kingdom came to worship this divine idol. On account of the fatigue of the journey and the change of climate, he fell ill. Seeing this condition of her God's devotee, hunch-backed maid-servant took pity on him, nursed him well and cured him. In return, the gentleman gave to the maid-servant a medicinal gold-pill to make her extremely beautiful. The maid-servant then longed to be a queen. Udayan lived a lotus-like life and so the maid-servant hinted Chandapradhyota, the king of Avanti. Chandapradhyota, the king of Avanti, carried the maid-servant off. The maid-servant brought with her the sandalwood idol which she worshipped everyday.

When king Udayan heard this news, his mind became restless. Chandapradhyota had robbed him of his good name. As a dutiful king, he thought that Chandapradhyota had outraged his dignity and became his enemy and the enemy should be killed. With all royal authority, he gave a call to ravage the kingdom of Avanti and to imprison or kill the king. But Udayan, the discriminate and religious king, knew that much injustice is done if one fights a battle in excitement. Along with the guilty, the innocent is killed. King Udayan, Bhagwan Mahavira's devotee, first sent his messengers, but Chandapradhyota took this for cowardice. At last, Udayan called up his army. He decided to fight the battle with the least possible violence. The purpose was served by a duel between the two kings. On the battlefield of Avanti, Udayan, the royal king, and Chandapradhyota, the king, fought like two clouds full

of thunder and lightning. Chandapradhyota, the proud king, could not reject the royal king Udayan's challenge to a duel and in no time he was defeated. The adamantine body of Udayan was so strong that even this lustful king, who knew a thousand treacheries, could not defeat him. Soon he fell supine and was bound in iron chains. King Udayan became victorious.

King Udayan entered the kingdom of Avanti. He spread the message of non-violence and declared that the innocent would be protected, and that nobody should fear brute strength. King Pradyota was imprisoned and the words 'a maid-servant's husband' were written on his forehead. Thus, king Udayan conquered Avanti and returned. These were the days of the months of *Shravana* and *Bhadrapada*. This devotee of Bhagwan stopped the march of the army for the eight days of *Paryushana* and pitched his tents at a safe place. The *Samvatsari* day came. In the morning King Udayan said, "We shall fast today. But don't keep them hungry who do not fast."

The chief cook of the army said, "Sir, all others have followed you. Only the prisoner Chandapradhyota remains to be asked."

King Udayan said, "Ask him, but don't starve him. Ask him his wish and then cook."

The chief cook went to ask king Chandapradhyota. Chandapradhyota asked the question and tried to know why only on that day. The chief cook of the kitchen explained it all to him, but the deceitful mind of Chandapradhyota had a doubt. He thought that perhaps it was a plan to give him poison in his food. So he, too, thought of fasting.

King Chandapradhyota said, "I am also a follower of

Bhagwan Mahavira's religion. In this miserable condition my mind is confused. I didn't remember even the day of this religious festival. Go and tell your king that I will fast today."

The chief cook told king Udayan everything from beginning to end. King Udayan heard this and thought, "Oh, this Pradyota is a follower of my religion. Today I am going to ask annual forgiveness (*Samvatsari Kshamaṇa*). Without asking for his forgiveness, my observance of the religious austerities would remain incomplete."

King Udayan's minister dissuaded him. They said, "Chandapradhyota attends Mahavira's conference, but he has all the vices." Someone said, "Release the tiger from the cage and it will again assault." Udayan, the royal king, said "Bravery lies as much in punishing a strong enemy as in forgiving an enemy." Before the moon of the fifth day of the bright half of the month of *Bhadrapada* glistened in the sky, king Udayan himself severed the chains of Pradyota, the king of Avanti. He seated him on a seat equal to his. He asked forgiveness for his immodesty and offence and said a few words about the upliftment of the soul.

Thus Mahavira's forgiveness is a brave man's forgiveness. It needs king Udayan's fearless heart. A weak mind does not forgive readily or become generous. A man of weak mind cannot stretch his hand for friendship.

#### **A Mine of All Virtues**

Forgiveness is the gift of an adamantine heart. Forgiveness is a promise of a pious heart. That is why they say that forgiveness is a brave man's virtue. Forgiveness means strength. Forgiveness calls for a strong heart. At the time of his

crucifixion, Jesus forgave them who sent him to the cross, because they did not know what they were doing. That is why he said while showing the importance of forgiveness, "When you are going to offer ablation if you remember there is an enmity between you and your brother, return and compromise with him."

This means that if the heart is full of animosity, no religious rite will be fruitful. The Jain religion fully expounds the virtue of forgiveness. It brings us a number of virtues at once. Forgiveness is said to be the seed-plot of all virtues. If forgiveness enters, greediness disappears. With forgiveness comes renouncement, simplicity, modesty, contentment and control over the mind and sense-organs. If all these virtues are present, forgiveness can be practised.

Forgiveness means being a Jain monk (*nirgrantha*), free from all ties, unknottting all ties. "Ksha (ꣳ)" means a knot and *ma* (𑀧𑀸) means 'to destroy'. Life today is caught up in a number of knots. Between father and son, there are differences of opinion. Between Guru and disciple, there are disputes. Between husband and wife, there are misunderstandings. Between friends, there are broils. Between master and servant, there is ill feeling. Between neighbours, there are quarrels. Love is absent in the relations between near ones. Forgiveness unites broken hearts. There are knots of arrogance and there are knots of enmity. There are obsessions and differences of opinion. Man becomes a victim of strange mental diseases. In a sugarcane where there is a knot, there is no juice. this is why relations between persons have become dry and uninteresting. Forgiveness vitalizes them. During the period covering the Tirthankaras from the second to the twenty-third, life was

comparatively simple. When a mistake was made, people begged pardon, but life today is complex. Man is restless and he makes the world around him restless. Man lives as if he is in a prison cell. Knowingly or unknowingly, we become victims of anger, pride, illusion and greed. These vices express themselves through our body, speech and mind.

*Outwardly we are good, but inwardly ?*

*Only God knows. Arrogance is a great vice.*

*Illusion says, "This is mine, that is yours."*

*Where there is anger, there is annoyance.*

*Where there is pride, there is insult.*

What we think to be non-existent, is found to be existent. What we think to be existent, is found to be non-existent. Lust pervades everywhere. The festival of forgiveness is the festival of universal love; the festival, that promises fearlessness to the sentients of the three worlds. Let us proclaim from the depths of a generous heart and in a voice touched with tenderness :

*"Love all sentients of the universe !*

*Cherish all good intentions of the Heart !*

*Come, forgive and ask forgiveness !*

*The world is full of vices, full of enmity.*

*Let us sow the seeds of friendship.*

*Then only the world will be worth living in."*

O ! Brother mine ! Why is there a collar round your neck ? Are you a wood-cutter for *bhavas* (births) ? Are you to roam with a bundle of sticks of passions (*Kashayas*) ? Why can't you speak in a free voice with a frank heart :

*"Michchhami dukkadam !*

*May my evil deeds be fruitless !"*



First is the love for the mother and next comes the love for brothers and sisters. It then develops into the care for the interests of others and it expands into compassion for all sentient.

Forgiveness is the measure of the fruitfulness of all rituals. Forgiveness is an indication of how far religious rites have been realized. Forgiveness is the barometer of the true religious spirit. In the absence of Forgiveness, vows, prayers, penances, meditations and religious rites do not give fruits. Forgiveness, which is a soul's virtue, is distorted by anger and passions (*Kashayas*). Water is cool by nature. In the proximity of fire it becomes hot, but heat is now water's property, it is a foreign element. As soon as the fire is removed, water regains its natural coolness. For bringing coolness to water no other aid is needed, because coolness is its natural property. Similarly, forgiveness is the soul's natural characteristic. No external instrument is needed for it. But as water becomes hot, so forgiveness, the natural characteristic of the soul, is distorted by the rise of anger and other passions, but that distortion is not natural. In the absence of its contact with fire, heat is reduced. Similarly, in the absence of anger and other passions, the distortion is tranquillized. When the soul is in its own nature, it is happy because it gains happiness in and by its own nature. When it flinches from its own nature and is mixed with foreign elements, it becomes unhappy. Thus, anger is not soul's nature, but a foreign element produced by contact with outer circum-stances and that is why it is harmful to the soul. There is nothing so harmful as anger and there is nothing so helpful as forgiveness. Anger brings a fall not only in this birth, but also in the next birth. It is said about forgiveness : "The best

forgiveness is the essence of the three worlds, it takes us across the samsara or transmigration, it gets us the three gems and it prevents our downfall."

Such extraordinary forgiveness is best illustrated by Mahavira's life. He experienced a number of calamities (*upasargas*) in life. But God bore them all with patience. When Indra, the greatest of gods, praised Bhagwan Mahavira's greatness, a god named Sangam became conscious of divine egotism. He made up his mind to put Mahavira on trial. At that time, Mahavira was engrossed in meditation in Paulash temple outside the village Pedhal in the region named Dridhabhumi. His meditation was extraordinary. He was practising penance with his eyes fixed on a dry substance, without any movement of his eyelids. The god Sangam stepped forth. The earth and the sky thundered. He thought to himself, "Indra made a mountain from a mole-hill, I will make a mole-hill from the mountain." Sangam came to Mahavira and tried his tricks, one after another. He wanted to prove that man is helpless in front of God's wonderful exploits.

Now it was a dark and dangerous night. Ghosts were screaming and evil spirits were running about impatiently for food. But these terrible noises had no effect on Mahavira. He was meditating open-eyed.

A storm arose and poured a basketful of dust into his eyes. But Mahavira and his eyes had no relation to each other, because the soul and the body are different. Ants were acutely stinging like piercing needles and gnats came with poisonous stings. Then came large red ants capable of carving a human body into the shape of a sieve. The pain was so terrible that

even an elephant would dash on the ground and die. But this ascetic did not move at all. Not a single word of pain came out of his mouth. Thus, on the one hand, the wicked one would not flinch from his wickedness and, on the other hand, the saint would not flinch from his saintliness. Meanwhile, his wife Yashoda and daughter Priyadarshana came. The unattached king Bhartruhari's heart which would never melt, did melt by his daughter's wailings. But here nothing could affect Mahavira. Lust defeats him whom nothing else defeats in *samsara*. Age, strength or time do not count there. Beautiful women, dancing and singing in the spring, came to this ascetic, but not a single hair on his body was affected at all.

These tricks of Sangam failed. These steps of his game were defeated. Now he only wished that excited by mental torture and physical pain, Mahavira should, but once pray for God's help. If man accepts god's greatness, it is a great victory. He could then return to his Heavenly Abode with a bright face.

Between Mahavira's two feet a cook made a fire to cook food. A hunter hung cages on his body which was steady like the trunk of a tree. With strokes of their beaks, hungry birds prayed upon the flesh of his body.

At that time, a thief was caught by chance. He said, "I am innocent. I have only carried out the orders of my guru. Come, I will show you my guru."

The thief led the policeman to Mahavira who was practising penance. That 'Disciple' was set free and the policeman beat up Mahavira like a beast. But speaking or asking for help was out of question.

That was the re-payment of a particular debt, whether man

or god – everyone is bound by the rope of *Karma*. The rope was being out that way. Mahavira got released from the kings gallows, but in fact he was cutting the bondage.

Six long months passed by. He did not get enough food by begging. But it was not in Mahavira to bow down. The gold of his soul stood at the test of fire.

At last, Sangam fell down in supplication at Mahavira's feet. This god's pride yielded to Mahavira's conquest over internal enemies viz. lust, anger, greed, etc. His tolerance melted Sangam's heart, agonizing like bee's wax. Bhagwan Mahavira forgave Sangam who had agonized him in a number of ways for six long months. The Jain scriptures describe this spirit of forgiveness as under :

जहिं आकोसणवयण सहिज्जइ,  
जहिं परदोस ण जणि भासिज्जइ ।  
जहिं चेयणगुण चित्त धरिज्जइ,  
तहिं उत्तम खम जिणे कहिज्जइ ॥

[The people who regard the harsh words of wicked persons as fruits of their own accumulated Karma, and do not blame others and get engrossed in the experience of the natural qualities of the soul, and it is this that God calls forgiveness par excellence.]

The Jain monk is forbidden to let the spittle pass down his throat before he asks forgiveness for his error. To love him, who has spread thorns for you, is the real test of forgiveness. Excited by jealousy, Bhagwan Buddha's own disciple once threw a slab of stone at him. Bhagwan Buddha was hurt on his leg. For a number of days, he could not walk. Even then Bhagwan Buddha had no feeling of bitterness towards his disciple. Moreover he said, "If we bear this, they will ultimately realize their mistake."

Forgiveness should be genuine, not artificial. We are to pray in the festival of *Paryushan*, not to celebrate it. Is forgiveness infused into life or is it simply verbal or formal? Forgiveness is the tremendous power that takes the soul near supersoul in a single leap. Have we made this forgiveness a matter of convenience ? Are we sure that we do not believe that the evil deeds that we did for 364 days have been suddenly washed off only by saying. "I beg pardon of all sentient ? May all sentient pardon me !" Joining two hands in supplication, saying over the phone or sending a printed card is of no use. The real forgiveness is that asking, which the mind does not hesitate or the creeper of the heart does not wither. The real forgiveness is that which decorates the street gates with wreaths of flowers of love and overturns the deadly thorns of past quarrels. The real forgiveness is that which showers nectar from the heart and regards all with love. About natural forgiveness, St. Jnanadeva says,

सहन करत सबमें बडो, गर्व न क्षमा कराय ।

जिमि शरीर रोमहिं धरत, ताको सुधि विसराय ॥

[There are innumerable numbers of hair on the body, but the body takes no notice of them. Similarly, enduring everything, we should not be proud at all.]

Forgiveness is the brilliance of the brilliant and the penance of ascetics. But are we really brilliant or is ours only a cover of hypocrisy, fear of cowardice ? We see that a number of people are afraid not of lies, but of detection of lies; not of evil deeds, but of being caught doing evil deeds; not of stealing, but of being exposed as thieves.

As long as man is fearful, he cannot attain forgiveness. We do not torment the minds of others only, we do not say bitter

words to others only, we do not offend the souls of others only, but we offend our own souls. We torment it by thoughts and words. We grow angry with ourselves. We should thus be aware of our offences not only to others, but also to ourselves in order to be able to ask forgiveness, for it is necessary for a person to confess his sins. If a man has exploited a poor person, if he has been instrumental to someone's exploitation, if he has given or taken bribes, if he has pained someone with his possession or killed someone with violence, he should confess his misdoings with himself as a witness. That is why Acharya Bhadrabahu-swami says,

जं दुक्कडं ति मिच्छा, ते भुज्जो कारणं अपूरतो ।

तिविहेण पडिहंतो, तस्स खलु दुक्कडं मिच्छा ॥

[The worshipper who performs pratikramana with thoughts, speech and body, who asks forgiveness for his offences and does not commit more sins has his sins made futile. When you become aware of sins, confess them frankly and take a vow not to commit the sins again, you approach forgiveness.]

'May my misdeeds be forgiven !' means that we should always take a firm vow to refrain from the mistake which we have once confessed, the fault for which we have practised penitence and the sin for which we have atoned.

In *Avashyak Nirukti*, Acharyashree clearly says, "Having once asked forgiveness for an offence, if someone again commits the sin, he evidently tells lies and weaves the net of hypocrisy."

This is how forgiveness should be given and asked. Both these activities and their effects are different. Asking forgiveness is a bit easier than forgiving. While asking forgiveness, egotism is melted. Whether the other person forgives or not, he who asks forgiveness purifies his soul. But

it does not suffice to ask forgiveness, to be tranquilized after asking forgiveness. One has to tranquilize oneself. Asking forgiveness is difficult because the desire to retaliate, the waves of revenge, keep on rising in man's heart. When a man becomes a victim to injustices inflicted on him, he is more wounded.

A noteworthy element of the conception of forgiveness in the Jain religion is that while other religions teach us to ask for god's forgiveness, the Jain religion talks of asking forgiveness for all souls. It is easy to ask forgiveness of God in a corner in a temple, but when a man asks forgiveness of small and big living beings around him, his dealings in life change, he is reminded of his direct dealings with the whole living world; there is a reference to a person's dealings with the whole universe.

#### **Bhava Kshamapana (Experiencing Forgiveness)**

Jain philosophy classifies forgiveness into two categories : (1) *Dravya kshamapana* and (2) *Bhava kshamapana*. *Dravya kshamapana* is only formal. The person knows that he is not asking forgiveness from his heart. The forgiveness that is asked from one's heart is *bhava kshamapana*. Only the person with discretion (*samyakdrishti*) can ask *bhava kshamapana*. *Bhava kshamapana* expresses itself when the *anantanubandhi* (continuing since endless times) passions (*kashayas*) get tranquilized. Some errors are realized only in a day's time. Sometimes anger lasts for one day, sometimes for a fortnight and sometimes for four months. Sometimes anger is like a pebble thrown into water and sometimes it is like a line drawn on the sands on a river-bank. It soon gets obliterated by the wind. Sometimes anger is like an inscription on stone. That is why in the daily *pratikramana*, forgiveness is asked for offences made during

twenty-four hours, in the fortnightly *pratikramana*, forgiveness is asked for offences made in the fortnight, and in the *chomasi pratikramana*, forgiveness is asked for offences made during four months. But sometimes anger lasts for a year. *Samvatsari pratikramana* is for this.

Forgiveness saves us, attachment kills us. If forgiveness expresses itself in purely good (*sattvaguni*) sense, enmity and opposition do not rise. But the forgiveness given in *rajoguni* and *tamoguni* sense does not purify the soul. Forgiveness in *sattvika* sense destroys innumerable sins and prevents the inflow of new *karma* in future. If during the period of one year enmity or jealousy towards someone has come to arise, he should be asked forgiveness. If we miss it, the sin is cemented on the slate of *Karma*. In that case *samyakatva* is lost and *mithyatva* comes to arise. That is why the duty of forgiveness on the day of the greatest festival (*parvadhira*) assumes great significance.

That is why Shrimad Rajchandra introduces forgiveness as the grand gateway to emancipation. According to the Jain Religion, excellent *Kshama* is the first of the ten prescribed duties. Forgiveness has different categories such as *upkara-kshama*, *apakara-kshama*, *vipaka-kshama*, etc. All these categories of forgiveness are found in our life, but he, who rises to *vachana-kshama* and then *dharma-kshama* or *sahaja-kshama*, easily attains emancipation. The Buddhist religion shows different attainments of excellence and says that he, who adopts the quality of forgiveness and develops it to its highest degree, easily attains emancipation.

Whom do we call the Tirthankara ? We call him *Kshamashramana*. when we go to temple we say, "I wish

forgiveness”. Once name of the Jain religion is *Arhat dharma*. The Jain religion says that if you are forgiving, you are meritorious. What is sleeping, wakens. Obscured *jnana* or *darshana* reveals itself. All distortions end.

All religions talk of sin. Some religions pray to God or expect miracles in order to be saved from the punishment for sin. The Jain philosophy says that there is no escape from punishment for sin. You can escape the punishment only if there is forgiveness in your mind. The Jain religion holds forgiveness in such a high esteem. We should prepare ourselves for forgiveness. The eight days of *paryushana* are for this preparation. The first important element of *pratikramana* is forgiveness. The first step to forgiveness is equanimity. For this there is *samayika*. *Samayika* means awareness of the present.

Then comes *pratikramana*. Then comes atonement. Knowingly or unknowingly, man transgresses the law every moment. He breaks the law. To return to the law, we perform *pratikramana*.

We ourselves ask forgiveness and inspire others to forgive. How to develop such fearlessness, such courage ? His pet disciple Gautam asked Bhagwan Mahavira, “Why do you talk of forgiveness every now and then ?”

Bhagwan replied, “By forgiving, we first feel elated and subsequently a peculiar sense of inner delight.”



## 7

### Non-Violence : A Way of Life

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जो देवाणवि देवो, जं देवा पंजलि नमंसंति ।  
तं देवदेवमहिं, सिरसा वंदे महावीरं ॥

[I bow down my head in obeisance to Mahavira, who is worshipped by the great gods, who is the god of gods and to whom gods pray with folded hands.]

**B**efore Bhagwan Mahavira was born, every soul upon this earth was in intense distress. A few men in their vain belief of so-called heaven turned life on earth into hell. Men had given up all efforts and believed in fate entirely. Their hands, legs and minds had become inert. He believed that everything is shaped by destiny, but not by self help.

In those days temples had become haunts of trickery and deceit. All religious lives were reduced to the performance of sacrificial rites and offerings. The way to redemption lay through sacrificial killings, people believed. Many living beings were consumed by the blazing fire of sacrifices. Thousands of beasts lost their lives on the altar.



Kings waged constant wars for petty gains. Scriptures spread the false belief that to die fighting in such wars was the easiest path to salvation. Many women lost their husbands. Countless innocent children became orphans. Only a small group of persons had the access to right knowledge. Even the right to perform penances was restricted to a small group of people. Is knowledge necessary for the poor and lowly people? Only a certain class of people could read scriptures. Others were not allowed to even listen to them. If someone of the lower castes learnt scriptures secretly seating in a corner, molten lead was poured into his ears. The life of women was full of toil and drudgery. Woman was regarded as nothing more than a household commodity. She was not treated as an individual in her own rights. A beast of burden could easily escape, but a woman could not win freedom except through death. All the four classes treated each other with feelings of hostility and contempt. The high-born were conceited. The distress of the downtrodden and the untouchable knew no bounds. They had no roof over their heads. They suffered silently the ceaseless oppression of the high-born. Aggression was regarded as a sign of bravery and he, who sought friendship, was regarded as a coward. To bathe in the blood of one's enemies was regarded as the height of bravery. Man was groping in the dark. Nature groaned terribly. All living beings were in agony. As if in answer to this universal fright, Bhagwan Mahavira was born almost 2589 years ago. Light spread over the hellish scene of earth.

In that era, there were a large number of states in India. Some states were ruled by kings and some others were ruled by powerful groups of men. Vaishali, the capital of the state of

Videha, stood on the bank of the river Gandaki. This city had a number of suburbs. One of the suburbs was Kundagrama. King Siddhartha ruled over Kundagrama. He was a *Kshatriya*, but he believed in peace and in the ultimate truth. He followed the ahimsa, non-violent way of life of Tirthankara Shri Parshvanath, who had lived 200 years ago. One night queen Trishaladevi, the wife of King Siddhartha, had fourteen dreams. Having these dreams, the queen woke up. She related the dreams to King Siddhartha. The king called an assembly of the experts who knew the science of dreams and he asked them to expound the meanings of these dreams. The following are the portents of these fourteen great dreams.

The first dream of the saffron coloured lion suggested that the king's son would be matchless in fearlessness, bravery and generosity and that having destroyed passions, he would protect all living beings just as a lion, destroying all the mad elephants and protects the forest.

The second dream of the elephant with four tusks meant that his son would preach the fourfold religion. This fourfold religion pertains to the *Shramana* (the Jaina monk), the *Shramani* (the Jaina nun), the *Shravaka* (the Jaina layman) and the *Shravika* (the Jaina laywoman).

The third dream of the bullock implied that on this earth the chariot of religion had got stuck in the mud of irreligion, but the king's son would pull the chariot of religion out of the mud and thus propagate religion.

The fourth dream of *Lakshmidēvi* (the goddess of Wealth) implied that having given alms all the year round, he would enjoy the endless splendour of the status of the Tirthankara.

The fifth dream of the nest implied that he would deserve the place of honour among living beings in all the three worlds, that is, he would be revered in all the three worlds.

The sixth dream of the moon implied that he would spread tranquility in the world which was so full of distress. He would propagate the religion of forgiveness which gives peace as the moon does.

The seventh dream of the sun implied that he would be radiant like the sun, destroying the darkness of ignorance and spreading the light of knowledge.

The eighth dream of the flag implied that he would be like a flag in the king's family.

The ninth dream of the pitcher implied that he would be the treasure-house of all riches, powers and acquisitions.

The tenth dream of the lake implied that like a lake he would remove the mental and physical fatigue of the people who are tired in spite of the fact that some of them rest on soft velvet beds, and that he will quench the thirst of people lying thirsty on the bank of the lake of samsara (worldly life).

The eleventh dream of the ocean implied that, like the ocean, he would possess the gems of vast knowledge and faith.

The twelfth dream of the gods' aeroplane implied that his fame would ascend up to that high abode. He would be adorable to gods.

The thirteenth dream of the mine of gems implied that he would be the mine of the gems of virtues.

The fourteenth and last dream of the firelight implied that

he would serve as the light in the soul. Thus, it was prophesied that a leader of the masses, one possessing many virtues, would be born to the queen. His name would be famous in all the nine continents.

At that time farmers went to King Siddhartha and said, "We do not know why, but the fertility of the land has increased."

Cowherds went and told the queen, "A miracle ! Cows give more milk. More grass has grown in pastures."

Forest-dwellers said, "The mango-trees are the same but, they are abound in the yield of mangoes. Plants are bending down with the luxuriance of flowers and trees with the abundance of fruits."

Citizens said, "This is a prosperous year. The occasions of mourning have been few. Pre-mature deaths haven't occurred. We experience more and more a new impulse of joy and vitality."

Hearing this, King Siddhartha said, "If the forecast of the astrologers comes true, a great soul will make himself manifest in the world. My heart is also stirred with delight, I don't know why."

Queen Trishaladevi said, "My mind is also stirred with joy. Shall we name the child Vardhaman ?" The word *Vardhaman* itself suggests an increase in the quantity of the good in life.

The great soul now in the mother's womb thought, "My stirrings give indeed great pain to my mother. I shouldn't be a cause of it." Thinking thus, the soul in the womb became stable. It stopped stirring. Mother Trishala's pain in the womb

subsided, but her mental anxiety increased. She suspected, that something inauspicious would happen, she wept bitterly and swooned. The whole royal family now was full of sorrow. And, the great soul yet in the mother's womb thought, "What I did for their good, has caused grief to them." So it began its stirrings, the mother's joy knew no bounds. This happened when the soul had been in the womb for six and a half months. But the great soul was deeply moved at this and thought, "How wonderful is a mother's affection for her child ! The trouble the child causes actually gives her pleasure. In this samsara there is no virtue greater than dedication to one's mother. I am yet in the womb. Mother has not even seen my face. But how much affection she has for me !" At that time Bhagwan Mahavira made up his mind that he would not take initiation during the life-time of his parents. Thus the first lesson Bhagwan Mahavira taught was one should always have feelings of loyalty and of love towards one's mother.

It was on the eighth day of the dark half of the month of *Chaitra* that Bhagwan Rishabhadev was born. Under the constellation *Hastottara* at mid-night on the thirteenth day of the bright half of the month *Chaitra*, Vardhaman was born.

56 celestial maidens joined the celebration of this birth. 64 Indras performed the infant's ablution with holy water. Even when he was a child, Mahavira was brave and knew no fear. When he was seven, Vardhaman was once playing with children the game of *ambali-pipali* among the branches of a tree. At that time, a snake coiled itself round the trunk of the tree. The children on the ground took to their heels. Those on the tree clung to the branches, trembling out of fear. But Vardhaman's mind knew no fear. He was not at all afraid of

the snake. He caught the snake at its tail-end, shook it and threw off. The second lesson that Vardhaman teaches is that of fearlessness, intrepidity. Without fearlessness, there cannot be spiritual development. All frighten him who fears. Nobody can stand up to a man who is fearless.

In order to test Vardhaman's fearlessness, one god took the form of a nauseating person. When he was eight, Vardhaman was playing with other children on the outskirts of the city. The rule of the game was that the winner would sit on the back of the boy, who had lost the game. The god assumed the form of a child, came to play there and according to his own plan he lost the game. He let Vardhaman sit on back. But all of a sudden he transformed himself into a giant, as tall as seven palm-trees. The god uttered sharp loud shrieks. A mass of matted hair shot out of his head. His eyes became flaming red. Other children ran away out of fear. But there was no fear in Vardhaman's eyes nor did he show any other sign, not even a tremor. He was tranquil as if majestically riding an elephant. He so struck the god's shoulder with his fist that the god cried out in pain. He gave up his hideous form of a giant and became a small child. Here, the whole city was full of fears, not simply because Vardhaman was the prince of King Siddhartha, but because people loved him so much. All saw Vardhaman returning safely, and heaved a sigh of relief. He was sitting on the god's shoulder. Some ran forward to beat up the god.

Vardhaman said to them, "No, he should not be beaten. It is the greatest punishment to an evil-doer if he repents what he has done. Who are we to punish him ? So, forgive him and let him go."

All obeyed Vardhaman. Now his little adventure was over and the god departed. At that time the god said, “The great god Indra admired your intrepidity and heroism, but you are even more intrepid and heroic than we thought. Really, you are Mahavira.”

Mahavira was sent to school. But to souls of this high order, schools and training there do not have much to offer. The teacher, who was astonished at his knowledge, said, “Trying to teach Mahavira is like holding up a lamp to see the sun.” In this very childhood, Mahavira thought deeply and found that the *samsara* was full of unhappiness. He saw that everyone liked to cause unhappiness to others, but no one likes even a shadow of unhappiness for himself. He thought, “As we love our soul, so all love their souls. As we like to live, so all like to live.”

एवं खू नाणिणो सारं, जं न हिंसति किंचण ।  
अहिंसासमयं चैव एयावन्तं विचाणिया ॥

[This is the substance for the knowledgeable that no harm should be done to anyone. If this is true, nature of Ahimsa (non-violence) is understood, it is enough.]

It is the bond of illusion and jealousy, attachment and aversion, that causes happiness and unhappiness. Vardhaman saw that even the most hated of enemies does not do the harm which uncontrolled attachment and aversion do. As the chicken comes out of the egg and the egg comes out of the chicken, so greed produces craving, craving produces more greed. However great the strength and the power may be, they are not greater than love and mercy. He decided to find the empire of love and mercy in this world. Extraordinary were the thoughts

of Vardhaman. In those days *Kshatriyas* fought terrible battles and killed countless enemies. Mahavira said, “What is the use of external battles ? Fight your own selves. Conquer your own selves. Then only you can get true happiness.”

अप्पाणमेव जुज्झाहि, किं ते जुज्झेण बज्झओ ।  
अप्पाणमेव अप्पाणं जइत्ता सुहमेहए ॥

[He said, “He, who wins himself, wins a greater victory than he who wins thousands of warriors in a battle difficult to conquer.”]

Thinking thus, Mahavira harboured a desire to renounce the world, but this pained his parents. When Mahavira was 28, his parents died and he prepared himself for initiation. But his elder brother Nandivardhana felt that the loss of their parents was just a recent blow and so he would not be able to bear his brother’s separation so soon. Vardhaman respected the desire of his elder brother Nandivardhan and continued to live in the fold of the *samsara* two years longer. But to him the city or the forest made no difference. Even in his royal palace, he lived the life of an ascetic. Sitting in a lonely place in the vast royal palace, he passed most of his time in meditation. Thus a year passed. From the second year, he started giving alms. Every morning he gave alms for three hours. He gave away in alms – gold, silver, riches and grains. He fed the hungry. Under the Ashoka tree, he himself tore five handfuls of hair. He took great vows which would bind him, too. “From today through thoughts, words or my physical self, I will not do an evil deed, I will not have an evil deed done and I will not help anyone doing an evil deed. I will perfectly purify the soul.”

At that moment, everyone was torn between feelings of joy and of sorrow. All were deeply moved in their hearts.

Nandivardhan, the elder brother, knew the intentions of Vardhaman. So, he gave his consent though with a heavy heart. But at the time of Vardhaman's departure, he wept.

Vardhaman's mind would not any longer be tempted by mundane thoughts. He had his gaze set on the path of austerity. That is why in a moment he turned his home into a forest and a forest into his home. At the age of 30 Vardhaman renounced the world. This was a journey for the realization of the soul and the victory over the sense organs. He discarded his royal garments. At that moment, the great god Indra cast a fine devine raiment on his shoulder.

Mahavira set out. At that time a Brahmin named Somasharma came there. He asked for alms. Mahavira had nothing that he would give. So he tore one half of the devine raiment given by Indra which was on his shoulder and gave it to him. The Brahmin left with the devine raiment. That devine raiment was very costly. A danner said to the Brahmin, "If you bring the other half of the divine raiment, I will darn it into a full piece. It will fetch you a handsome price."

The Brahmin returned and started trudging along close on the heels of Mahavira. He didn't dare to ask for the raiment. But it so happened that once the other half of the devine raiment slipped off Mahavira's shoulder. The Brahmin picked it up. Mahavira did not care for it and afterwards he never accepted a new devine raiment.

जे ममाङ्मङ्गं जहाइ, से जहाइ ममाङ्गं ।

[He, who abandons the attachment for possession, abandons the possession completely.]

The following incident reveals not only Bhagwan's

abundant mercy, but also his utter non-attachment to his own physical self. On the first night of his initiation this incident occurred which put his equanimity to the test. Prince Vardhaman was now monk Vardhaman. From the royal bed of flowers, he has stepped on to the rugged and thorny path of austerity. One night, while he was standing in the *Kausagga* posture outside Karmar town, a cowherd asked him to look after his bullocks for a short time while he was himself away. When the cowherd returned, he did not find his bullocks. Mahavira was now in meditation and since cowherd got no answer from Mahavira, he searched for his bullocks on the river bank, among the hills, in the deep foliage and in every nook and corner. He did not find his bullocks anywhere. Dejected and weary he came back where Mahavira was and there he saw his bullocks sitting beside Mahavira.

He flared up in anger. He took the bullock's rope and started lashing Mahavira with it. But at that moment, god Indra appeared and challenged him. He said to the cowherd, "How foolish you are ! He, whom you think to be a thief, is the son Vardhaman of King Siddhartha. Casting off the life of a prince, he has set out to purify his soul. Do you think he would steal your bullocks ? You do not know you are hurting the Lord."

The cowherd, the offender, fell prostrate at the feet of Mahavira. Mahavira's eyes brimmed over with abundant compassion. The great god Indra said, "Such foolish worldly persons will waylay you on the difficult path of austerity. So, let me live in your presence and remove the obstacles. During the period of your penance for the next twelve and a half years I will be by your side to look after you."

Having heard what the great god Indra said, Mahavira



said, “Never has this happened and never will it happen in the life of one who seeks to realize the soul. Self-realization or self-liberation is not to be attained with the help of others. This is the ideal of one who seeks to realize the soul. एगो चरे खगविसाणकप्पो (He proceeds alone and by his own efforts attains liberation.) The liberation of every soul depends upon his own strength, valour and exploits.”

Mahavira proceeded all alone. Sometimes among the ruins of a building, sometimes through burial grounds, sometimes in a thick forest and sometimes in a deep ravine, he sat in meditation. And so he came to a vast hermitage of Duijjanta ascetics in the Moraka camp. This hermitage stood on the bank of a fine stream among green pastures. The head of the hermitage was an intimate friend of Bhagwan Mahavira’s father, Siddhartha. Mahavira accepted his warm welcome and stayed there. The head of the hermitage gave him a thatched cottage to live in. Mahavira, the great monk, stayed there for the rainy season. Monsoon did not set in quite in time. So no fresh grass appeared on the pastures. Hungry cows came to graze and began to pull the hay off the thatched hut. The ascetics, drove the cows away with sticks. But Mahavira was engrossed in unbroken meditation. Attracted by the sweet-smelling substances applied to his body at the time of initiation, insects such as worms, butterflies, gnats and mosquitoes started swarming around stinging him. But Mahavira was quite detached. Other ascetics saw that, while with sticks in hands, they protected their own cottages all the day long, Mahavira did not care for his possessions at all. The ascetics began to slander him. The head of the hermitage came to know this. He said to Mahavira, “Even birds protect their nests. But you don’t

care though you are a prince. Why is it so ?”

As he was engrossed in meditation, Mahavira did not speak. But he thought to himself, “The monk, who had renounced his family, was now tempted by the security of life in the cottage. It was for the sake of austerity that I renounced my home. Now entrapped in somebody else’s cottage, should I forget austerity ? The lamp of my austerity can shine under a tree, in a cave or among the ruins of a building.” So with the consent of the head of the hermitage, Bhagwan left the cottage with all goodwill. But at that time he made five resolutions. (1) Not to stay at a place which breeds aversion. (2) Always to be in meditation. (3) The vow of silence should be observed for most of the time. (4) Not to eat more food than what can be taken in the palm of my hand. (5) Not to flatter householders. These five resolutions show Mahavira’s spirit of renunciation. Like the seeds of a banyan-tree, these vows spread into the sheltering tree of true asceticism in life. On account of these five vows he had to go without places to stay in. Only barren forests, ruined buildings and deserted houses became his abodes. But Mahavira was Mahavira. Neither fear nor provocation could swerve him from his path.

Continuing his journey from the hermitage of the Duijjants ascetics, Bhagwan Mahavira reached a deserted town. Most of the houses were in ruins. This town, with the bones of skeletons strewn everywhere, was known as Asthigrama – the town of bones. A fierce *yaksha* named Shoolapani lived in the temple on the outskirts of the town. He had such a great dislike for the smell of human body that whatever stayed in the temple over-night was sure to be found dead in the morning. The

*yaksha* would scare and prosecute the man and the man would die of fright. Fear itself is not dangerous, but the fear of fear is dangerous. Even Indrasharma, the worshipper of the temple, was afraid of the *yaksha*. But Mahavira was not afraid of anybody. He said, "I do not fear anybody and do not cause fear to anybody. I will stay in the temple for the night."

It was now getting dark. The priest of the temple had left. Mahavira was standing in deep meditation. Shoolpani, the *yaksha*, appeared. He had in his hand a terrible *shoola* (lance) glittering like lightning. He looked like fierceness itself. Thinking that he would get a bellyful for his food, he burst into a peal of cruel loud laughter. Even the strongest men were frightened by the laughter. But like a thunderbolt Mahavira stood firm and unperturbed. The *yaksha* assumed the forms of an elephant, an evil spirit and a snake. He inflicted endless wounds on Mahavira's body. By his miraculous powers, the *yaksha* caused severe pain in Mahavira's eyes, ears, nose, head and everywhere. But Mahavira stood firm like the Sumeru mountain.

The whole night Mahavira was visited with great calamities. At last Shoolpani, the *yaksha*, got dead tired. His monstrous physical strength surrendered to Mahavira's spiritual power in the end. Gradually his heart underwent a change. He bowed down at the feet of Mahavira and said, "O, Lord ! Pardon me. I did not recognize you."

Mahavira said, "It is an enemy that is pardoned. You are my friend."

The *yaksha* was surprised. He said, "Am I a friend ? And yours ? How much I tortured you !"

Mahavira said, "Not only mine; you can be the friend of the whole world. Overcome by feelings of anger and spite, you were preying on human bones. But violence never gives you peace. It is only by forgiveness and love that peace is realized. I know that you bear revenge against this town. But the cure for revenge is not revenge, but love."

As gentle rain falls on the hot earth, so Mahavira's words pacified *yaksha*'s bruised spirit. His heart brimmed over with the redeeming waters of love and compassion.

In the course of his sojourn, Bhagwan again came to pass through Moraka town. There lived in this town a hypocritical astrologer of the Achchhandaka clan who cheated ignorant and credulous people with stories of false miracles. On account of Bhagwan's presence and through the influence of his practice of meditation and penance, the hold of Achchhandakas abated.

While Bhagwan was going on a journey from south Vachala to north Vachala, he did his preaching for the benefit of the snake, Chandakaushika. Then a god named Sangama caused a number of torments to Mahavira, but through all these travails, Bhagwan's face shone bright like gold as if it was the mid-day sun. For six long months, he caused innumerable torments to Mahavira, but Mahavira constantly pursued his path of austerity. Disappointed and dejected, Sangamadeva fell at the feet of Mahavira. Tried and defeated Sangama said in a voice choked with emotion, "I am Sangama. I did not recognize you. You are adorable even by Gods, not alone men. Wonderful is your self-control. Matchless are your forgiveness and tolerance."

Though Mahavira was tormented for six months, not a

trace of it was left on the face of the great yogi Mahavira. He thought in his compassionate heart, “Alas ! What will happen to this poor soul ? He has burdened himself with what a huge load of *Karma* all because of me.”

Kalikalsarvajnya Hemchandracharya says :

कृतापराधेऽपि जने कृपामन्थरतारयोः ।  
ईषद्बाष्पाद्र्योर्मद्रं श्रीवीरजिनेनेत्रयोः ॥

[Beneficent are Bhagwan Mahavira's eyes which emit pity on his tormentors and which are wet with tears in the corners on account of his compassion for them.]

And then his eyes opened wide, with tears glistening at the ends of each of his two lotus-like eyes. Seeing the tears Sangama danced and spoke, “Oh ! the pitying eyes of forgiving God will surely bless me though I have tormented him.”

Once upon a time Bhagwan Mahavira thought that in order to cast off *Karma*, he should go to a place where man was man's enemy, where nobody knew what a monk was and where he had no friends and acquaintances. He wanted to put the religion of *Ahimsa* (non-violence), the religion of love, to test. So, he went to the *Anarya* region named Radha where it was difficult even to survive. Here people were unkind and cruel. They bruised his body in a hundred ways. Wild dogs tore at his flesh. At that time one of his disciples said, “Shall we not keep with us a stick at least to keep them off ?”

“In that case our vow of *Ahimsa* will be broken”, said Mahavira.

There he was tormented almost to death, but Mahavira did not deviate from his path at all.

It is said in the *Acharanga Sutra* :

सूरो संग्राम-सीसेवा, संवुडे तत्थ से महावीरे ।  
पडिसेवमाणे करुसाई अचले भगवं रीइत्था ॥

[As the body of an armoured warrior remains unwounded in war, so Bhagwan Mahavira showed great fortitude even in the midst of torments.]

In the twelfth year of his initiation, Bhagwan stood in meditation under a tree on the outskirts of the town Chhammani. An incident, similar to that which had happened on the first day of his initiation, happened again. Leaving his bullocks to the care of Mahavira, a cowherd left for some work. Bhagwan Mahavira, who was in meditation, did not say anything. Taking his silence as consent, the cowherd went away. The grazing bullocks disappeared into a thicket nearby. The cowherd returned and did not find his bullocks there, asked, “O, Monk ! Where are my bullocks ?” But he got no reply. He asked second time. But Mahavira was in meditation. How could he give an answer ? The cowherd's anger knew no bounds. “I have been asking so often, and you do not answer, nor do you show any other sign to reassure me about my bullocks. Are those your ears of little earthen bowls ? Do you have oil poured into your ears ? Those ears have done you no good, it seems. Let me fill them up.” The cowherd said, and brought two straight long thorns.

The stupid cowherd pushed the nail-like thorns into the ears of the great yogi. Lest someone should pull out the thorns, he cut off their outer ends. Even then Mahavira did not stir, and nor did he give any other sign.

Then Mahavira went to the town, Madhyama. He asked for alms from a Bania named Siddhartha. An expert physician named Kharaka had come to Siddhartha's place. He found the

small wooden sticks pushed into Mahavira's ears and with great effort he pulled them out.

Everyone now began to slander the cowherd, who had proved to be such a cruel tormentor. Bhagwan said, "This is no fault of the cowherd. I am suffering the consequence of what I have done. In my eighteenth *Bhava* (birth) I was a king named Triprushtha Vasudeva and it was I who had ordered molten lead to be poured into the ears of the servant who always made my beds. This is the fruit of that sin. Everyone must bear the fruit of his *Karma*, even he may be a mundane soul or a monk."

It was a cowherd who caused the first torment to Bhagwan in Karmargrama and again it was a cowherd who caused the last torment. During the period of his austerity, he suffered a number of torments, but in suffering them he always maintained his equanimity. He never had feelings of anger or aversion towards anyone, even if the man was hostile or had turned tormentor for no reason. His heart was brimming over with love for all : gods, devils, humans and beasts, even when they caused terrible torments to him. Exercising complete restraint on himself, on his mind, speech and body, Bhagwan suffered all this with complete equanimity and constantly pursued the path of self-realization. In torrential rain, in bitter cold, or in a raging storm, the unflickering lamp of his austerity constantly shone bright. Bhagwan had preached *ahimsa* (non-violence), but mankind was found to be slipping back into *himsa* (violence). The power mongers can never abandon their love for war. The victor in such wars plundered people's gold and silver and sold young men and women in the bazaar. The city of Kaushambi had recently won such a victory. Bhagwan daily

went on his round, begging for alms in that city. He went from house to house, but returned not accepting any food from any house. In this way six months passed by. For as long a period as six months he did not accept even a grain of food. The people of Kaushambi thought that Mahavira was like a fish dying of thirst in an ocean full of water.

Everyone in the kingdom; the king, the minister, the merchant, the monk began to weigh his own *Karma*. Everyone began to think "What is an evil deed ? What is a good deed ? What is justice ? What is injustice ?"

One day the news came that Bhagwan had accepted boiled unsplit black beans from Chandanbala who was a slave in the household of merchant Dhanavaha. On hearing this, people started streaming to the place of the merchant Dhanavaha. But after some time they were surprised to find that the woman, whom they had mistaken for a slave woman, was actually the daughter of the king of Champanagar. Her mother was the sister of the king of Kaushambi. She was now a prisoner taken in the war between Champa and Kaushambi. Seeing this, people exclaimed, "How terrible is war, in which man kills his own kinsfolk."

Mahavira showed to the world the strength of the soul and of the body. Out of his austerity period of twelve and a half years, for 349 days he took only one meal a day. On all the rest of the days, he fasted without taking even water. During this period of severe austerity, he performed one penitential exercise of six months. One penitential exercise of six months less five days. Nine penitential exercises of four months. Two penitential exercises of three months, two penitential exercises of two and

a half months, six penitential exercises of two months, two penitential exercises of one and a half months, twelve penitential exercises of one month each and seventy-two penitential exercises of a fortnight. For 4166 days out of 4515 days of his life of austerity, he performed penitence even without water. He journeyed thousands of miles on foot without any garment on his body, or an umbrella over his head, or shoes on his feet. Thus he proved that man's soul has tremendous strength. If you are to weigh the strength of the whole world on one side, and the soul's strength on the other, the soul's strength excels. If a man treads the path of *ahimsa* and truth, he becomes *Paramatma*. *Paramatma* is none other than the soul itself. It is the soul that becomes *Paramatma*.

After twelve and a half years of severe austerity and unprecedented penance, Mahavira sat in meditation in a ricefield on the bank of the river Rajuvalika. It was the tenth day of bright half of the month of *Vaishakha*. It was the fourth quarter (3 hours' period) of the day. He was performing a two-days fast. And on this day, under a *shala* (teak) tree he was sitting in *godhasana* (cow-milking) posture (knees up and head lowered). At that time he attained *Kevaljnana* (omniscience). The lamp of infinite knowledge now shone bright. For a while the whole *samsara* was lit up in unprecedented light. The directions became calm and purified. With a loud beating of drums, gods descended to the earth to celebrate Bhagwan's attainment of *kaivalya* (omniscience). Bhagwan found the path to true happiness. He became free from all confusions of *samsara* and all complexes of the world. All the three world : hell, earth and heaven, and all the three aspects of time, the present, the past and the future, made their abode in Mahavira's heart. After his

attainment omniscience, he came to be known as *Arhata*, *Jaina*, *Veetraga*.

A rich Brahmin named Somil arranged for a great *yagna* (Sacrificial rite) in the middle region of Pavapuri. Famous ritualistic scholars from all over India came to participate in it. Among them were scholars well-versed in fourteen *vidyas*, scholars such as Indrabhooti, Agnibhooti and Vayubhooti. Each one of them had 500 disciples. Two scholars named Vyakta and Sudharma had come from Kollaka. The scholars named Mandika and Mauryaputra had come with 350 disciples each from Maurya district. Four other scholars named Akampita, Achalabhrata, Metarya and Prabhasa were present in that assembly. These eleven scholars were eminent scholars in India, but they were full of feeling of suspicion and ignorance and were groping in the dark. At that time Bhagwan Mahavira came to Pavapuri. Gods constructed a *Samavasarana* (the lecture-hall) for the occasion. Gods, devils, human beings and even beings of lower order like the animals – all went to listen to his sermon. At that time, these scholars began to discuss the scriptures with Mahavira. But omniscient Bhagwan having known their doubts in advance stated them in their own words and resolved them. Consequently, all the eleven scholars took initiation and became Bhagwan Mahavira's *ganadharas* (leading disciples propagating his teachings). Then they went on a journey to Magadha, Mithila, Koshala and Kalinga. Thousands of men and women became their disciples. Great learned Brahmins such as Indrabhooti Gautama and Sudharma, Kshatriyas such as Udayi and Maghakumar, Vaishyas such as Dhanna and Shalibhadra, Shoodras such as Metaraja and Harikeshi became Mahavira's ascetic disciples.



His followers came from all walks of life, from among kings and princes to ordinary persons. In all 14000 monks and 36000 nuns were initiated at Lord Mahavira's hand. A very large number of laymen and laywomen were his disciples.

Lord Mahavira founded a *sangha* or congregation of all these people. Such an organization is called a *tirtha*. So he came to be called *Tirthankara*. There has been no Tirthankara after him. Mahavira had completely conquered the pulls of attachment and aversion, and so he is also known as *Jina*. The followers of *Jina* are Jains.

Let us examine Lord Mahavira's concept of a *nirgrantha* monk, (a monk free from all ties) of his *Shasana* (dispensation). This monk must have a free mind replete with noble thoughts. He must be constantly observing the vow of *Ahimsa*. He should not experience any of the complexes of *samsara*, of mind, having their source in personal relationship or in ideas of the egoistical self. He should not idle away a single moment. For food, clothing and shelter, man feels himself obliged towards a number of people in the *Samsara*. A *nirgrantha* monk is free from this dependence. As he always journeys on foot, he does not need a chariot, a cart or a horse. As he does not wear shoes on his feet, he has not to search for a shoe-maker. As he himself tears his hair, he does not need a hairdresser. His life is independent and free. He considers the difficult path to be a comforting one. The monk has only one aim before him. Explaining this aim Bhagwan Mahavira says : "How many obstacles an elephant leading an army in a battle suffers ! How many wounds he suffers ! Still he goes on. In the same way the monk progresses. The elephant does not care about being bound, cut to pieces or killed. His mind is fixed on the aim.

Similarly the monk does not care about anything, but proceeds on and on in the life of austerity."

Bhagwan Mahavira's style of sermonizing was *jnata* style. It was a simple but poignant style explaining his point of view allegorically.

Once during his monsoon sojourn in Rajgraha he told this story :

People often keep animals to provide for their days of fasting. Take the example of the lamb who is pampered and fed so well by the master that he becomes as fat as a pig. It believes that it is extremely happy. It eats, drinks and makes merry, while other lambs wander in search of food and die of hunger.

Meanwhile a guest comes to its master's house. Its master takes the healthy and stout lamb and kills it. He cuts it into pieces and makes a tasty dish. The lamb now feels sorry for the guest ever came."

Bhagwan Mahavira tells us this story to make us meditate on the true nature of life. The guest is none other than old age which visits everyone. The knife is the knife of death which kills everyone.

But it is the duty of a man to wake up in time before old age and finally death overtakes him.

Mahavira gave his sermon in Ardhamagadhi, the language of the laity or the layman. His last monsoon sojourn was in Pavapuri. A number of kings had assembled there at that time. It was now the seventy second year of Mahavira's life. On hearing the news of Bhagwan Mahavira's *nirvan*, every house



in Pavapuri was steeped in sorrow. After a silence of twelve long years the saviour had spoken. Not after two or five hundred years, not even after one or two hundred years, not after seventy five years, but only after seventy two years Lord snapped the bond that had stood in the way of his complete liberation. However sweet the moonlight may be, this cannot change the fact of its being an aspect of the black night.

Worshippers now thronging around Lord Mahavira. Rishis were blowing conch-shells. Indra, the chief among gods, was busy making preparation for the nirvana celebration. But the hearts of gods and of human beings were full of grief. For they knew that Lord Mahavira's divine self would now no longer be visible and his pious words would no longer be heard. The great god Indra also wished that Bhagwan should put off his nirvana.

The great god Indra said to Bhagwan, "This constellation suggests an inauspicious fate. Would you please not put off your *nirvana* for a while ? This is very easy for you who are omniscient and omnipotent."

Mahavira realized Indra's illusion. He said, "Indra, your love for my physical self makes you speak so. All things, the cause of my birth, the function of my body and the aim of my life have ceased to be. Let alone a moment of my life, even a fraction of a moment is burdensome."

Some people thought that whatever Bhagwan might say, he would not accept *nirvana* so soon. Maharshi Gautama, the prime disciple of Mahavira, had gone elsewhere to deliver a sermon. They thought that Bhagwan would not pass away when his prime disciple was away. But breaking the subtle

bond of the body, Lord Mahavira attained *nirvana*.

On hearing the news of Bhagwan's *nirvana*, the enlightened Gautama burst into tears. His lamentation was so touching that even the hardest of hearts would melt. It is easy to console an ignorant person. Here was the lamentation of the highly enlightened one. Even Indra did not know how to pacify Gautama.

Meanwhile the sadness on the face of the enlightened Gautama was changed into delight. Joy spread where there was sorrow. Indra could not understand this change. The enlightened Gautama said, "Oh ! Bhagwan's *nirvana* has taught me more than what his life did. He often advised me to be independent, to rise above all bonds of dependence. He advised me to go to the inner world where there is no teacher and no disciple. But then I had great attachment for Bhagwan's physical self. My worship was physical rather than spiritual. That is why he kept me away at the time of *nirvana* with a view to teaching me that austerity surpasses all attachment or narrow love."

Thus for every soul Bhagwan Mahavira brought the message of eternal happiness. This is what he did more than 2589 years ago. But the message still purifies the world.

Let us realize the importance of the revolution that he effected before we move on to the consideration of the message of Bhagwan Mahavira. He made scriptures accessible to the masses. In those days religion was discussed only in Sanskrit, the language of gods. The masses could not understand it and this was considered to be the mark of its greatness. Knowledge

which could be understood by the laymen was considered to be ordinary and *vidya* which could not be understood was considered to be great. This mistaken idea prevailed everywhere. It was considered to be a bad thing to discuss religion.

Mahavira's preachings were understood by all and opened the door to the salvation of the soul for all.

In order to give freedom to women Lord Mahavira made two great reforms; he recognized *brahmacharya* (celibacy) as a vow and he said that if a woman gets initiated as a nun, she can become free from all bondage. He discarded the importance of gender and castes and established the importance of good conduct.

कम्मुणा बंभणो होइ, कम्मुणा होइ खत्तिओ ।  
वइसो कम्मुणा होइ, सुद्धो होइ कम्मुणा ॥

[One is born a Brahmin, a Kshatriya, a Vaishya or a Shudra according to one's karma.]

Thus he led shudras out of the darkness of slavery and lifted them up from beastliness to godliness. He said that a man or woman of any caste could practise religion. In fact, he said that a monk should not be at all conceited regarding his appearance, caste, knowledge, penance, and celibacy. This was Bhagwan Mahavira's great social revolution. He changed the whole situation. This true insight given from the depth of his soul made a permanent impact on the society. Bhagwan Mahavira fearlessly and firmly expressed his thoughts and liberated people from the bonds of a certain class of people, the practice of violence and mental slavery. He led the society out

of the bonds of the caste system. He completely revolutionised the concept of the high and the low. He revolted against the convention which laid down that woman should be under her father's protection in childhood, her husband's protection in youth and her son's protection in old age. Now onwards, the distinctions of caste or gender shall not obstruct the development of the soul. Under the aspect of the soul, all are equal. Brahmin or Shudra, man or woman, young or old – whoever makes efforts can attain liberation. It was in order to justify this that he made Chandanbala his first nun. He helped man overcome the dependence on fate and on the grace of God. He preached that man should make efforts and said, "However great a god may be and however good his heaven may be, if man shows his humanity, even a god bows at his feet. That is why man should insist on truth and love. It is by his deeds, his virtues and his efforts that man can be great. For this, birth, family and caste are of little use."

Mahavira saw that celibacy is something greater than the vow of possessionlessness. Celibacy is not only an external function of accepting or abandoning external objects; it is essentially a spiritual restraint. Similarly, penitence is the only way of severing the bonds of karma. Thus he established the over-whelming importance of penance in life. Thus Bhagwan liberated man from mental slavery. He valued man's own effort above fate. He expounded that active efforts are preferable to dry erudition. Fighting against age-old customs and blind faith, Mahavira proved the importance of freedom of thought. He fearlessly accepted what he thought to be true.

Like the monk, the householder has his own duties to

perform. He said, “It is a false belief that the monk alone should practise religion and the householder can enjoy himself. Like the monk, the householder should practise religion. While the monk should thoroughly and strictly observe vows, the householder should observe vows as far as he can. Thus there are five great vows for the monk and five small vows and seven *shikshavratas* (vows of penitence) for the householder. If a person observes these vows, he would be triumphant. Don’t kill beasts for sacrificial rites. Don’t conceal scriptures. Don’t hate the enemy.”

Bhagwan Mahavira showed that the differences of creeds and sects are subsidiary and every creed has relative truth. He preached that man should never cause harm to anyone. He gave the doctrine of *anekantavada* to promote tolerance in thought. He taught *syadvada* to promote harmless speech. He showed the importance of possessionlessness in society.

He said,

घम्मो मंगलमुक्खिट्तं, अहिंसा संजमो तवो ।  
देवा वि तं नमंसंति जस्स घम्मे सया मणो ॥

[Religion is supremely auspicious. Non-violence, self-control and austerity are its characteristics. Even gods bow down to him who always rejoices in religion.]

Bhagwan prescribed some rules for attaining the salvation of the soul. These rules are vows. There are five great vows.

The first great vow is *Ahimsa* (non-violence). Bhagwan Mahavira said, “If you kill someone, it is yourself you kill. If you dominate someone, it is yourself you dominate. If you torment someone, it is yourself you torment. If you harm someone, it is yourself you harm.” A wise man knows this and

so he does not kill, dominate, or torment anyone. *Ahimsa* is the basis of the Jain Religion. Other religions have adopted *Ahimsa*, but they have not given it the importance that the Jain religion has given. Other religions have not examined *Ahimsa* so subtly as the Jain religion has done.

The concept of *Ahimsa* has emerged from logical thinking and experience. The concept of *Ahimsa* has emerged from the doctrine of the equality of all souls. Everyone wants to live; nobody likes to die. Everyone wants happiness; nobody wants unhappiness. The very thought of doing harm produces *Karma*. So, according to Jain philosophy, *himsa* and *Ahimsa* depend upon the doer’s thoughts. Where there is *pramada* (neglectful idleness or sloth) there is always *himsa*. Untruthful speech and deeds are *himsa*. To give someone a shock or to be corrupt is also *himsa*. It is from *Ahimsa* that truth, non-stealing, celibacy and possessionlessness emerge. *Himsa* enters first in thought, then in speech and then in deeds. That is why they say that war is born in the hearts of men. The quest for *Ahimsa* is echoed in *anekantavada*.

In Jain philosophy *Ahimsa* is said to be the supreme religion and *himsa* is considered to be the source of all evils and of all miseries. Mahavira’s *Ahimsa* is not limited only to humankind, it extends to all living beings. It believes in unity of life and regards all living beings to be equal. He, who can be cruel to animals, can be cruel to human beings. Cruelty is not only an aspect of external behaviour, but it is also an inner evil tendency. He, who is cruel at heart, will behave cruelly with animals as well as human beings. He, who is compassionate at heart, will behave compassionately with all. Moreover, the Jain religion believes in the cycle of birth and rebirth. The soul is in

one *yoni* (existence) today; it may be in another *yoni* tomorrow. It may be a fly today and a man tomorrow. This being so, man has no right to harm non-human living beings even. One should behave sympathetically with all-friends as well as enemies. Such is the importance of *Ahimsa* in Jain philosophy.

तुंगं न मंदराओ, आगासाओ किसालयं नत्थि ।  
जह तह जयमि जाणसु, घम्ममहिंसासमं नत्थि ॥

[Nothing is higher than the Meru Mountain; nothing is vaster than the sky. Similarly, there is no religion as good as *Ahimsa*.]

Another great vow is truth. I will not practise untruth, I will not make someone practise untruth and I will not help someone practising untruth. It is said in *Prashnavyakarana* that truth is God. It is said in *Acharanga Sutra* that the wise person, who obeys truth, conquers death. The human heart experiences truth. Mahavira's life was governed by experience which was the fruit of his own austerity. That is why he says if we ought to believe in his word, it is not because he is omniscient; every soul can attain that status if it practises true austerity – this is his preaching. Bhagwan Mahavira himself could attain the status of Tirthankara only after his austerity of the previous 27 *bhavas* (modes of existence) followed by his penance of twelve and a half years. So, he preached that we should be always watchful and abstain from untruth. He, who tells a lie, is never trusted. You should be careful to see that you do not speak untruth. One should speak things which are free from shortenings, and speak only when necessary. Harsh language should be avoided. Regarding a *nirgrantha* (monk), he said, "The *nirgrantha* will speak thoughtfully because if he speaks unthoughtfully, untruth may be spoken. He will abandon

anger, for in anger he may tell a lie. He will abandon greed, for untruth may be spoken out of greed. He will abandon fear, for untruth may be spoken out of fear. He will abandon joking and mocking, for untruth may be spoken for fun."

Think of him who is so much concerned about truth. Neither fire can burn him nor water can drown him who speaks the truth. Jain philosophy has thought comprehensively about truth. To insist that what you speak is the only truth is a sort mental *himsa*. The generous view that there can be a grain of truth in what the other persons say, is *anekantadrishti*, for truth is relative. As you have full faith in what is truth from your viewpoint, so the other person has faith in what is truth from his point-of-view. Thus *anekantavada* equally tolerates and co-ordinates all viewpoints of life, in a spirit of co-operation. This is the true method involving ceaseless endeavour to search out truth. To regard everything from a relative point-of-view and to see an element of truth in everything – this is *anekantavada*. Not 'mine is truth' but 'truth is mine' should be our motto.

Bhagwan Mahavira's life is full of incidents showing that 'truth is mine'. It was he, who sent his chief disciple, the enlightened Gautama, to Shravaka Ananda to ask for his pardon. In those days numerous disputes had arisen. In order to prove his contention to be true, everyone was trying to refute the contentions of others. Bhagwan Mahavira taught us to support rather than refute the views of others.

He said, "Only if you make your unilateral view multilateral, the veil covering your vision will be removed and you will have a clear and unmistakable view of pure truth."

Thus Bhagwan Mahavira tried to quench the fire of

disputes. For this he gave an illustration of how the seven blind men look at the elephant. This *anekantavada* will make man think from the other man's viewpoint and consequently half of the miseries of the world will disappear. *Anekantavada* leads us to the path of co-ordination and of annihilation of opposition.

The third great vow is the vow of non-stealing. Man should abandon all kinds of stealing. We should not take anything that is not freely given to us. Nor should we make anyone take what is not given to him. Nor should we help anyone take what is not given to him. He said that not even the teeth-scraping straw should be taken by a monk without its owner's permission. Nor does he make someone take it, nor give his consent to it, let alone taking big things. A monk should take care to see that he takes only innocent things acceptable to him. This means that he should be aware of the acceptability or non-acceptability of a thing before taking it.

The fourth great vow is that of celibacy. Bhagwan Mahavira added this fifth great vow to the four great vows of Parshvanath and established its distinct importance. He said that all the physical and mental miseries of the world are caused by thirst for sensual pleasures, for all sensual pleasures are ultimately painful. A river may be flowing, but it is always contained between its two banks. Similarly, the stream of life needs restraint. If this restraint is accepted willingly, the monk will remain happy and joyful. So, Bhagwan Mahavira said, "You should control yourself. You should restrain your soul. He, who lives in lust, greed and sensual pleasures, ultimately suffers miseries for a long time. Not even the enemy, that cuts

your throat, does that much harm to you as your soul engaged in evil conduct does to you. So, natural restraint gladly accepted, is the source of happiness, peace and tranquillity."

The fifth great vow is of possessionlessness. Possession is the source of evil. Possession is not only the acquisition or accumulation of things, but also the temptation and the attachment to things. This possession is the source of all the five evils viz. *himsa*, untruthfulness, stealing, sensual pleasure and attachment. Today, we see that the chief cause of the boundless miseries of the present world, is in man's uncontrolled tendency to possess. Man believes that possession brings happiness. But in fact possession is the cause of the miseries and bondage. Possession makes a man a slave of external things. As the bee sucks honey from the flower without destroying it, so the welfare-seeking man does the least possible harm to another in his worldly life. Thus expounding the five great vows Bhagwan Mahavira says, "As the wind blows across flaming fire, so ideal people observing these vows will pass through the *samsara* and attain eternal joy."



8

## Timeless Message of Bhagwan Mahavira

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**I** bow to Mahavira who is a supreme deity, one who is worshipped even by Gods.

When Mahavira was born, the world was literally a hell. A handful of people, wallowing in luxuries, had made life miserable for the common man. He had lost all hopes, and believed that everything had been ordained and had resigned himself to fate with no hope of salvation.

Religion had fallen on evil days. Temples had become dens of vices. Animals were sacrificed. Kings waged wars to satisfy their ambitions and scriptures would say that those dying on the battle field would inherit the kingdom of heaven. Thousands of women suffered widowhood and thousands of innocent children were rendered orphans. Knowledge was captive, a privilege for the few. It was not meant for the poor and those of low castes. Scriptures were the monopoly of the selected group of people. Others were denied even the

opportunity to listen to them. Women were ill-treated, treated as slaves; as chattel with no identity of their own. Caste distinctions were rampant and untouchability ruled the roost. The low-caste people were subjected to insults and indignities. Enmity was a virtue and shedding blood a sport. It was in such terrible times that Mahavira was born 2600 years ago, shedding luminous light, dispelling darkness.

Sanskrit was the language of the upper caste people, a language not understood by ordinary people. All philosophical discussions were in Sanskrit which were beyond the ken of the common people. Those, who spoke the common language of the ordinary people, were considered inferior, not worthy of respect. The so-called enlightened ones did not remove ignorance. On the contrary they perpetuated it, for knowledge was the preserve of only few. The *Shudras* (of low caste) and women were not allowed to read the *Vedas* and those who dared were punished.

The first thing Bhagwan Mahavira did was to break the dominance of Sanskrit – the language of the elite. He said, “Knowledge is not for the knowledgeable, but for the ordinary people, too. Speak the language which they understand.” *Ardhmagadhi* was the language used by the masses and so he began to preach in that language. He expounded the mysteries of existence and religion in easy-to-understand language. Earlier people did not understand the *pandits* (scholars), but now they did. Women in Mahavira’s time were denied social and religious rights and had to depend on men. They were sold as a commodity and were denied decent existence. Mahavira ushered in a revolution. He brought about two reforms. He laid emphasis on celibacy and said that if a woman becomes a *sadhvi*



she would be entitled to liberation. Mahavira paved the way for her to reach spiritual heights, which was closed to her for centuries, for she was considered impious, unchaste.

The caste system was very rigid and the society was riven with the evil of casteism. *Shudras* (low-caste) were in miserable condition and led almost hellish, sub-human existence. Bhagwan Mahavira succeeded in removing caste system and emphasised the importance of character and of birth. He said, “Your karma determines whether you are a *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* or *Shudra* – the four main castes in those days. Rituals for him were meaningless. Character, according to him, was supreme and *Shraman* was one who never prides himself on caste, beauty, knowledge or penance. He, thus, brought about social revolution and transformed the entire society. Since Mahavira had overcome vices like ill-will, attachment, malice etc. he was called *Jin* and the followers of *Jin* are *Jains*.

His concept of a *sadhu* was a person with open mind, one who is generous and believes in non-violence, is not lazy and is free from complexes. He will not depend on others, will undertake journeys on foot only, and that, too, bare-footed. He will be, in short, self-reliant, will be indifferent to pains and pleasures. He will, said Mahavira, continue to walk on the path of liberation.

Mahavira emphasised celibacy, for he considered it an act of supreme self-control, dictated by one's soul. Similarly, penance also helps one to get rid of *Karma*. What he showed was the path of liberation, of getting rid of mental 'slavery'. He sought to dispel the darkness of blind beliefs and rigid customs which imprisoned the soul and prevented one's journey to a higher level of consciousness. He urged people to think before

accepting everything blindly and to reject what was worth rejecting. In short he wanted people to show courage of conviction.

A householder, he said, had also certain duties to perform. A *sadhu* had to observe five *mahavrat* (vows) and for householder he ordained twelve *vrata* - five *anuvrat* and seven *shikshavrat*. If these are observed scrupulously, a person can be said to have led a meaningful life. Mahavira was not for religious disputes and averred that every opinion had some truth, for truth was relative. He urged people to practise non-violence in conduct, *anekant* in thought and *syadvad* in speech. He said, “Religion is supreme. Non-violence, restraint and penance are its chief attributes. One, whose mind is turned to religion, is revered even by gods. He stressed the importance of five *mahavrat* (five *yama*) and they are valid today as they were 2600 years ago.

The first *mahavrat* is *non-violence*. He said, “The one you want to kill is your ownself and the one you want to rule over is also your ownself. Therefore a truly enlightened soul will never think of killing anyone or ruling over anyone. Nor does he cause pains to anyone.” Non-violence is the basic postulate of Jain religion. It is at the heart of the religion and the concept of ‘live and let live’ is its cornerstone. All are equal, it says, and therefore let everyone live happily and let no one be the cause of unhappiness to others. Violence results in the formation of *karma*. Bad conduct, lying and indolence are attributes of violence. Truth, *asteya* (non-stealing), celibacy and detachment are attributes of non-violence. It is rightly said that ‘war is born in the hearts of men’. Non-violence in thought is reflected in *anekant*.

Mahavira's concept of non-violence encompassed the universe - human beings as well as all other organisms. Cruelty is not physical, but is innate, inborn. Compassion to all needs to be practised, he said.

In the past three thousand years, fifteen thousand wars have been fought. Among all creatures human beings have the capacity to annihilate their fellow-beings. If there is a nuclear war today, there will be a nuclear winter and the entire human race will be frozen to death. This reminds one of an incident from the life of Maxim Gorky, a Russian writer. He talked to the villagers about the achievements of science. He said science had helped man to fly in space and to fathom the depths of oceans. Once, when he was discoursing on wonders of science, an old villager shot back saying : "You are right. Science has shown us how to fly and how to reach the bottom of a sea, but has it taught us how to live in peace on this planet ?" Gorky had no answer. Mahavira has taught us how to live, has shown us the way to good living. We live today in perpetual danger of a war, war with weapons of mass destruction ! There are a variety of bombs, each one capable of killing thousands at one trial ! There is a stockpile of 30,000 nuclear weapons to decimate the human race in a jiffy. Violence has become a way of life and is seen in each and every act of a being. The mass media have played a negative role in inflaming our passions, in providing an impetus to violence. Human kind is in the grip of hunger, but money is spent on fashioning weapons of destruction, on planning war strategies rather in removing hunger and poverty. People live in a state of fear, terror and insecurity. Nations talk of war and prepare for war. Hence the need for non-violence.

Non-violence is a way of life. It comes from within. In the

oldest book of Jain religion *Acharang Sutra*, it is said that non-violence is a true universal religion. Acharya Shri Umaswatiji said, परस्परप्रेमो जीवानाम्. Mahavira's non-violence encompasses the entire universe and he had emphasised unity of life.

It was after a gap of 2500 years that Mahatma Gandhi felt inspired by the same principles of non-violence and compassion that Mahavira had propounded. In August 1946 Mahatma stood, unarmed before a violent mob and his compassion melted their hearts. Mountbatten said at that time, "What a battalion could not have achieved, has been achieved by this frail man and has saved India from a conflagration." Non-violence links Mahavira with Mahatma, "as if there was an invisible traffic between Mahavira and Gandhi."

As we step into the next century, every one has to make non-violence a part of their being, their very existence. Jain philosophy lays emphasis on totality of life, not on fragmented existence. There are people who take care to see that tiny insects are not killed, but they do not flinch when it comes to exploiting others. Everyone has a split personality and this leads to fragmentation which is highly detrimental. Non-violence must pervade one's life, one's every action and activity. Compassion should be encompassing as was evident in Mahavira's love for Chandkaushik, a venomous snake.

Acquisitiveness or possessiveness is directly related to violence. Exploitation and corruption are also manifestations of violence. To exploit the disadvantaged or the underprivileged is also a form of violence. "Jain religion affirms the co-existence of non-violence and human existence," says Muni Santbalji. Jonathan Swift has said, "We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another." We must

annihilate the very idea of violence and fanaticism to reach the ideal of religious fellowship. Truth, detachment, non-possessiveness are the fundamentals of universal religion preached by Mahavira.

Another important feature of Jain religion is that it has thought about food or diet and its effect on man's thinking. 'As you eat, so shall you think', it says. It lays greater emphasis on fasting, on abstemious habits as does *Ayurveda*. According to Carrington "Fasting rests the heart and it gains in strength. It also helps in the process of purification of blood." Not only that it helps one to get rid of unwanted desires. Similarly, Jain religion emphasises the importance of vegetarianism. In the present age when diseases such as heart-attack, blood pressure etc. have become rampant, vegetarianism is the answer to these ailments. The modern mind accepts nothing that is not scientifically proved. Fortunately all that our scriptures said centuries ago has been proved scientifically. American doctors advise the patients to finish eating before sunset and that is what the ancient texts advocated. Meditation and Yoga have been successful in easing tensions and stress and even in removing physical and mental disorders. There is *pachhakhan* to develop mind, *kausagga* for meditation, *pratikraman* to know one's faults, *paryushan* for the purification of mind, and *forgiveness* as an attribute of the brave - these will only help in the remaking of man. Jain religion's panacea is - character, charity, penance and love. These alone can reawaken the dormant humanity.

Martin Luther King, who fought against apartheid, had a dream about a world where a person's identity is known not by the colour of the skin, but by the content of his character.'

Jain religion is opposed to discrimination based on caste, colour or creed. "Bow not to a person, but to the virtues he/she has," it says. Take refuge in religion, asserted Mahavira and it will lead you to liberation.

The universe today is in vice-like grip of pollution. Trees are mercilessly razed to the ground and the disastrous consequences in the form of famine or floods, soil erosion etc are there for all to see. We are not sure whether the inhabitants in 21st century will get natural rain or man-made acid rain ! Many living organisms have been annihilated leading to imbalance in the eco-system. The message of Jainism rings true - non-violence to one and all. Secondly, it prohibits eating of vegetables on certain day, which reflects its concern for environmental protection.

'Truth' is another pillar of Jainism. It postulates : "I will not practise falsehood, will not force others to practise it and will not support it." Truth is God, it says in *Acharang Sutra*. Truth springs in the human heart and cannot be forced. One must take care to see that one avoids falsehoods or telling lies, consciously or unconsciously. About *nirgranth*, Mahavira says : He will think twice before he speaks for if he speaks without thinking, he may have to resort to lies. He will never get angry for an angry man may tell lies. He will not be tempted for temptation, which may compel him to indulge in falsehood. He will overcome fear, for fear may lead him to telling lies. He will not indulge in making fun of others, for he may inadvertently tell lies. Jain philosophy, thus, emphasises the importance of truth. It says : 'Never say I am right, for others can be right, too,' for truth is relative. This liberal view is called *anekant*. It means tolerance, synthesis, coexistence. Try to find an element

of truth in everything. Never say : 'I am right;' but say, 'whatever is right belongs to me'. In Mahavira's time, there were many disputes and controversies and everyone believed he/she was right. Mahavira said : 'Don't be self-centred and don't look at things from your point of view only (*ekant*), but from others point of view also (*anekant*). Then and then only you will be able to know undiluted truth.' Thus '*anekant*' philosophy is Mahavira's greatest gift to mankind, according to Vinoba. Long before Einstein, Mahavira thought of relativism 2600 years ago.

The key concept in Jainism is 'harmony', or 'synthesis'. As the world shrinks, congruence of religions becomes a necessity. All religions must coexist. Kings Kumarpal and Vishnuvardhan had this vision in mind when they built Shiva and Vishnu temples alongwith *Jinalayas*. *Kalikalsarvagna* Hemchandracharya performed *pooja* in *Shivalay* in Somnath. Not only that he prayed there, but composed a verse propitiating Bhagwan Shiva. It is, therefore, hoped that the idea of *anekant* will be the foundation of synthesising the sublime elements of all religions. Mahavira had waged a war against blind beliefs, rigid customs and traditions which hamper one's spiritual growth. The word 'Vardhaman' connotes 'progress' or 'progressive'. And one whose mind is free from prejudices can only become *nirgranth*. Mahavira sought to remove the cobwebs of beliefs and customs and free the soul from these shackles which bind it and prevent its liberation. 'That is true religion which does not bind the soul, but facilitates its liberation', he said. His religion has stood the test of time since it encompasses even scientific vision. Dr. Jagdishchandra Bose proved that there was life in plants and this was what Rishabhdev had said earlier. In fact religion is

science - science believes in experiments to find truth, while religion has self-evident truth, truth which is realised by great souls.

The third *Vrat* advocated by Mahavira is *asteya* meaning non-stealing or abjuring stealing of any kind. One should not accept anything that one has not earned or deserved and should not be a party to any such deal. Anything, that does not rightfully belong to us, must not be touched or accepted. Today we witness a spectacle in which people grab everything and anything that does not rightfully belong to them. Modern man has become avaricious - avarice is the besetting sin of the present society leading to so many other evils. If the vow of *asteya* is practised, India will be the envy of the world.

The fourth *vrata* preached by Mahavira is *brahmacharya* (celibacy). 'Carnal desire is the root cause of all the evils', he said. A river has two banks to control its flow; similarly human beings must also exercise, restraint and control their desires.

Permissiveness has done great harm to the existing society and it is therefore all to see and hence the need for restraint (*nigraha*). The key to happiness and peace lies in it, asserted Mahavira. Free reign to desires, especially carnal desires, has led the society to the brink of disaster with deadly diseases like AIDS spreading their tentacles and jeopardising the lives of many. Hence the watchword is '*restraint*'.

The fifth *vrata* is *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness). Possessive instinct leads to sinning. Everyone is in hot pursuit of things; the desire to possess dominates and in the mad race, all sorts of sins and undesirable acts are committed.

Mahavira expressed his views emphatically and

courageously and freed people from the tyranny of a coterie which imposed its views on others. He also liberated people from violence and mental slavery. He broke down the barriers of class-system and removed the distinctions based on caste or creed. All are equal, he averred and everyone is entitled to *moksha*, irrespective of caste, gender, age or status. He was instrumental in Chandanbala becoming the first *sadhvi*. Anybody can be great provided he/she practises truth and love and has humanitarian outlook. Greatness has nothing to do with birth, caste or status. Live and let live, he said and preached peaceful coexistence.

*Kshatriyas* were engaged in fratricidal wars in those days. Violence was rampant and vices had a field day. At that time Mahavira's message was : Wars or fights with others will not help; fight with yourself and annihilate the enemies within : desires, possessiveness, attachment, violence. Conquer them and you will be happy, was his message. The way to supreme bliss lies in conquering one's ownself.

Mahavira tested his body and soul during his life-time. During his period of penance of about twelve years and six months, he ate food for only 349 days and that, too, once a day. Rest of the days he fasted and even abjured water for about four thousand days. He must have walked thousands of miles barefooted and bare-bodied. He, thus, demonstrated soul-force, and triumph of will.

Mahavira founded the *sangh* of *sadhu*, *sadhvi*, *shravak* and *shravika* known as *tirth* and hence he is known as *tirthankara*. Attachment, he said, is the source of all sins : violence, falsehood, carnal desires etc. The modern age witnesses an

unprecedented proliferation of violent tendencies caused by man's instinct of possessiveness. It is this instinct which has rendered human beings inhuman and violent. True happiness lies in "The less I have, the more I am", but who listens ? The principle of *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness) advocated by Mahavira appealed to Mahatma Gandhi so much that he thought of the principle of trusteeship. "You are just a trustee", he said, "of what extra you have; you are a protector of that extra and you have to distribute it fairly among the people to whom it rightfully belongs."

Follow the five *yama*, says Mahavira. Just as fire burns everything, allow your desires to be burnt and follow some ideals and principles and you are sure to taste the fruit of happiness.



## 9

## Predictions of Tirthankara Mahavira

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Venerable Mahavira arrived at Pava from the city of Rajagruha on foot for his last four-months-stay-in-rainy-season (*chaturmas*). What he predicted about Jain religion and the world at that time has traditionally come down to us. One version of it is available in Acharya Jinaprabhasuri's *Vividha-tirthakalpa* while another version is found in Acharya Hemachandra's *Trishashtishalaka-purushacharita* and *Deepmalika*.

Acharya Jinaprabhasuri recorded in *Vividha-tirthakalpa* that once Gautama, the chief of the principal disciples of Tirthankara Mahavira, politely asked Mahavira the question as to what important events would take place after the latter's death.

In answer to that question, Tirthankara Mahavira said, "After three years and eight months from my death there will set in the fifth division called *Dusama* of the present half Time-cycle. After twelve years from my death Gautama will attain

liberation (*moksha=siddhagati*). After twenty years from my death Sudharma will attain liberation and after sixty four years from my death the last omniscient Jambu will attain liberation. From the day of Jambu's attainment of liberation, the following twelve things will disappear from India (*Bharat*) : perception of thought-forms of other's mind, highest type of clairvoyance, supernatural power called *pulaka*, subtle body called *aharaka*, spiritual evolution by destruction of *karmas*, monastic conduct modeled on the conduct of Jain Mahavira, right conduct dominated by certain special types of austerity, right conduct free from all types of passions except an extremely small amount of greed, right conduct completely free from all passions, pure knowledge (omniscience) and liberation."

"After my death there will flourish 2004 epoch-maker acharyas in my Jain tradition. Of them, the first will be Arya Sudharma and the last will be *Duhprasaha*. *Duhprasaha* will flourish in the end-part of the fifth division of the present half Time-cycle."

"After 170 years from my death, there will occur the death of Acharya Bhadrabahu. And after his death, the following four things will disappear from India (*Bharat*) : symmetrical body-shape called *samachaturasra-samsthana*, supremely strong bone-joint called *vajrarushabhanaracha*, *samhanana*, meditation-type called *mahaprana-dhyana* and the last four *purva* works (books)."

"After 500 years from my death and in the days of Acharya Vraja the tenth *purva* work and the first four types of bone-joint will become extinct."

"After my death *Palaka* will rule for 60 years, (nine) Nanda kings for 108 years, Pushyamitra for 30 years, Balamitra and



Bhanumitra for 60 years, Gardabhilla for 13 years, and Shaka for 4 years. After Shaka, that is, after 470 years from my death there will be the political rule of king Vikramaditya. He will be a great emperor and he will start his own Era (*Samvata*)."

"After 453 years from my death, there will flourish Acharya Kalaka who will bring the end of the rule of Gardabhilla."

"Jain ascetics will conveniently forget the tradition of pure monastic conduct. They will formulate monastic code according to their sweet will and by doing so they will deceive the ignorant and credulous people. They will indulge in praising themselves and slandering others."

The following predictions, too, were made by Tirthankara Mahavira in the four-month-stay during his last rainy-season. At that time in Pava he adorned Rajjuka assembly of king Hastipala. Unique assembly hall was constructed by gods. And therein Tirthankara Mahavira lectured regularly.

One day, after Tirthankara Mahavira's lecture ended, king Punyapala politely said to him, "O Venerable One ! Last night I dreamt eight queer dreams. I had eight inauspicious dreams of an elephant, a monkey, a milky tree (a fig tree), a crow, a lion, a lotus, a seed and a pitcher. I am concerned that they may signify inauspicious or evil future events."

These dreams were signs of future events. Interpreting and explaining them Tirthankara Mahavira said, "You saw an elephant in the first dream. It suggests that in future polite and devotional Jain householders will become mad with pride and passion on getting short-term prosperity or wealth. They will behave like a mad elephant. They will never think of

renouncing the transient prosperity or wealth and accepting the vow of asceticism even in the face of terrible calamities and very hard times. And in case they took the vow of asceticism, they would not observe it rightly and sincerely. Only very few monks will observe it firmly, strictly and honestly."

"In the second dream, you saw a monkey. It signifies that in future, the nature of even great acharyas will be like that of a monkey. They will be as restless as a monkey. They will put forth very little spiritual effort and will be very careless and lazy in the observance of vows. Like a monkey they will be thoughtless, impudent and restless."

"In the third dream, you saw a milky tree (a fig tree). It signifies that in future the Jain monks will become hypocrites and throng householders making donations with selfish motives. They will regard those monks firm and strict in the observance of monastic code, as lax in the monastic conduct. On the contrary, they will consider the monks careless and loose in the practice of monastic code to be firm and strict in the monastic conduct. Like thorny babul trees, the hypocritical Jain monks will be in great majority."

"In the fourth dream, you saw a crow. It suggests that in future Jain monks, in great number, will transgress the monastic code of conduct. Again, abandoning all rules and restrictions laid down for monks in the monastic code of conduct, they will take shelter in the heretical sects. In other words, they will break away from the main stream or tradition, will found various heretical sects and subsects and will take shelter in them. Like crow, they will be cunning. They will indulge in fruitless sophistry and dialectics as do crows in making harsh and unpleasant sounds - 'ka' 'ka'."

“In the fifth dream, you saw a lion caught in a difficult situation. It signifies that in future, Jain religion propounded by an attachment-free omniscient saint and as brilliant and vigorous as a lion, will suffer a severe set-back and become very weak. Having turned their face away from true Jain religion, the people will accept wrong religious views. Such people will gain reputation and their wrong views will greatly gain ground.”

“In the sixth dream, you saw a lotus. It suggests that in future under the influence of evil times, even persons of noble birth will keep company of the wicked and vicious persons; as a result of it, they will abandon the right path of religion and will indulge in evil activities.”

“In the seventh dream, you saw a seed. It means that in future the Jain householders, having lost their differentiating and discriminating power, will give donations to the non-deserving persons, neglecting and abandoning the deserving ones, just as a thoughtless farmer sows excellent seeds in barren land and rotten seeds in fertile land.”

“In the eighth dream, you saw a pitcher. It signifies that in future it will be very difficult to find Jain monks endowed with meritorious qualities and observing rightly and strictly the monastic vows and rules.”

While interpreting the dreams of king Punyapala, Tirthankara Mahavira drew a very vivid picture of the future. After that he gave an account of conditions prevailing at that time in his days as also of those that will take shape in future. He said, “When a tirthankara (in this context, Mahavira) is present in a country (in this context India, that is, Bharat), that

country flourishes with wealth, prosperity, crops, etc. in abundance. Its cities and villages look like heavens. A village looks like a city, and a city looks like a heavenly world. A head of the family becomes as prosperous as a king, and a king becomes as prosperous as Kuber, the treasurer of gods. Acharyas are as brilliant as Indra, the lord of gods. Mothers-in-law shower love on their daughters-in-law as do mothers on their daughters. Fathers-in-law have unbound affection for their daughters-in-law. The people are wise, prudent, judicious and polite. They are devoted to the Supreme Soul, spiritual teacher and true religion. The learned are honoured. And kings are mostly Jain devotees.”

While predicting conditions of the future Ages he said, “In future, a tirthankara, a universal ruler, an excellent hero (Vasudeva), etc. will not be born in India. Pure knowledge (omniscience), perception of thoughts of other’s mind and the highest type of clairvoyance will disappear from India. On their disappearance, conditions of India will deteriorate progressively. The intensity of passions like anger, pride, deceitfulness, greed, etc. will gradually increase. Unrighteousness and immorality will grow, and prudence and humility will wane. The strong will harass the weak as a big fish devours a small one. Like a ship without sails, India will become unsteady and shaky in all spheres. Theft will thrive. Rulers will levy heavy taxes. Judges will accept fat bribes. Man will hanker after material objects for sensual pleasures.”

“All decency of teacher-pupil relationship will disappear. Teachers will not teach the secret of their subjects / sciences to their pupils, and pupils also will not serve and respect their teachers. Malignant microbes and insects will appear and

multiply themselves to a dangerous number. Sons will hardly serve their parents. Donation, good conduct, austerity and good feelings will gradually become rare. Quarrelsome mentality, violent temperament, passion for revenge, etc. will grow in intensity and extent. People – rather traders – will largely use false weights and measures to deceive their customers. The excellent things of excellent colour, smell, flavour and touch will vanish.”

Then Mahavira described conditions of the coming fifth division of the current half Time-cycle. He said, “In the end-part of the fifth division of the current half Time-cycle, there will flourish a Jain Acharya Duhprasaha, a Jain nun Phalgushri, a Jain householder Nagila, a Jain lay-woman Satyashri, a king Vimalavahana and his minister Sumukha. Human body will be nearly three feet in height. Human life-span will be of twenty years only. On the last day of the fifth division of the current half Time-cycle, in the morning, the observance of monastic code of conduct will completely disappear, in the noon the practice of kingly duties will completely disappear, and in the evening fire will completely disappear.”

Then Mahavira drew a picture of the coming sixth division of the current half Time-cycle. He said, “On the completion of the fifth division made up of twenty one thousand years, there will set in the sixth and last division, called *Dushama-dushama*, of the current half Time-cycle called *Avasarpini* (Descending). In this sixth division, conditions will deteriorate even further to a great extent. Religion, society and government system will become completely extinct. There will be nothing like family. Father-son relationship and all behaviour based on it will come to an end. In the beginning of this division, there will blow

terrific winds and there will be torrential rains. They will cause deluge and destruction. Only human beings and animals will survive with seeds. They will reside in hollows or caves on the banks of rivers Ganga and Sindhu. They will live on flesh and fish.”

Then Mahavira described conditions which will take shape after the completion of the sixth division of the current half Time-cycle. He said, “At the end of the sixth division of the current half-Time-cycle called *Avasarpini* (Descending), there will set in the first division of the half-Time-cycle called *Utsarpini* (Ascending). The conditions prevailing in the first division of *Utsarpini* will be the same as those prevailing in the sixth division of *Avasarpini*. And the second division of *Utsarpini* will be similar to the fifth division of *Avasarpini*. In the beginning of the second division of *Utsarpini*, earth will receive rains of two types called *Pushkara Samvartaka* which will remove heat from earth. The earth will cool down. Then the earth will receive milky rains called *Kshira-megha* which will generate unctuousness in things. After that, earth will receive fourth type of rains called *Amruta-megha* (Nectar-rains) which will produce herbs and vegetation with varied properties. Then the earth will receive the fifth type of rains called *Rasa-megha* (Flavour-rains) which will make the earth fertile and also capable of producing fruits, grains, etc. of various flavours. All these rains of five types will descend heavily and uninterruptedly on earth.”

“Conditions will be conducive to progress again. Human beings residing in hollows or caves on the banks of rivers will come out from them and will settle on plains. With the change in time, human intellect will gradually become cultured and

brilliant. The human body-form will become attractive and the human life-span will increase in length. In the third division called *Dushama-sushama* of *Utsarpini* villages, towns, cities, etc. will come into existence. Tirthankaras will flourish. They will explain the importance of spiritual, religious and cultural life.

In the fourth division of *Utsarpini* human beings will be born as twins only : a brother and a sister. A brother and a sister born as twins will marry each other; that is, a brother will become the husband of his sister and they will die together. Human body will be very huge and human life-span will also be commensurably extremely long. Human beings will satisfy their desires with the help of wish-fulfilling trees. These trees will offer everything they desire. All things and living beings will undergo development or evolution in the right direction. Even in the fifth and sixth divisions of *Utsarpini* the development and evolution will go on continuously. On the completion of the sixth division there will be an end of *Utsarpini*. The half-Time-cycle called *Avasarpini* (Descending or Retrogressive) and the other half-Time-cycle called *Utsarpini* (Ascending or Progressive) together will make one complete Time-cycle. Time-cycle moves on ceaselessly and eternally. In the past there have been infinite Time-cycles and in future there will be infinite Time-cycles. In other words, the past has no beginning and the future has no end. Having understood rightly the essence of the religion of man, one who translates this understanding into practice and lives up to the principles of pure religion, breaks this Time-cycle, rises above Time and attains eternal bliss.”

Thus venerable Mahavira predicted the future, while answering his chief disciple Gautamaswami’s question.



## 10

### A Journey of Ahimsa

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**T**here was a time, in the past, when the world was confronted with two alternatives — violence or non-violence. Today the two alternatives before the world are – non-violence or humanity’s extinction. Man’s very existence is in peril today with the wave of violence sweeping globally. Terrorism has become a global phenomenon and nations are at war, resulting in bloodshed and killings. There is violence in each and every society and has percolated down to the domestic life. An individual today is more violent. A schoolboy does not hesitate killing a classmate over a petty matter. Killing a person belonging to another race or community has become the order of the day. Thus at the level of an individual and society, violence has almost become a way of life.

In the Indian scriptures there is the story of Bhasmasur. He worshipped Lord Shiva and through severe penance propitiated Him. Shiva was pleased and granted him a boon – whatever he

touches, will turn to ashes. Bhasmasur wanted to test the efficacy of the boon and thought to test it on Bhagwan Shiv. Shiv, realising the consequence, was on the run to avoid getting reduced to ashes. Well, the moral is that violence engulfs one and all, spreading its tentacles far and wide. The Bhasmasur story has the same message. At last Bhagwan Vishnu assumes the form of Mohini – feme fatale – and Bhasmasur, attracted by the seductive charm began to dance and placed his hand on his head. This resulted in his own destruction. Violence is like Bhasmasur, which ultimately consumes its perpetrator.

Bhagwan Mahavira taught the lesson of non-violence more than two millennium ago and which was the key to turn man into a superman. That lesson of non-violence preached by him was not confined to ‘live and let live’ for the human beings, but it encompassed all the living organisms such as birds and animals and the entire world of nature. Bhagwan Mahavira had said :

तुंगं न मंदराओ, आगासाओ किसानभयं नत्थि ।  
जह तह जयंमि जाणसु, धम्ममहिंसासमं नत्थि ॥

[There is nothing in this world higher than Mountain Meru. Similarly there is no religion greater than non-violence.]

During Mahavira’s time, animals were sacrificed in performing *yagna* (sacrificial fire) and mute animals were, thus, subjected to cruelty and torture at the altar. This was done in order to achieve *moksha* or a place in heaven. The kings would not hesitate to fight and kill to satisfy their greed for more lands and to realise their inordinate ambitions. It was believed that those, who died fighting on a battlefield, would earn a place in heaven and enjoy the proximity of *devkanyas* (divine women).

If victory was achieved, they would relish its fruit – riches and prosperity. In those days innumerable women were widowed and children rendered orphans. In the orgy of violence, innocent lives were lost.

Mahavira said : “You have no right to kill those whom you can not invest with life. Violence begets violence and revenge begets revenge. Non-violence is the supreme *dharma* (religion) and violence is the root of all evils.”

He preached the message of non-violence and peace to the kings of his times. It was an all-encompassing creed extending to the entire living world. *Acharang Sutra* says : आयातुले पयासु – consider all living organisms to be as precious as your ownself. Those who can be cruel to animals can be cruel to human beings, too. Violence is not external behaviour or conduct, but inner evil instinct. One, who harbours cruelty or violence in the heart, will be violent to one and all and one, who has the spring of compassion in his the heart, will be compassionate to all living creatures, including the world of nature.

He also said that the soul happens to be in one *Yoni* (Tortoise like raised birthplace) in this birth and it may be in another in the next birth. If one is a fly today, he is likely to be a human being in the next and hence a human being has no right to cause pain to non-human beings. One must, therefore, treat all creatures with love and compassion. In *Aagam Sutra* (Cononical Literature), Mahavira says : “You are the one whom you intend to kill, the one whom you want to rule over, the one you want to cause harm to. Therefore, one who is knowledge-able does not kill anyone or rule over others or cause any harm to others.”

Non-violence as a creed is unique and Mahavira observed : The earth, water, fire, wind and plants - all have life in them and we must accept and respect their existence. If you deny their existence, you deny your own. And that's also a form of violence. If you accept that life exists in these elements, you are really non-violent and such a thinking can become the foundation of modern environment.

Mahavira's non-violence is the result of a supremely compassionate soul which accepts the principle of equality of all living creatures.

He not merely preached or propagated non-violence, but practised it and his life has been its embodiment. His experiment with non-violence turned Vardhaman into Mahavira. He made his body suffer a variety of pains and got rid of the attachment to the body. As a result, no obstacles could come his way during the course of rigorous penance. One, who is attached to the body, can never be non-violent.

He gave up his abode in the Duijjant Tapas *ashram* near Vaishali when he realised that his penance might hurt others in the vicinity and he sought refuge in forests or some deserted places. He suffered all types of pains that life offered him without complaining. While in a state of deep meditation, nothing touched him as his inner consciousness was aroused. The very thought of violence would result in formation of *Karma* (a form of matter), he believed. Telling lies or to behave in a way which would cause pain to others or to support a violent act is also a form of violence, according to Mahavira. Violence is first born in mind and then is reflected in speech and behaviour. It is truly said : "War is born in the minds of

men." Non-violence be reflected in thought, speech and action and from the principle of non-violence is born truth, celibacy, non-possessiveness and *anekant* (respecting different viewpoints). Possessiveness and violence are related and therefore, without practising non-possessiveness - *aparigraha* - it is difficult to practise non-violence. *Aparigraha* is not poverty, but abdication of inessentials. It can restore economic equality in the world. Greed breeds cruelty and compassion can flow only when one gets rid of greed and develops a sense of treating all as equals. Thus Bhagwan Mahavira's concept of non-violence is not an external thing, but a way of life with a basis in mind and heart.

परस्परपेग्रहो जीवानाम् – Each living creature depends on another living creature. He subjected his concept of non-violence to a very rigorous test. He, along with his disciple Goshalak, visited a region *Radh* inhabited by a ruthless and murderous tribe. There he saw fierce dogs feeding on human flesh, but Mahavira did not use even a stick to ward off the blood thirsty hounds. He wandered among the violent, barbaric tribe unarmed and spread the message of non-violence.

The moot question is - why are we celebrating this year as a Year of Non-violence ? The reason is that humanity today is enveloped by violent forces. Violence was there in the times of Mahavira, too, but then there was no alternative to it. Today we have with us the concept of non-violence and its practice has led to amazing results which are recorded in history. Ironically enough, we still resort to violence to solve our problem when the results of non-violence are there for all to see. The distortions, that have crept into our thinking, have led



us to take recourse to violence. It is forgotten that non-violence is the only solution to our individual, social and national problems and that it can bring about progress and prosperity in the country and global peace. Instead, aggressive mentality and violent acts are visible all around. People talk through the barrel of a gun. The need for a change in the mindset is far greater today than that it was 2600 years ago, as is the need for the creed of non-violence.

Non-violence means fearlessness in the face of death. On seeing Mahavira's mental concentration, endurance, firm perseverance and unflinching forbearance, Indra, the Lord of Gods, paid his obeisance to him and said in voice choked with emotion, "O Revered One, in granting forgiveness, you are like the earth, in enduring calamities, you are like a mountain, in steadfast persistence in spiritual efforts, you are like an ocean and in concentrating the mind, you are like a rock. Neither a man, nor a powerful god, nor a mighty demon can swerve you from the spiritual path you have adopted."

All agreed with Indra in his praise of Mahavira. But a god named Sangama could not tolerate this. He was very proud of his godhood. He wished to prove that man is nothing before god. He believed that a man, however great he might be, would succumb to the lures of wealth and damsels. Obtaining the permission of Indra, he arrived where Mahavira was standing in deep meditation. He thought : "Indra has made a mountain out of a mustard seed. I shall turn that mountain into a mustard seed again."

He put his plans into action. He played his tricks one by one on Mahavira. He inflicted innumerable favourable and

unfavourable calamities on Mahavira in quick succession. In one night he created twenty dreadful calamities on Mahavira. For about six months, Bhagwan Mahavira did not get food worth consumption and the body suffered, but it withstood the ordeal caused by Sangama. At last Sangama stood defeated and bowed at his feet. Two drops of tears waile up in Mahavira's eyes. This had happened for the first time in Mahavira's life, tears in eyes for Sangama had formed many *karma* in his efforts to harass Mahavira. This shows that a truly compassionate soul will show compassion even to enemies. One, who recognises enemy as an enemy, is *Vir*; but, one who considers an enemy as a friend is Mahavira.

Bhagwan Mahavira's non-violence is based on two strong pillars - fearlessness and friendship. He said : Violence is a mental complex, a state of mind. It is death personified and leads one to hell. It serves no useful purpose and destroys one and all. His life and message led to new thinking and a new way of life. Living based on non-violence finally gave birth to the philosophy of equality and of *anekant* (the doctrine of manifold aspects). Thus it fostered peaceful co-existence and became the foundation for social life and awakening of human consciousness.

During pre-historic period, the first Jain Trithankar Bhagwan Rishabhdev had given the message of non-violence, in the famous centre of pilgrimage, Shatrunjay, sitting under the *rayan* tree. Therefore, the first temple in Jain religion is a tree temple. The 22nd Trithankar Neminath, who was prince Nem, was to marry princess Rajul and at that time, he heard painful cries of animals. On inquiry, he learnt from his charioteer that the animals were being killed to be served

during the marriage feast. Prince Nemkumar was shocked and returned without getting married. Bhagwan Parshwanath retrieved a snake from a pile of wood to be used for the sacrificial fire - *Yagna*. This incident shows his concern for the life of a living creature and his innate sense of non-violence. King Shrenik, during Bhagwan Mahavira's time, had forbidden killing in any form and even women had played significant role in preventing war. Queen Mrigavati had prevented war by making a request to Bhagwan Mahavira. King Chandrayatha of Sudarshanpur and Namikumar of Mithila were at war and Madanrekha preached them non-violence on the battle-field and succeeded in preventing killings and bloodshed. King Ashok realised the futility of war after the battle of Kalinga and took to the path of non-violence, established relations with other states based on the principle of non-violence, mutual trust and tolerance. He, in a spirit of accommodation, returned the caves of Barabara to *aajivak* cult which was in opposition to the Buddhist cult. The rock edicts of emperor Ashoka are found at many places in India in which one finds the provision he had made for the treatment of human beings and animals. He had planted trees for shelter for human beings and animals and birds and had dug wells for drinking water.

In the year 186, before Vikram Samvat, Ashoka had framed rules for the protection of life in any form and one, who violated the rules, was severely punished. He had proclaimed a ban on animal killing and there were strict laws governing the killing of animals for meat consumption. Animal killing was not allowed for about fifty-six days in a year, and special supervisors were appointed for the purpose. Ashok, thus, was an advocate of non-violence, and if practised, it can augur well

for one and all. The grandson of Ashoka was Samprati, who occupies a pride of place among great kings. There was a great joy on his face after his victory in war, but his mother was in great sadness. She told him that it would have been better if he had built temples to purify souls than having fought war and such an act would have made her happy. Emperor Samprati built Jain temple to respect his mother's wishes.

Acharya Haribhadrasuri, in a fit of rage, contemplated the destruction of his opponents - the guru and his disciples - as his own disciples were killed. He was about to kill 1444 people when Yakini Mahattara persuaded him not to indulge in any violent act. His anger then turned into forgiveness. Instead of killing 1444 persons, he composed 1444 volumes which reflected the synthesis of diverse philosophies and this attracted the attention of the contemporary historian Abul Fazal of the Moghul period. Moghul Emperor Akbar, born in the year 1542 did deeds which reflected his non-violent spirit. He got acquainted with Jain religion and non-violence in peculiar circumstances. Champa, an ordinary householder, had fasted for six months and her procession aroused Akbar's curiosity. In the beginning, he was not ready to believe that a person could survive on boiled water for six months, without any food. He tested her and Champa came through successfully and Akbar was curious to know more about Jainism. He invited Acharya Hirvijaysurishwarji to his court. Acharya, set out from Gandhar port on the 7th day of *Margshish Sud* in Samvat 1638 and reached Fatehpur Sikri on Friday, *Jyestha Vad* 13th, of Vikram Samvat 1639.

Emperor Akbar got up from his seat on seeing the Acharya and welcomed him and the three princes Shaikh Salim, Murad

and Dhaniyal, too, offered obeisance to the Acharya. In the palace were laid royal carpets, but Suriji refused to walk on it and this surprised Akbar to no end. The *muni* explained that Jainism prohibited walking on covered flooring, lest insects or ants beneath get killed. Akbar got the carpet removed and found countless ants and insects under it. Akbar learnt that the Acharya had walked the long distance and to compensate for the labour, he offered him gold and silver. The *muni* refused to take anything, but demanded that if at all the emperor wanted to give something, he should release the imprisoned birds and animals, prevent killing of fish in the Dabor lake, to prohibit killing of any type during *Paryushan* and to set free the prisoners languishing in jails for years. Akbar accepted all his demands and instead of eight days of *Paryushan*, he prohibited killing of animals for 12 days in Gujarat, Malva, Ajmer, Delhi, Fatehpur, Lahore and Multan and also in pilgrim centres in and around Girnar, Taranga, Shatrunjay, Kesariyaji, Abu, Rajgrihi and Sametshikhar. He was so impressed by the Acharya's concern for human welfare that he conferred the title of *Jagadguru* (world teacher) on him.

Hemchandracharya, a Jain Acharya who is known as *kalikalsarvagna* - one who is omniscient - occupies a place of pride in the spiritual history of India. King Kumarpal, inspired by his guru, performed many a deeds for which he is justly remembered. In Vikram Samvat 1199, at the age of fifty, he was crowned the king of Gujarat. Inspired by Hemchandracharya, he issued a proclamation — first of its kind - in favour of non-violence. He declared : “Many people live by the sword and kill each other. It’s an affront to the king. Lying is evil, extra-

marital relationship is a greater evil. But of all the evils, violence - killing a living organism - is the worst. Therefore, give up violence and professionals, who depend on it, will get free foodgrains for three years from the state’s granary.” He stopped the practice of offering animal sacrifice to goddess *Kantakeshwari*. Under his proclamation, known as *Amari Proclamation*, he closed down slaughter houses and put a stop to animal torture. The fact that, by and large, the people of Gujarat are non-violent and show love for animals is due, in large measure, to the deeds of king Kumarpal under the inspiration of Hemchandracharya.

During the period of Sheth Jagdusha, 108 buffaloes were sacrificed to propitiate the goddess. Jagdusha found the practice abhorrent and he placed himself on the first step leading to the temple and his son on the second step, for sacrifice instead of the buffaloes to see whether the goddess would be in rage or not. The goddess was not and his belief in non-violence triumphed. He fed the people of Gujarat, Sindh, Mewar, Delhi and Kandhar during three successive droughts. About 5 lakh people were fed daily in the 115 relief camps set up by him. He distributed enormous amount of grains among the people and roughly spent around Rs. 4 crore. The contemporary kings called him ‘the saviour of people’. He was not only generous, but full of compassion which is the other name for non-violence.

Sheth Motisha, born in 1838, set up a cattle shed in Mumbai for stray animals, cows, dogs, oxen, goats, sheep and birds who were kept there for treatment and were fed. Stray dogs were killed, but he set up kennels for them where they were taken care of.

Who gave the *mantra* of non-violence to Mohandas K. Gandhi, the barrister, who had just returned from England ? How did he come to place so much trust in non-violence and who instilled in him love for truth, sense of spirituality and a strong belief in *anekant* philosophy ? It was none other than the spiritual guru Shrimad Rajchandra who was born in a small village Vavania in Saurashtra. In Vikram Samvat 1947 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India from England trained as a barrister. He arrived at the house of Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, a relative of Shrimad Rajchandra. He also arrived there at the same time and both met for the first time. Dr. Mehta and Gandhiji had met earlier in England and they both managed to hit off well. Gandhiji was greatly impressed by Rajchandra's nobility of nature and his deep knowledge. What a coincidence that Shrimad Rajchandra imbibed the essence of non-violence from Mahavira and it got implanted from him into Mahatma Gandhi ! Gandhi experimented with truth, non-violence and the philosophy of *anekant* and this saw the dawn of a new era in world history.

Gandhi, under the influence of Rajchandra, brought about a sort political, social and spiritual revolution in the country. He admitted that during a spiritual crisis, he sought guidance from Shrimad. He said : "I met many religious leaders, but the impression that Shrimad Rajchandra left on me, no other leader had been able to leave. Whatever he said had a lasting effect on me." He called him his spiritual Guru. He further said : "I admire his intellect and honesty. I know he would not mislead me and would put me on the right path. Hence my submission to him." Some doubts arose in Gandhi's mind about Hindu religion. It was at that time he met Rajchandra and he dispelled

his doubts. Said Gandhi : "My meeting with him resulted in mental peace. He restored my confidence in Hindu religion saying that I would get from it what I wanted..... I cannot describe the kind of impression he created on me. I have not come across a religious leader of his stature. I considered Tolstoy a great philosopher in Europe, followed by Ruskin, but Rajchandra has been a cut above these two." It is said that if Gandhi had not met Rajchandra, he would have converted to some other religion.

Gandhiji, on a train journey, had the occasion to read Ruskin's '*Unto this Last*' and it also influenced him profoundly. He then entered into correspondence with Tolstoy and got more strength to pursue his movement. But more than this, it was his meeting with Rajchandra that had launched him on the right path. He often discussed with him matters like non-violence, truth, compassion, existence of God, *moksha*, rebirth, Christ etc and sought his guidance on matters which baffled him. Shrimad answered all his questions to his entire satisfaction. It was, indeed, a happy co-incidence, and a historical event that such great souls were born in Saurashtra in Gujarat in the same century. Gandhi's correspondence with Shrimad had been extensive, but unfortunately only three letters are extant today.

Gandhi fought injustice meted out to him in South Africa with non-violence and this was due to Shrimad's influence. He forgave those who treated him cruelly for he had learnt the virtue of forgiveness from Shrimad. Shrimad, thus, showed Gandhi the right path and Gandhi, on his part, reflected what he learnt from him in his actions. He considered non-violence to be more potent than lethal weapons and made truth and non-

violence his two most powerful weapons. Gandhiji's concept of non-violence is not ordinary one. It encompasses a whole gamut of qualities and virtues - sacrifice, justice, compassion, mortification, tolerance, love for one and all. A person needs inner strength to practise non-violence. A votary of non-violence, he said, would be prepared to face any consequences, including death. Fearlessness is what he should have. Mahavira, Buddha, Ram, Jesus were all fearless souls. If you are prepared to die and if you have no desire to kill, that leads to love and compassion. Compassion, he believed, can effect change of heart in any other person.

For Gandhi, righteous behaviour and sense of justice lead to non-violence. Justice means absence of exploitation. Tolerance can bring about a change of heart, not wielding a sword. On 8th October, 1931, he wrote in *Navjivan* that man's true legacy is tolerance; fighting with weapons is a jungle law. Soul force is the true source of non-violence and soul is immortal, universal. Strength derived from soul can make a person fearless and non-violent. Once a person realises the strength of his soul, he becomes non-violent. Thus, his non-violence is not the virtue of a coward, but of a truly brave person. He has observed in the issue of *Harijanbandhu* of October 13, 1938 in connection with his association with General Smutts : "He began as my bitterest and fiercest opponent and critic, but today he is my dearest friend." To be non-violent does not mean to love one whom we like, but to love whom we like to hate. On 7th July 1946, he wrote in *Harijanbandhu* after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima : "The moral of this bombing - the most tragic event in History - is that violence can not be destroyed through violence and

one bomb can not be destroyed with another more powerful one. For mankind to survive, non-violence is the only way open to it. Love is the antidote to violence, for violence leads to more violence."

If a person can follow and practise his religion with least violence in any form, he / she should avoid it completely. Gandhiji would not permit plucking a flower for worship if one can worship without offering a flower. He drew our attention to a very important fact, namely, the presence of violence in every religion and sect. To hurt the religious feelings of people of a particular sect or to hold their beliefs to ridicule are also subtle forms of violence. This inevitably leads to enmity and hatred. To behave in a way which one's religion does not permit or to impose one's religion, on the strength of power and money on others against their wishes is also tantamount to violence, according to Gandhiji. This resultant violence, says Gandhi, leads to so called holy wars causing untold suffering to the people and the nations as a whole. Therefore, one must learn to respect other's religion and develop a spirit of tolerance and accommodation. One must practise the basic tenets of one's own religion and not indulge in religion conversion.

Gandhiji advocated the building of a political empire on the foundation of non violence and which alone can make the state stable, strong and people-friendly. A political system should be such which gives priority to the welfare of its own people and is not aimed at destroying another weak state or country. If a state or country prospers at the cost of another country, it is nothing but violence, asserts Gandhi and if this mindset does not change, world peace will remain an



unfulfilled dream. Any system based on one's own selfish interests, harms others, interests and this will result in conflict of interests and violent clashes. A system based on the principle of non-violence always protects the interests of other nations. Narrow outlook, desire to exploit and establish hegemony are the chief causes of one nation attacking another nation. If these are removed, the question of invading another country will not arise.

If a nation is at all attacked, it has the right to defend itself and has to decide to what extent non-violence will be desirable. But a nation that believes in non-violence should not indulge in wholesale violence to defend itself and see to it that minimum of human lives are lost; and that there is no mass killing. At the time of the last world war, Gandhi had issued direction as to how to deal with the aggressor countries. It is a duty to defend one's own country, but there must be a limit to what extent one should go to defend oneself. The destruction of another country should not be, in any case, the intention, said Gandhi. It is clear that he had a clear vision of what warring countries should do and his views on non-violence, even during war or conflict are clear-cut.

Gandhi also advocated practising non-violence at the individual level as well as in social and family life. Let's not harm even the tiniest creature, he said; Jain philosophy says *parigraha* - possessiveness - is the mother of violence. Gandhi also said the same thing. One, who hoards things more than required, resorts to violence. What is, therefore, needed is self-restraint and a sense of sacrifice coupled with compassion. Man must realise that there are other means - not violence - through which man can overcome his innate weaknesses and evils lying buried deep into consciousness. This was Gandhi's message to

humanity and he succeeded in his experiment not only with truth but with non-violence, too. He is an example worth emulating in the present violent-prone society.

He considered non-violence to be a powerful force. It does not mean that one should not resist evil or injustice. He told the villagers, who had fled from the village Betiya when the police attacked them and raped the women, that they had not done the right thing. It was an act of cowardice. They should have stayed on and offered resistance without the thought of revenge. Those, who are prepared to die, can only teach the lessons of non-violence, not those who are afraid of death. Once a Pathan attacked him in 1908. His elder son, who was not with him at that time, wanted to know what was expected of him if he had been at that time. He asked : "I could not have behaved the way you wanted me to, for I would not tolerate someone attacking you. What should be done ? Should I attack the person, or stand and watch the man attacking you or run away leaving you to your fate ?" Gandhi said : "If you run away, or do not defend me, it is cowardice. It is better to use brute force than to be a coward. You should defend by fighting the attackers, if you cannot defend by imperilling your own life." This is the reason why Gandhiji joined the Boar war. He had helped the government at the time of Julu rebellion and also helped the British Government during the war. He believed that evil or wickedness be fought with non-violence and it is more effective way. He said : "Killing every Englishman will not result in any good for the country or bring about our independence. Let us reform a person than to do evil unto him."

He was wedded to non-violence and said he would prefer to die than to deviate from its path. His non-violence was not



confined to religion or to the progress of the soul, but, he said, it should permeate one's life and be reflected in every field of activity. It can be practised by children and the young, women and the old. There are two conditions necessary. Love for all and a steadfast belief in God, whom love is personified. It should become a way of life, he emphasised, and be used for achieving world peace.

Gandhi's concept of non-violence was influenced by *anekant* philosophy. In 1925, he observed in *Young India* : "I believed that I was always right and my honest critics wrong. But now I realise that we both were right in our own ways. Then I stopped criticising my opponents or critics. I learnt that I must try to look at the situation or a problem from a Muslim's or a Sikh's point of view." He later said , "My principle of *anekant* is based on two things - truth and non-violence."

Gandhi protested against the practice of animal killing either for researching drugs or in the name of religion. If one's thoughts or actions are guided by violent ideas, it will be considered as violence, but to speak out bitter truth is not violence. He advocated non-violent struggle against injustice and violence in any form. On October 15, 1931, he wrote in *Navjivan* : "You say non-violent struggle is not possible and have not known a non-violent revolution in history. But my ambition is to provide such an example. My dream is that my country should achieve independence through non-violence and want the world to know that I will not want to make my country independent at the cost of non-violence."

During the time of Mahavira, animal killing, for religious rituals and for food, was resorted to. And during Gandhiji's

time, too, violence was visible everywhere as a result of industrialisation. It was at that time that he strongly advocated practice of non-violence in every field of human activity - economic, political and social. He proved that non-violent struggle can lead to victory. The war-weary world, steeped in violence and afflicted with terrorism, looks up to Gandhi for inspiration and guidance. How to fight injustice ? By non-violent struggle or *satyagraha*, said Gandhi. It is his atom bomb to meet the challenge posed by destructive atom bombs.

In 1949 winter on a Sunday an African American student, in Philadelphia, had come to listen about Mahatma Gandhi. He knew that Gandhi had fought a long non-violent struggle for India's independence. His weapon was *satyagraha*. The young man, Martin Luther King Jr., was favourably impressed by Gandhi's non-violent movement. Six years later, he raised his voice against apartheid. He led peace rally. He was attacked, but he stuck to the path of non-violence. Both he and Gandhi did not deviate from the chosen path and violence claimed them both.

Gandhiji's autobiography had a great impact on Adolfo P'erez Esquirel, who won the Nobel Prize in 1980, and who put into practice Gandhi's concept of village self-sufficiency. Gandhi's autobiography also influenced Aung San Sun Kyi of Burma - Myanmar - who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. Suu Kyi has studied in a private school in Delhi in 1960. She, at that time, examined Gandhi's method of fighting against all evils by the non-violent way. 25 years later, she adopted the same method and fought for restoration of democracy in Burma.

Non-violence recognises neither east nor west - it's for the whole world to adopt. The people of the world must unite and establish peace in the world and make it a livable place. We must strive for progress and spiritual development, and that, too, through non-violent means. It is not a synonym for cowardice or timidity. It's a powerful force which can fight against even terrorism. The opponent should be reformed and the trace of violence from his heart should be removed. This alone can usher peace in the world. It is not a negative force. It is positive and its foundation is based on universal love and brotherhood. It is a soul force; and unites one soul with another. From Mahavira to Gandhi to Martin Luther King, non-violence has continued to hold beacon light. Let us make twenty-first century a non-violent one and save the world from war, bloodshed and terrorism. The penance lies in non-violence alone.



## **Role of Women in Jain Religion**

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A mong religions, Jain Religion has contributed some original ideologies to the world. The most significant aspect of it is that it has always respected the smallest of the insects among living organisms and this attitude extends even to a blade of grass. As a legitimate consequence, equality amongst men and fraternity with the animals, the insects and nature in all its manifestations has come to be the essential feature of Jain ideology. It is but natural for such a religion to cultivate an attitude of respect towards women. The period, when Jain religion emerged as a major religion, also saw casteism and class-hatred ruling supreme. A few of the classes or castes styled themselves as superior to others and the inferior classes were required to serve them as bonded labourers. Jain religion opposed this inhuman class distinction and glorified the soul that dwelt within each human being. Obviously, therefore, it emphasised equality between men and women. Jain religion regarded

the women as an equal partner of men in strong contrast to the common concept of woman as an inferior being, having just the status of a maid-servant. In the Jain fold, religious and social functions, a woman enjoys as many rights as a man does; it would, therefore, be sheer ignorance to treat woman as inferior. Jain religion has preached that where a man goes, woman can go; what a man does, woman can do. Achievements of man and woman should be considered as being on equal level. Matters of religious achievements and self-development are related to the soul rather than to the body and a difference of sex as merely on the physical level. Woman is thus equally at liberty as is man for religious worship and advancement. Both are equally entitled for liberation by freeing themselves from the bondages of desires, passions and doings, that is *Karma*. Jain religion pointed out that there is no difference or distinction as far as the souls of a man and a woman are concerned, on the spiritual level. It would be illogical, irreligious and ignorant for a man to treat woman as inferior. Thus the approach of Jain religion towards woman is based on the concept of equality.

Jain religion is oriented towards emancipation. It mostly emphasises the values of renunciation, detachment and liberation. Normally, in almost all religions a woman is belittled whenever the concept of freedom from passion is being highlighted, for the reason that she evokes passions and carnal desires, and thus she is someone to be avoided or kept at a safe distance. But in the Jain fold, the approach is totally different. *Sutrakrutang Nirvyukti* specifically mentions that just as a woman is liable to destroy the character of man, so a man might destroy the character of a woman. Hence, women averse to worldly

pleasures shall save herself from men, in the same manner as men have to save themselves from women.

Jain religion has also probed some of the deeper aspects of man-woman relationship. The significance of the word *NARI* has been fully explained in *Sutrakrutang Nirvyukti* and in *Churni* and woman has been classified as *Dravya Stri* and *Bhav Stri*. *Dravya Stri* would mean the physical formation of a woman and *Bhav Stri* would mean her temperament. So also in *Uttaradhyayan Churni*, *Nishith Churni* and *Acharang Churni* the female temperament is elaborately described. Again, *Tandulvaicharik Prakirnak* dwells upon some 94 innate characteristics of a woman. Indeed, at some places the description seems to be derogatory, but it is specifically mentioned in *Bhagvati Aradhana* that this description of the shortcomings applies only to ordinary women and women of no chastity, whereas women of chastity have no such shortcomings. Moreover, in praise of women this book mentions how the glory of a virtuous woman spreads everywhere and she is like a goddess on earth. She is worshipped even by the gods and no words are adequate enough to praise her. It is for this reason that the Jain Agams regard wife as *dhammasahaya* – as one who helps in religion.

As a result of this concept of equality for women, the role of women in Jain religion has been very significant. From the early times of Rishabhdev Bhagwan, the first Tirthankara of Jain religion, education was imparted to young daughters. *Gnata Dharmakatha* and *Jambudwip Pragnapti* give an account of 64 arts of women who used to acquire mastery in dance, music, fine arts and culinary art besides language, mathematics and

writing. Marudevi, Bhagwan Rishabhdev's mother, was compassion incarnate. Brahmi, Bhagwan Rishabhdev's daughter, was intelligent and virtuous and was also acquainted with the 64 arts. She studied the 18 scripts and taught the science of the scripts. Ultimately she became a *Sadhvi* and renounced the world. She inspired as many as 3 lakh *Sadhvis* and 5 lakh 54 thousand *Vratharini Shravikas* to follow on the path of spiritual advancement. Sundari, other daughter of Tirthankara Rishabhdev, had profound knowledge of mathematics.

One distinct aspect of woman's personality is motherhood. Bhagwan Mahavir having been initiated to asceticism, has referred to womanhood as motherhood. Jain scriptures give very inspiring accounts of the mothers of the Tirthankaras and describe them as having noble thoughts, virtuous character and lofty ideals. Bhagwan Mahavir's mother Trishala herself had a superbly inspiring character. Tirthankara Sumatinath's mother Mangala was a learned lady devoted to justice. There are many instances of her keen insight in administering justice. It is not only the Tirthankara who have achieved spiritual advancement, their mothers also have attained the *devlok*, the abode of the gods, through spiritual pursuits. Moreover the Tirthankara, who were engaged to be married before their initiation into asceticism, also express great respect for their wives. Bhagwan Mahavir's wife Yashoda sincerely appreciated the sense of renunciation of her husband and was always eager to see that no harm was done to him. She listened to the preachings of Vardhman, Mahavir's name in worldly life, with great respect and tried her utmost to put them into practice. When prince Vardhman left for the *diksha* the spiritual initiation, she gave

him a smiling farewell. Jyestha was the wife of Nandivardhan, Prince Vardhman's elder brother and she remained steadfast in her loyalty to her husband, despite many temptations from the gods.

The early scriptures of Jain religion like *Uttara-dhyayan Sutra*, *Gnata Dharmakatha*, *Antankrut Dasha* specifically mention that both men and women are considered as equally eligible for the ultimate goal of liberation. Moreover, there are a number of references to women having attained liberation. According to the Shwetambar tradition Jain Tirthankara Mallinath attained *Kevalgnan* and liberation in *Stri Yoni* itself. As against other Tirthankaras, who were men, the most outstanding aspect about Mallinath is that she attained *Kevalgnan* on the very day on which she was initiated to *diksha*. For years together she preached religion by roaming in rural and urban areas and showed them a way to self-purification. With the conferring upon women the right to being eligible for liberation, she automatically became entitled to other rights.

A significant aspect about the role of women in Jain religion is that since prehistoric times the Jain *Sadhus* are outnumbered by Jain *Sadhvis*. So also the number of *Shravikas*, women, who first join the fold, is far greater than that of *Shravaks*. The twenty-third and twenty-fourth Tirthankaras of Jains, Parshwanath and Mahavir Swami unhesitatingly admitted *Sadhvis* along with the *Sadhus* and *Shravikas* with the *Shravaks*. Thus, the Jain religion was committed to the equality of all, in fact, it achieved equality between men and women. The ancient sculptures of Mathura contain the sculpture of a *Sadhvi* very similar to that of a *Sadhu* and another sculpture of a man and woman together offering prayer. This is an enough

indication of how in ancient times men and women were treated as equals in the Jain tradition. So also the ancient edicts of Mathura contain female names along with those of males. Women participated equally with men in religious ceremonies, gave donations as per their desires and collaborated in the construction of temples. During the times of Bhagwan Parshwanath, 16 thousand Shravikas attained spiritual uplift through initiation or *Diksha* under the inspiring guidance of Sadhvi Pushyachula. The followers of Bhagwan Mahavira included only 14 thousand *Sadhus* as against 36 thousand *Sadhvis*; the *Shravaks* were one and a half lakh, whereas the number of *Shravikas* exceeded 3 lakh. These figures are indicative of the honour and respect women commanded in the Jain religion. Mahasati Chandanbala independently managed this sect of 36 thousand *Sadhvis*.

Chandanbala is a remarkable personality in Jain religion. Bhagwan Mahavira accepted food from Chandanbala who was regarded as a maid servant and this was the gesture of abolition of casteism. She was nominated to the post of *Pravartini* and was given rights equal to those of the post of a senior Acharya in a *Sangh*. Under the impact of religious discourses of *Sadhvi* Chandana many a kings renounced the material world. Chandana herself attained *Siddhatva* in that birth itself through rigorous penance. The sect of Jain *Sadhvis* contained women of all castes and communities. Chandanbala, Kali, Sukali, Mahakali, Krishna and such other women belonged to the Kshatriya community whereas Devananda and others were from Brahmin community. A religion, that conferred the right to liberation to each and every woman, would not confine itself within the bonds of casteism. It is not that only the women from

royal families have joined *Sadhvi Sangh*, women from lower strata like maid servants and concubines have also accepted *diksha* and won respectable status in the society. Knowledge, chastity and penance of these *Sadhvis* won social acceptance and respect. The king of a region or a person of a very high social status would, according to the rule, get up from their seats to pay their respects to such *Sadhvis*. Brahmi, Sundari, Chandana and such other *Sadhvis* are worshipped even today and names of 16 *Sati* pious women are remembered along with the names of the Tirthankaras.

A look at Jain *Sadhvi Sangh* reveals that women from all castes, communities and classes were admitted to it without any discrimination. Their spirituality and learning had a great social impact. *Sadhvi* Sulasa did not deviate from her religious pursuits despite numerous hindrances in life. Because of her pious deeds, Sulasa would attain the status of Tirthankara in the cycle of life.

Jayanti, daughter of King of Kaushambi, was a learned woman in the times of Bhagwan Mahavir and she was very knowledgeable in the essentials of religion. Jayanti was a follower of Bhagwan Mahavir and yet she unhesitatingly asked questions to Bhagwan Mahavir during his religious discourses. Usually it is the males who preach, but in Jain religion in many instances women preachers have given the guidance to the males on the path of purification. In *Uttaradhyayan* Queen Kamalavati guides King Ishukar to the better way of life. *Avashyak Churni* refers to Brahmi and Sundari having preached Muni Bahubali. *Uttaradhyayan* and *Dashvaikalik Churni* contain an episode of Rajimati giving a preaching to Rathnemi. Kosha, a concubine, guided the sage with her saying to path of righteousness. The

religious sincerity of Prabhavati inspired her husband King Udayan to follow the religious way of life, whereas, Mrigavati could prevent a war by herself having been initiated into *Diksha*. Queen Prutha, wife of Chetak, who presided over the Republic of Vaishali, groomed and trained her seven daughters in the different arts and all of them won wide acclaim. These seven sisters had a great impact on the contemporary women community. Bhadra, wife of Gobhadra, had unusual insight in managing business affairs. When Champa *Shravika* observed fast for six months, this fast impressed the Moghul emperor Akbar who gave orders to stop violence throughout the state for as many days as the vow of fasting was to last.

Jain women have also significantly contributed to the field of literary creation and in the exercise of the power of memorising. Yaksha *Sadhvi* had the power to repeat verbatim of any difficult passage of prose or a piece of poem that she would listen only once. Arya Poyani played a leading role in the conference organised in the early years of the fourth centenary of Bhagwan Mahavira's *Nirvan*, with a view to systematising and protecting *Agama* literature. About 500 *Shramans* of the tradition of Acharya Sushthita had gathered on the occasion and 300 *Sadhvis* participated in the conference of *Agama* reading under the guidance of Arya Poyani.

Jain Princess Auve of Cher State in South India was a poetess of ancient Tamil literature. For her stirring voice and moral preaching, Tamil speaking people still admire and adore her as mother Auve (*Aryika Ma*). Vasuki, the wife of world-famous literary writer Thiruvalluvar, adopted a saintly way of life and *Shravak* way of life played a significant role in the life of Thiruvalluvar.

Uday Vidyadhar's wife Saviyabbe died fighting in the battle of Begapur along with her husband. There is an edict at Shravanbelgola which gives an account of this courageous woman having a sword in her hand and mounted on the horse and she is depicted as hitting at a warrior who is mounted on an elephant. An equally courageous woman was Chandra-vallabha, wife of King Rajmal, the second. She ruled over her territory and established a huge Jin idols. Atimbbe from South India was known for her donations in the closing years of the tenth century. She had strongly opposed the practice of Sati, widow-immolation. She got thousands of copies of the manuscript of *Shanti Puran* written by the Kannad poet Ponne, and distributed all these handwritten copies, and thus she managed to save the original manuscript. This led to the survival of many volumes and to the spread of education and literature in Karnatak. She was instrumental in the establishment of many Jin idols. Mahakavi Ratna gave her the title of *Dan Chintamani*. In 1037 A.D. Akkadevi, sister of Chalukya King Satyashraya, was entrusted with the reign of one province in view of her proficiency in state administration. In South India women like Ketaldevi, Shantaldevi, Achaldevi are reputed for having constructed temples. As per an edict of 1147 A.D. princess Pampadevi having unusual learning is known to have composed *Asta Vidyarchan Mahabhishek* and *Chaturbhakti*. Yakini Mahattara is regarded as a most scholarly woman of the eighth century.

Women also played the role of providing inspiration to men. It was because of the inspiration of Hemchandracharya's mother Pahini that he came to earn the reputation as the *Ocean of Knowledge*, Kavi Dhanpal was inspired by his sister Sundari



in writing his monumental work of *Amarkosh*. So also women like Shreedevi and Anupamadevi provided inspiration to their husbands to spend their wealth for religious purposes. Even in this century, there have been numerous *Sadhvis* and *Shravikas* who have earned high reputation in various fields. Impressed by the personality of Mahasati Ujjavalkumari, Gandhiji himself went to visit her. Harkunvar Shethani constructed the Hathisinh temples of immense grandeur and sponsored a huge procession of pilgrims and thereby exhibited her skill in management. Mahattara Mrigavatishriji constructed the Vallabhsmarak at New Delhi. Shardabai Mahasatiji, *Sadhvi* Pramukha Kanakprabhashriji and many other *Sadhvijs* have provided fruitful guidance and leadership to the society.

It is because of this emphatic and positive role of *Sadhvis* and *Shravikas* that the Jain religion, committed as it was to non-violence, did not approve the *Sati* system which was prevalent in the Middle Ages. So also it has strongly resisted the *dasi* system-women slavery - and the practice of the trading of women. *Dasi* system was regarded as a symbol of affluence and prestige. Many *dasi*'s were bought from various countries for the pleasure of Meghkumar. But Bhagwan Mahavira protested strongly against the practice. *Sadhvi* Yakshakunvarji struggled incessantly to end the practice of sacrificing animals. As Jain religion is fundamentally opposed the seven vices, like polygamy, adultery, addiction to alcoholic drinks, harlotry and gambling, women from this religion are saved from the torture that results from these evils. In *gnata dharmakatha* King Drupad asks Draupadi to select husband for herself. As mentioned in *Upasak Dashang*, Mahashatak does not compel his wife Revati in any way as regards her religious faith, food habits and other

matters. On the other hand women like the wife of Shravak Anand very willingly and joyously follow the faith of their husbands and perform the *upasak* vows of Bhagwan Mahavira. Thus, since the times of *Agama* era, women are allowed total freedom as regards religious faith and life-style. *Sadhvis* used to live and move independently from the company of the *Sadhus*, and arranged for their own security by appointing a *Sadhvi* as a *Pratihari*-guard.

Bhagwan Mahavira has glorified the vow of celibacy and women were also allowed to refuse to be married and to adopt the celibate way of living. Women like Brahmi, Sundari, Malli, Chandanbala, Jayanti and others accepted the life long vow of celibacy by rejecting the married life. In view of the prevailing traditions and circumstances, it was considered inevitable in those times for women to live a married life. But Jain religion has left such a personal issue of marriage to the discretion of women; a woman may herself decide whether to marry or not. If she felt that the unmarried way of life was better for her effective religious pursuits, she was entitled for *diskha* without getting married.

At the *samavasaran* (gathering for preaching) of Bhagwan Mahavir, women enjoyed as much freedom as did men. They attended such gatherings without any restraint or restriction, listened to the preachings and satisfied their curiosity by publicly asking questions as in the case of Jayanti who settled her doubts by raising questions.

Thus, the role of women in Jain religion has been very progressive and ennobling on the whole. As mothers they have given birth to Tirthankaras, as wives they have provided

inspiration to their husbands; as individuals they have managed large trade and commerce independently. In the Jain way of life, woman has always been bold enough to protect her chastity and defeat the enemy. Her learning has for ever been honoured everywhere. *Sadhvis* have set an example for the society in matters relating to the ultimate achievement of spiritual progress. The liberation of women, the freedom of women and the advancement of women are integrated in Jain religion. This principles are sure to guide and lead the people in the ensuing decades towards the new path of attainment of the liberty of women.

Let us end with one of the daily prayers of Jainism –

*I forgive all the living beings and*

*all the living beings forgive me.*

*I have amity with all and enmity with none.*

*Let all the living beings be happy.*

*Let all the living beings be busy in making others happy.*

*Let the evils disappear from everywhere and*

*Let the whole world be happy.*



## Human Rights And Jainism

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**A**bout 2600 years ago, Bhagwan Mahavira one of the twenty-four chief propounders and Tirthankaras of the Jain religion, led a mass movement against the then prevalent social system based on caste system and also against the system of slavery so rampant in those days. He said :

एक्का मणुस्स जाई ।

It means that the entire human race is one and distinctions based on caste, colour or creed have no place in human society. No one is superior or inferior, higher or lower to another in terms of status and position in society.

Every great religion has preached universal brotherhood and mutual respect. For instance, the Bible preaches, 'No man liveth unto himself. We are all parts of one another. God hath made all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth of one blood.' In the words of Guru Nanak, 'Neither Hindu nor Muslim am I. We are God's children all.' The *Vedas*

proclaim, 'That which exists is only One; the sages speak of it variously.' The Koran affirms, 'All creatures are members of the one family of God.'

106 years ago, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was thrown out of a railway carriage at the Pieter Maritzburg railway station in South Africa by a white officer. The apparent provocation for the whiteman was that the colour of Gandhi's skin was black. At that time Gandhi said, "I will no longer tolerate this." And this one utterance from a man with a frail body, but with an indomitable will, became a turning point in the history of mankind. It was the beginning of a struggle against injustice and discrimination which later spread through out the world. Great national leader like Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela took up on the task of making the world more just and more humane.

Mahatma Gandhi's spiritual mentor was Shrimad Rajchandra from whom he sought spiritual guidance. He fought against the white regime in South Africa so as to free the Indians from the scourge of slavery. At the roots of this struggle lies the fundamental principles of Jainism. The biggest violation of human rights is reflected in racism which indulges in blatant discrimination on the basis of race or colour. The Jain religion strongly protested against such discrimination and tried to banish slavery and thus did a great service to the cause of human dignity and justice.

Taking a cue from Mohandas Gandhi, who later came to be known as a Mahatma, Nelson Mandela fought to banish apartheid from South Africa and fought for human rights. For that he had to spend 28 years in jail. And yet he was determined to end racial discrimination in his motherland.

Thomas Paine, in his book *The Rights of Man* (1791-92) has written about human rights. He was declared an outlaw for his *Wicked seditious writing*, and was prosecuted. Thereafter, he never went back to his country and had to take asylum elsewhere. This was the fate that befell on one who championed for the cause of human rights. The situation has not changed much even today, 200 years after Thomas Paine and those who fight for human rights are subjected even today to unbearable indignities.

The term 'human rights' is very much in vogue today and has become a part of the lexicon of national politics and international diplomacy. Countries all over the world talk of protecting human rights and leaders of all shades and colour never forget to mention them every now and then.

It has been a hot topic of discussion in many a convention. Today human rights are equated with a decent life style. All the same, the term "Human Rights" continues to arouse confusion and controversy. More often than not it is only talked about, but not practised. Despite strong international effort, the movement for human rights has not been a great success in many parts of the world. And yet, it has now become a movement for human dignity and fight for justice. Religions do talk of human rights, but very often ironically though, they are violated and trampled upon again in the name of religion. Hence the onus for protecting and promoting them actually rests on religions. They can pave the way for unity, harmony and social justice in the world. There is today a wide gap between precepts and practices, between promise and performance. Many countries accept the importance of human rights in principle but are shy while actually promoting or protecting them. There is,

therefore, a greater need to promote them in those countries which are found wanting in practising them.

The world has been a witness to unprecedented suffering and exploitation, inequality and brutality, violence and injustice. The use of chemical weapons and aerial bombardments are widespread. Racism and apartheid in its subtlest forms, along with slavery, continue to raise their ugly heads every time and again. Look at the 'skinheads' in the USA and Germany. Rights of minorities are blatantly ignored, cultural identity is sought to be obliterated and women are denied equal status in the society. The ideal of self-realization is in jeopardy. At such times, respect for human dignity and human individuality need to be re-asserted.

Jainism lays emphasis on human dignity, human values, equality and self-realisation. The Jain philosophy views life as a whole, not in fragments. The Jain scriptures show four stages of one's existence : *human being*, *tiryak*, *devata* and *naarki*. Out of these four, godhood (*devata*) is considered superior to all and yet *moksha* (*salvation*) is possible only when one is born a human being. Jain 'Agam' says : माणुस्सं खु सुदुल्लहं । Human life is indeed a rare gift. A human being is gifted with the power of knowing the past, especially the previous births. He can atone for his sins, renounce worldly pleasures and practise penance for spiritual development. Such an enlightened soul can hope to acquire *kevalgyaan*, the ultimate knowledge, and through it *moksha* or salvation. Jainism thus emphasises the importance of birth of a human being and in consequence the importance of human rights. Jain religion does not only talk of reverence for human life, but for all living organisms on earth. It believes in the dictum : 'परस्परपण्यहो जीवानाम् । Each organism depends on

another and this is the only way the survival of each can be ensured, and so existence of each be respected. A religion which respects even a tiny ant, would surely have infinite reverence for human life. Similarly, man must also show reverence for all the living organisms and thus achieve harmonious co-existence. Every living organism, be it an insect, an animal or a bird living on the surface of the earth or underwater, has a soul and, therefore, all are equal. This understanding is the cardinal principle of Jain philosophy. But if it remains a mere principle and if it is not practised, it loses its savour. Hence it tries to practice it in life through the concept of non-violence. In the Jain aagam *Acharang Sutra* it is said that one must try to experience the pain suffered by others as one would experience it. In other words one has to be sensitive to other's pain and suffering and then only non-violence can be achieved in its true form.

The moment you realise that others, too, feel hurt, that others, too, experience pain, you will stop hurting or causing pain to others. This realisation will lead people on the path of non-violence. Today, the world is steeped in violence and it is visible not only on the battlefields, but also in the minds of the peoples of the world. This, in turn, leads to exploitation, oppression, brutality and denial of basic rights. Jainism has non-violence as its cardinal principle and Bhagwan Mahavira insisted upon it in social and religious festivals. Man himself must not only practise non-violence, but he should inspire others to do so. Non-violence, is an all-encompassing concept which includes not only the non killing of a living organism, but also avoid saying something which may cause him/her mental hurt. Mercy, compassion and vegetarianism are other

manifestations of this concept of non-violence. It provides cattle-ponds and also shelters for insects.

The twenty-fourth *Tirthankara* Mahavira Swami showed his disapproval of discrimination based on caste, colour and creed at a time when these were deeply entrenched in the society. Casteism was rampant and all types of cruelties were perpetrated in the name of castes. Jainism believes that at the root of this evil lies excessive pride, pride in one's own superior caste. Its direct concomitant was hatred for other castes and this was a clear violation of basic rights. Jain religion challenged the caste-structure and shook its very foundations. Mahavira said that a person can enjoy a higher status through his qualities or deeds and in the same way he goes down in esteem through his lowly deeds and acts. Recitation of a *mantra* (incantation) does not make one a Brahmin or member of superior caste. He said :

कम्मुणा बंभणो होइ, कम्मुणा होइ खत्तिओ ।  
वईस्सो कम्मुणा होई, सुदो हवई कम्मुणा ॥

[A man is a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra by his deeds rather than by his birth]

Thus, Mahavira struck at the roots of the caste-system and sought to remove the long-standing enmity between the *Kshatriya* (warrior - caste) and *Brahmins* (superior caste). After his *diksha* (initiation), he ate his first meal at the house of a Brahmin. On his attaining *kevaljnan* (ultimate knowledge), eleven learned Brahmins became his first disciples. Similarly, Metaraj belonging to the lowest caste - *Shudra* - practised rigorous penance and became *maharshi* (great sage). Even today there are a few Jain *Sadhus* who do not belong to the Jain

community, but to the Brahmin or to some other castes. In those days *gotra* (clan) was appended to one's name to establish one's superiority. Mahavira discontinued this practice and thus sought to assert the principle of equality among all human beings. He again and again emphasised the fact that deeds and not birth determine one's status or caste in the society.

Slavery was prevalent in Mahavira's times. Slave markets were in existence and human beings were sold like commodities. They were subjected to inhuman treatment and were tortured. To Mahavira this custom was an anathema and he found it revolting. He fasted for 175 days and on the 176th day he broke his fast when he was offered boiled grains by a female slave. This act of his was a telling blow to the system of slavery. Thus, Mahavira in his non-violent way put an end to the caste system and the system of slavery.

Jain religion also lays stress on respecting individual freedom. Yet, one can enjoy one's freedom only when one does not come in the way of other's freedom. This means one has to exercise self-discipline. One should constantly think of others' freedom and try to protect it. Thus, Jain religion believes in controlling unbridled passion and desires so as not to obstruct others path of progress. An individual can enjoy his/her rights fully without hinderance, but it is also the responsibility of an individual to protect others' rights and not to abrogate them. This will ensure the inherent dignity of human family, social progress, better standards of life and enjoyment of freedom. At the heart of Jainism is the principle of 'live and let live'. It also believes that the deeds of human beings are responsible for his happiness or misery. This point of view puts man in the centre

and reflects reverence for an individual. Man can never be at the centre of the philosophy which says that everything is controlled by God and man is a mere puppet. He himself is not free, he has no independent will or freedom. Jainism, on the other hand, grants complete freedom to every one to act the way he wants to do.

Human rights encompass freedom of thought, freedom of opinion and freedom of expression. Jain religion has the doctrine of *anekant*, its literal meaning is the doctrine of non-absolutism. It is Jainism's unique gift to the world. *Anekant* advocates looking at things from all angles. It takes into account thoughts and opinions of others. It says : Others, too, have a point of view and we must respect it. Knowledge or thought or behaviour has to be examined from a variety of angles so as to get a total, complete picture.

*Anekant* is an all-pervasive approach of this religion towards every facet of human values and behaviour. It is the corner stone on which the well-thought out Jain philosophy is based. It is a concept which teaches us rational behaviour to be practised in every walk of our life. The nicety of this concept mainly lies in the fact that it teaches us to be impartial and objective towards everything; to be unbiased in our thinking and in our conduct. It inspires us to have an all-pervasive view towards every problem that confronts us, to look to the other side of the matter also, so as to enable us to make a correct and rational judgement on issues that we face in our life. It teaches us to look at and judge everything with an open mind, the greater the openness of mind, the greater would be the clarity, impartiality and objectivity in our thinking.

Such an approach alone would ensure the practice of *Anekant* in everything that we do in our day-to-day life. The tenets of Jainism on which its teachings are based emphasise this as the core of its basic philosophy. The real nature of human life can never be reflected in our thought and action if one takes an attitude of *Ekant* (obsession for only one thing or one side) as against *Anekant*. The *Ekant*, would present before us a partial, biased and one-sided view of everything, while *Anekant*, would present before us an impartial, unbiased and all-sided view. In the situation, the only alternative for all right thinking persons is to practice *Anekant*. The philosophy of *Anekant* teaches us the maxim of synthesis i.e. rational assimilation of every good aspect that we can draw from the experience of every individual, into a coordinated whole, even if some of these aspects may have been drawn from the experiences of our opponents. For this, we will have to shed our ego, our false notions and our vanity. The Jain philosophy thus respects thoughts, religions and opinions of others. This is the foundation of what is now called the human rights. Tirthankara Bhagwan Mahavira was accessible to every human being - low and high. He respected the views of everyone. He was open to questioning by anyone irrespective of his status in life. Even those, who belonged to other religions, those who preached and practised other faiths, could freely approach him for a religious dialogue. Each individual enjoyed the freedom to meet him and to sort out discrepancies in mutual beliefs. That is why among the community of Jains, each individual enjoys the democratic right of freedom of thought and expression.

Human rights assume greater significance at the time of war as against the time of peace. Jainism has a particular



approach to war, a very special thinking on it. The teachings of Bhagwan Mahavira underscore the following tenets as far as 'production' is concerned :

1. There should be no production of the means of destruction.
2. There should be no assembling of the means of destruction and the import and export of war materials.
3. The training of violence or destruction should not be given to anyone.

Jain religion not only preaches us not to produce the means of violence and destruction, but also teaches us that such means should not be traded, bought or sold. Unfortunately, schools and training camps have now been established in many parts of the world, today, where persons are trained as terrorists and militants who can spread panic, violence and destruction of life and property on a massive scale by using the most sophisticated weapons produced specially for the purpose. In this context, the preachings of Lord Mahavira, detailed above, become more significant. If sincerely practised by the world, it would reduce terrorism and violence and would ensure a universal sense of security among the people.

In the present world, consumerism is encouraging yet one more type of violence and insecurity. Almost every individual wants to ensure a certain high level of consumption for himself and for his family and when he cannot obtain it by fair means, he takes recourse to theft, murder, dacoity and kidnapping. These are old evils, but in to-day's society the propounders of consumerism stimulate great temptations and the evils are multiplied. The Jain, thinking on our worldly or economic life,

is based on the tenets of morality, humanitarianism and compassion. It preaches us to put limits to material greed and consumption which are the very off-shoots of consumerism. It is often forgotten that when a person indulges in limitless consumption, he lends himself to fear and insecurity. For instance, those who load themselves with ornaments are always gripped with the fear of theft or physical confiscation. The Jain religion sincerely believes that consumerism has made man unhappy and has brought him perpetual dissatisfaction. He is now deprived of happiness, peace and stability. The material wealth which initially appears to lead one to happiness will ultimately make one more and more unhappy. That is why the Jain religion persuades us to put an end to aggrandisement or atleast to fix a certain limit to it. If what is preached by it is practised in the world, poverty would be eliminated and crimes resulting from it would also be reduced.

Whenever there was a war cry, Bhagwan Mahavira during his life time acted in the following way :

1. He personally intervened to halt the war, wherever it was waged.
2. He advocated the vow of non-aggression or non-retaliation i.e. as long as a country was not physically attacked by an aggressor, no country should attack the opponent.
3. He took steps to ensure that the hostility between the warring groups is completely eliminated or atleast reduced through negotiations. He actively worked for disarmament during his time. He also preached that abductions, repression and suppression of others' thoughts and actions are only different forms of the same thing called violence. It is only when

people actively subscribe to non-violence in thought and action that a citizen can obtain freedom of thought and expression in the real sense. Democracy flourishes only where those, who oppose the rulers, are also appropriately heard and not suppressed or oppressed. Acharya Tulsi, a leading figure among Jain monks has prescribed norms through his Anuvrata movement as to the type of persons who should be elected to rule the country. According to these norms, only those who are honest, those whose character is of a high order, who are free of addictions to drugs, who possess high quality of efficiency, who are secular in their thought and action and are not biased in favour of any caste or creed alone deserve to be voted to power. Only such elected people can find effective solutions to the problems of the people. In the words of Bhagwan Mahavira, only the one who is bold and courageous can protect human rights.

Every citizen must be devoted to his duties as much as to his rights. Article 29(1) of the Declaration of Human rights emphatically states, "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible."

Women have been accorded equal status in Jain religion. In fact, there were more women in the order of Lord Mahavira than men. The scriptures record many tributes to women of exceptional qualities. The care of women, especially in critical situations, is given higher priority than that of men. Mothers of the Tirthankaras are given special honour through communal worship. Legends abound in which women of high spiritual merit such as Brahmi, Sundari, Mallikumari, and Rajimati have

come to the aid of men. Women have been recognized for their exceptional contributions in the fields of education, culture and religion.

The devotees of the Jain religion may be small in number and yet they have played a very active and constructive role in times when a section of the humanity faced calamity – natural or human-in various parts of the country, calamities such as droughts, famines, floods, earthquakes etc. The history of the Jains is full of philanthropists like Jagadushah, Khemo Dedrani, Javadshah and Motishah and even today the Jains, who regard non-violence and compassion as their main ideals of life, come forward at a moment, notice to provide relief and succour to the suffering humanity. Otherwise also, they are generous enough to distribute aid to the poor and the starving in both rural and urban areas. Lord Mahavira has said that the one, who does not distribute wealth equitably among people of his clan, does not deserve salvation. He has lauded the one who distributes his wealth to the needy and to the deprived ones. In the *Dashvaikalik Agamsutra*, Mahavira says that the one who does not voluntarily recognise the share of the needy in his own wealth will not reach salvation in his life. This means that everyone should allow others to partake of or share his or her wealth according to his or her capacity.

Thus Jain philosophy considers non-violence and compassion as the richest qualities of human life. It exhorts its disciples and followers to oppose violence and brutality in every possible way. The Jain religion has always advocated gender equality since its birth. One of its tenets is that the Almighty dwells in the soul of every person and when that is so every individual should strive to adopt spiritualism rather

than sectarianism in his or her life, should abhor physical and mental violence and should practice compassion. It is only when an individual manifestly transcends over the power of the physical might through the power of soul. That he or she can really become fearless in life.

It is in this way that the Jain religion not only emphasises social, economic and individual duties of persons, but more than that it also emphasises mental, moral and spiritual fellowship among men in all walks of life.

Today, when man is struggling hard to protect and preserve human rights in the world, the Jain religion and philosophy can offer a lot to humanity in terms of non-violence, compassion, mutual understanding, all pervasive approach to the problems of life and such other human values.

We should unite at this crucial juncture of world history and strive ceaselessly to save humanity from extinction. It is essential that we try our best to revitalize our religious and moral principles and unite to ensure peace and harmony. Jainism preaches amity towards all beings, compassion for the miserable and detachment towards possessions.

In order to discourage violence, Bhagwan Mahavira proclaimed that the entire human race is one. At a time when communalism, hatred, violence and terrorism have become rampant in contemporary times, this preaching of Bhagwan Mahavira should be our true ideal. Indeed, it is the right time to practise them now.

The message of Jainism has even a greater relevance today. By following this path, it will be possible for us to make a meaningful use of the wonderful inventions of science and

technology and make them truly blissful and create a global society free from hunger and hatred – a society at peace with itself and with its environment. Thus, a heaven will descend on this earth. What more does a human being want ?

The poetic composition of the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, which basically is in praise of our motherland, is symbolic of the sacred sentiments towards humanity as a whole and it eulogises human rights in all their aspects. It is only when such rights are granted to each citizen that humanity can be free from fear, agony, exploitation and repression. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore :

*“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;*

*Where knowledge is free;*

*Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by  
narrow domestic walls;*

*Where words come out from the depth of truth;*

*Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;*

*Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the  
dreary desert sand of dead habit;*

*Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening  
thought and action –*

*Into that Heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake.”*

Let us hope that the new millenium will usher in an era of peace, equality and justice for all those who inhabit this planet which cries out for the restoration of its pristine purity when it came into being aeons ago.

*[Lecture delivered at Parliament of the World's Religion,  
Cape Town, South Africa on 2nd Dec. 1999]*



## Virchand Raghavji Gandhi

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Certain personalities leave indelible footprints on the sands of time; their legacy is not affected by the constantly revolving wheel of time.

At the World Religions Conference held in Chicago, U. S. A., in 1893, America, and the west, for the first time, heard the determined, spirited, resonant voice of ancient India, and the message of Indian philosophy and culture. Two Indian delegates participating at this conference awakened the western world to the spiritual heritage of India. One of these was Swami Vivekanand whose success in the World Religions Conference of Chicago is fresh in everyone's memory today. But the contribution of another Indian delegate to the same Conference, Shri Virchand Raghavji Gandhi, the representative of the Jain religion, has a claim to equal attention by virtue of the success he achieved at the Conference and also by his work as a religious thinker.

In 1893, more than three thousand delegates of

different nations and religions had assembled at the conference. The conference was inaugurated on 11th September, 1893, and Virchand Gandhi, Swami Vivekanand, P. C. Majumdar and other eminent scholars from India were present as distinguished participants. The aim of this religious conference was to impart to the world the knowledge of different religions, and to promote a feeling of fraternity between followers of diverse religious persuasion, and so to pave the way for world peace.

Virchand Gandhi, a young man of twenty-nine, impressed the delegates not only by his eloquence, but also by the sheer weight of his scholarship. He wore a long and loose kurta, a white shawl on his shoulder, a golden-bordered *Kathiawadi* turban on his head, and country shoes. This external appearance bore the imprint of India. The scholarship, the impartiality of outlook and the oratorical skill of this man fascinated the delegates at the conference of World Religions. An American newspaper wrote, "of all Eastern scholars it was this youth whose lecture of Jain faith and conduct was listened to with the interest engaging the greatest attention."

Virchand Gandhi talked about the doctrines of Jainism in such a coherent manner that some newspapers published the text of his lecture in full. He had the most effective way of handling the otherwise abstruse terminology of Jainism. He had an extraordinary ability to clarify his statements in a consistent and logical manner. As he expounded his views, he would give his own interpretations of some of the most difficult points. His lectures demonstrated the fact that the study of Sanskrit and Prakrit alone was not enough for a proper understanding and

exposition of Indian philosophy; it was also necessary to assimilate and to realise India's past culture in its proper context. Virchand Gandhi had realised the cultural context and that is why he was never dogmatic; he spoke as a Jain and yet he often took sides with Hindus, but above all, he always spoke as an Indian.

At the conference, Virchand Gandhi made a brief, but striking presentation on the fundamentals of the Jain religion. He expounded the Jain religion in two of its main aspects, namely, Jain philosophy and the Jain way of life. He elucidated the nine elements, the six types of Jivas, the subtle strands of thought in Jain philosophy regarding *Dravyarthik* and *Paryayarthikanaya*, the *Syadvad* and other philosophical aspects which fascinated all. He illustrated the specific Jain code of conduct, the Jain way of life and explained the cardinal principles of Jain cosmology, comparing it with Buddhism and other religions. He also established the fact that Jainism is older than Buddhism. His discourses convinced the elite of America of the fact that the Jain religion has an authentic and rational religious tradition. Expressing his joy about this new knowledge, an American gentlemen gave his opinion about Virchand Gandhi in these words :

“In this religious gathering a number of philosophers, preachers and scholars came from India and delivered lectures and each one of them presented a new perspective and element so as to convince that their religion ranks high with great religions of the world, moreover, their oratory and devotion presented distinct types and were full of wisdom and contemplation. Among them was an outstanding young man

of Jain religion who gave new ideas about morality and philosophy. Though he is only a house-holder and not a monk or religious preacher, he can expound so well. Who must then be his gurus ? His simple, but striking philosophy of life is worth knowing, worth understanding.”

Another special characteristic of Virchand Raghavji Gandhi's lectures on the Jain religion was that there was no trace of criticism of other religions. Free from sectarian preferences and prejudices, his impartial ideology is an apt expression of the Jain who practices *Ahimsa* in life and *Anekanta* in thoughts. His lectures were marked by a fusion of natural sentiments, profound study, and genuine enthusiasm. The lectures served to educate the American society regarding the salient features of Indian culture. Virchand Raghavji Gandhi is the author of *The 'Yoga Philosophy'*, *'The Jain Philosophy'* and other books of which *'The Karma Philosophy'* may be regarded as his best contribution. In discussing the Jain doctrine of Karma in the book, the author reveals his profound devotion to studies and his awakened and discerning religious sentiments.

Virchand Gandhi was not only a philosophical thinker, but he also had the welfare of the nation at heart. There prevailed in America the belief that India was a country of tigers, serpents, magicians and the kings. Christian missionaries also presented to foreign countries a distorted picture of the people in India. Virchand Gandhi made as great an effort as Vivekanand did to give to the people abroad the true perspective of India. Explaining the importance of Indian culture to foreigners, he said, “It is an astonishing that foreigners have been constantly attacking India and that

foreigners have been constantly attacking India and in the face of all these aggressions the soul of India has stood vital and watchful. Her conduct and religion are safe and the whole world looks at India with a steady gaze.”

“Cultural distinctions, agriculture, art, artistic skill, literature, good conduct, means of knowledge and science, hospitality, feminism, love and respect – all these are found in India in quite a different form. If that culture was purchasable, England could have purchased it, adopted it. But it has not happened, it cannot happen.”

As early as in the year 1893 Virchand Gandhi talked of the economic and political freedom of India. He said to the American people :

“India is at present under the foreign rule. She is independent in the field of religion, but when India will be free, she will not invade any country in a violent manner.”

Virchand Gandhi had a rare ability to see beyond the immediately visible world. He could see beyond this world, he could know the future. Even before the dawn of political independence, Virchand Gandhi had foreseen the proper role of India.

“If India becomes free, she will live in a political co-operation with all countries.” Five decades before the independence of India, Virchand Gandhi had the prophetic sense; he said in his lecture of ‘The Jain Philosophy’ – “You know my brothers and sisters, that we are not an independent nation. We are subjects of Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria” the ‘defender of the faith’, but if we are a nation in

all that name implies with our own government and our own rulers, with our laws and institutions controlled by us free and independent, I affirm that we should seek to establish and for ever maintain peaceful relations with all the nations of the world.”

Virchand Gandhi made such a great impact that the conveners and scholars of the conference of world religions awarded a silver medal to him. Subsequently on 8th August 1894 the citizens of Kasadova awarded a gold medal to him. In this city he delivered a lecture on ‘Some mistakes corrected.’ The newspaper, ‘Buffalo Courier’, records the immense success of the lecture. In America Virchand Gandhi founded two institutions namely, ‘The Gandhi Philosophical Society’ and ‘The School of Oriental Philosophy’. In Chicago he founded an institution namely ‘Society for the Education of Women of India.’ The secretary of this institution was Mrs. Howard who had adopted pure vegetarianism and other codes of conduct of Jainism under the influence of Virchand Gandhi. As sister Nivedita became Swami Vivekanand’s disciple, so Mrs. Howard became Virchand Gandhi’s disciple and like Jain, she practised Samayika.

Later, Virchand Gandhi went to England, where he fulfilled his desire to be a barrister, but he did not use this training for monetary gain. Knowing the curiosity for Jainism in England, he started a coaching class. Later he founded the ‘Jain Literature Society’ in London. Herbert Warren, a religious enthusiast, abandoned non-vegetarianism and adopted the Jain religion. He took notes of Virchand Gandhi’s lectures and wrote in English a book on the Jain religion. Moreover, Charles C.



Bonny, the President of the Conference of world religions, was impressed by him. At the time of the famine of 1896-97 in India, Mr. Bonny was the president of the Famine Relief Committee founded in America by Virchand Gandhi. This committee immediately sent to India forty thousand Rupees and a steamer full of corn. During this travel Virchand Gandhi delivered as many as 535 lectures. He had the command of fourteen languages including Gujarati, Hindi, Bengali, English, Sanskrit and French.

Thus, a young man of twenty-nine, preached religion in foreign countries in the face of opposition from his own community who objected to travel abroad. He toured abroad twice to spread the message of Jain Philosophy and he was equally a spokesman of Indian Philosophy.

The short life span of Virchand Raghavji Gandhi is full of multifarious achievements. He was the first graduate of the Jain society to get his BA with Hons. in 1884. When his father died in 1890, he did not allow the primitive practices of wailing and breast-beating during mourning. At the age of twenty-one, as the secretary of 'Shri Jain Association of India', he worked for the abolition of poll-tax levied on pilgrims at Palitana.

Annoyed by poll-tax and other forms of harassment, the Anandji Kalyanji firm had filed a suit against the ruler of Palitana. But Sursinghji, the ruler (Thakor) of Palitana, was a right-hand man of the Political Agent. The Political Agent did not give fair justice. Virchand Gandhi took up the problem. In those days to protest against the dictates of the ruler was to invite severe punishment and even death. He often went up from Mahuva to Palitana and prepared the ground for

compromise. He met Lord Ray, the governor of Bombay, and Colonel Watson, the Political Agent and made a strong representation and eventually forced the abolition of the poll-tax. An English man set up at Mt. Sametshikhar, a place of pilgrimage in Bihar, a factory for extracting pig's fat on order. Virchand Gandhi went all the way of Calcutta to have the work on the project stopped. He stayed in Calcutta for six months studying the papers regarding the case and learnt the Bengali language and ultimately got this verdict issued.

"Sametshikhar is a place of Jain pilgrimage and nobody else has any right to interfere there." He did not give up his fight until he achieved his objectives and got the factory closed down. He brought the dispute regarding the temple at Kavi to a happy resolution. He attended the international Commerce Conference as an all-Asia delegate. As a delegate from Bombay, he attended the Indian National Congress held at Pune in 1895. He was a strong advocate of Rashtriya Mahasabha or the congress. He seems to have come in intimate contact with Mahatma Gandhi. In a letter written to Virchand Gandhi's son, Gandhiji sends his blessing and asks :

'Have you adopted any ideals of your father ?'

Virchand Gandhi passed away in 1901 when he was only thirty seven. He rendered yeoman service to India and Jainism by interpreting Indian culture and religion in its true spirit to the western worlds. In this respect, he enjoys the pride of place in the galaxy of Indian thinkers and philosophers and his name will continue to be remembered as a great champion of Jain religion.

The late Virchand Raghavji Gandhi was fondly

remembered by all the people in 1983. Just hundred years before at that very time, the Parliament of Religions of the world was held in Chicago in the United States of America. Almost every Jain organisation the World over, organised various kinds of functions in honour of the late Virchand Raghavji Gandhi. A library was started at Mahuwa in memory of Virchand Raghavji. Just outside the premises of the library at Mahuwa and also outside the Jain Derasar at Chicago, a statue of the late Virchand Raghavji was installed. The statue was made by Prabhudas Sompura in Ahmedabad for which he had spent five months. I travelled from place to place in Saurashtra in those days just to procure a turban which in then was used by a Jain *Shravak* and after ongoing lot of efforts I ultimately succeeded in procuring one from an old Jain layman. The Institute of Jainology devoted one special issue of its periodical 'Ahimsa' in memory of Virchand Raghavji Gandhi. Three different organisations sponsored the publication of three of the books written by Virchand Raghavji Gandhi. A special stall was put up at the venue of the Parliament of World Religions at Chicago. Elocution competitions and essay competitions were held in the sacred memory of the late Virchand Raghavji Gandhi. Nevertheless, a lot more things are still to be done in that regards.



## **Activities of Jain Religion in the Last Century**

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**A**s we examine the activities of Jain congregations (*sanghas*) during the last hundred years, a fact, that surfaces is that the activities in Gujarat affected the activities in other states of India and the activities in other states of India and the activities of Jain religion in other states echoed in Gujarat. It is, therefore, not only proper, but also necessary to examine the religious activities of Gujarat in the perspective of the whole nation.

In A.D. 1884 Hermann Jacobi translated the two Prakrit Jain Canonical (*Agam*) books *Acharangasutra* and *Kalpasutra* into English under the caption 'Jain Sutras'. In the preface of this book Hermann Jacobi has established that the Jain religion is not an off-shoot of Buddhism. Lassen, Wilson, Vebar and other scholars believed that Jainism had emanated from Buddhism. Jacobi respectively refuted the four arguments of professor Lassen and proved that Jainism is absolutely

independent of other religions, especially Buddhism. (Indische Alterthum Skunde by Lassen IV, p. 763 seq.) He also proved that Mahavira and Gautama Buddha were two contemporary and different great men. ('The sacred books of the East' Series ed. F. Max Muller : *Jain Sutras* by Hermann Jacobi, Pub. Oxford University Press, 1884)

This historical statement made by Hermann Jacobi became very important in subsequent times. A number of western scholars made their own contributions to Jain Studies. In his original book Colebrooke (1765-1837) presented some facts about Jainism. Dr. H. H. Wilson (1784-1860) made a special contribution in this field. Otto Bothlingk began the rich tradition of translation of Jain scriptures. In collaboration with Rieu he translated Hemchandrachary's *Abhidhan Chintamani* into German in 1847. In 1848 Rev. Stevenson translated *Kalpa Sutra* and *Nava Tatva* and made an important contribution to the translation of Jain canonical (Agam) sutras. (*Kalpa Sutra* and *Nava Tatva* translated from the Magadhi by Rev. J. Stevenson Pub. : Bharat-Bharati, Oriental Publishers and Booksellers, Varanasi - 5) In this book, a translation of *Kalpa Sutra* and *Nava Tatvas* from Ardhamagadhi into English was published. In the preface to this book he has introduced the Jain religion, *Paryushana Parva*, Tirthankaras and Jain Geography and in the appendix at the end of the book he has written a note on the Ardhamagadhi language.

Vebar, the Sanskrit scholar, translated some selected portions from *Shatrunjaya Mahatmya* in 1858 and from *Bhagawati Sutra* in 1866. Besides, he did some important work in the field of Jain canonical literature and research in Jain philosophy. Stevenson's translation of *Kalpasastra* from Magadhi was

introductory, while Jacobi's work was comprehensive. In this tradition such scholars as Leumann, Klatt, Buhler, Hoernel and Windisch edited books on Jainology. Dr. E. F. R. Hoernel, the famous archaeologist, revised and translated Chanda's books. — *Prakritalakshana* and *Upasaga Dashao*. He also published diagrams of succession of Jain teachers. In 1897 A.D. Hoernel took the chair of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and in the next year he delivered a lecture on 'Jainism and Buddhism' in the annual meeting of the Society and there he upheld Jacobi's views. He edited *Upasaga Dashao* and in Sanskrit poetry written by himself in the beginning of the edition, Hoernel dedicated the edition to Atmaramji Maharaj. Hoernel sought solution of doubts from Shri Vijayanandasurishvarji (Atmaramji) and thus a close contact was established between the two and that is why he got the extraordinary honours to be invited as a representative of the Jain religion in the Parliament of Religions which was to meet in 1893 at Chicago in America. But since he was not able to attend the conference on account of the code of conduct for monks, he delegated Shri Virchand Raghavji Gandhi with the essay that he had prepared.

In 1885, Shri Virchand Gandhi of Mahuva, of the Vishva Shrimali caste, became the Hon. Secretary of 'Jain Association of India'. When Shri Virchand Raghavji Gandhi returns from abroad for the first time, chairs were hurled in his assembly. But later on he went abroad twice. On account of his scholarship, oratory and devotion to religion, he equally influenced scholars and common people during his travels in America. The conveners and scholars of the world Religions Conference honoured him with a silver medal. He not only delivered lectures on the Jain religion and showed its

significance and comprehensiveness, but also and along with this, he simply and sharply explained the views of all philosophies of India. From America he came to England. Looking to the curiosity about the religion that prevailed here, he started a coaching class. One of the curious men in the class, Herbert Warren abandoned non-vegetarian diet and adopted the Jain religion. He took notes from Shri Virchand Gandhi's lectures. Besides, Herbert Warren wrote a book on the Jain religion. ('Jainism – not Atheism and the six Dravyas of Jaina Philosophy' By H. Warren, Jain Publishing House, Arrah, India) During this travel abroad, Shri Virchand Gandhi delivered 535 lectures. Some of these have been preserved in the three books titled 'Jaina Philosophy', 'Yoga Philosophy' and 'Karma Philosophy'. On account of his efforts 'Gandhi Philosophical Society' was established in Washington. In the World Religions Conference at Chicago Swami Vivekanand gave voice to the Hindu religion and culture. In this conference Shri Virchand Gandhi delivered a lecture on the Jain Religion. He had lectured elsewhere on other Indian philosophies. In 1901 A.D. Shri Virchand Gandhi died only at the age of 37 and in 1902 A.D. Swami Vivekanand died at the Belur hermitage at the age of 40. Vivekanand's life and work left a lasting influence. But the great work of Shri Virchand Gandhi sank into oblivion. Only the 'Jain Literature Society' founded by him in London stands as his memento. Its secretary was Herbert Warren. In 'Jainism not Atheism' Warren discussed the Jain concept of God. The learned and celebrated barrister of Digambar sangha (congregation), Shri Champatray Jains' lecture 'A peep behind the veil' was also published in this book. Barrister Champatray Jain's book, 'The Key of Knowledge' was very highly esteemed

in those days. With different religions in view, the writer made, in the fourteen chapters of this book, spiritual presentation on such topics as God, Yoga, Law of Karma. The writer especially aims at the Jain doctrine of *saptabhangi*.

In 1904 AD Shri Vijaydharmasuriji came to Kashi. He made correspondence with a number of European scholars on revising and editing Jain literature. The flow of studies and research in Jainology passed from Europe to America and since last few years it has passed into Japan also. Recently Suzuko Ohira of Japan researched on *Tattvartha Sutra*. In Paris Dr. Koleri Kaya made a deep study of Jain cosmology. He wrote a thesis on *Jain Vyavahar Bhashya*. Dr. Nalini Balbir, a resident of Paris, researched on the *Danashtaka* story. At present Klous Broon and Chandrabhal Tripathi are making an important contribution in Jain Studies in Germany.

Ray Dhanpatsinh of Calcutta was the first to get Jain Agamas printed. His efforts to get 45 Agamas printed and published should be regarded as noteworthy (Samvat 1933 to 1947). He published a number of Agams. With the help of Agamodaya Samiti Agamoddharak Shri Sagarand Suri single handed did the revising and printing work of Agam Panchangi on a large scale. Subsequently none else has single-handed done such a huge work. Jain Dharma Prasarak Sabha, Atmanand Sabha and Yashovijayji Jain Granthamala of Bhavnagar published important books on Jain Literature. In the series 'Sacred Books of the Jainas' translations of a number of Digambara Jain works were published from Arrah. Besides, L. D. Institute of Indology and Shri Mahavira Jain Vidyalaya at present do the publishing activity. A number of Jain books of Digambaras were systematically revised and edited by

Bhaaratiya Jnanapith. In 1904 A.D. when the publication of scriptural or religious books was opposed, Shri Nathuramji Premi published important books in the series *Hindu Grantharatnakar* and he also did the editorial work of *Jain Hitaishi* and *Jain Mitra*. He wrote as many as thirty books. [Premi Abhinandan Granth, Publisher: Premi Abhinandan Granth Samiti].

Yashovijaya Jain Sanskrit Pathashala established in Banaras by Shri Vijaydharmasuriji presented to Gujrat not only Shri Yashovijayji Granthamala, but also three scholars: Pandit Sukhlalji, a profound savant of philosophy, Pandit Bechardasji, a research scholar of Jain Prakrit books and Pandit Hargovindadas Sheth. That was the time of establishment of the Banaras Hindu University. Syadvad College established in Banaras in those days did the huge work of producing scholars of the Digambara sect.

In the present century, important work has been done in the field of archaeological research and publication. Rice, Kielhorn, Peterson, Fergusson and Burgess did research work about Jain temples, stone inscriptions and manuscripts. The digging at Kankali Tila in Mathura gave most useful archaeological means and materials for the study of Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Along with this some important links of Jain history were found. James Burges's illustrated book 'Temples of Shatrunjaya' can be regarded as a landmark.

The historical and archaeological knowledge of the Jain religion expanded and alongwith its research work was started in Jain philosophy. In 1906 AD, Jacobi translated Umasvati's *Tattvarthadigama Sutra* into English. Jacobi's disciples Kirfel

and Glazenape carried on with this work. A number of research scholars such as Shubring, Hertel and Garino continued that work. Hertel made a significant contribution to real and esteemed evaluation of the narrative Jain literature. On the basis of the critical survey of this literature, he has proved that the original stories of the *Panchatantra* were Jain stories. Dr. Brown's illustrated *Kalaka Katha* and *Uttaradhyayana* are also noteworthy. Subsequently Bhagavanlal Indraj, Bhoudaji, Bhandarkar, Satishchandra Vidyabhushana, Chimanlal Dahyabhai Dalal, Munishree Jinavijayji, Shri Dalsukhbhai Malavania, Bhogilal Sandesara, Agarchandji Nahta, Dr. Ramanlal C. Shah, Dr. A. N. Upadhye, Pundit Kailaschandraj, Dr. Umakant Shah, Pandit Lalchand Gandhi, Pundit Hiralal Rasiklal Kapadia, Shri Motichand Kapadia, Munishri Chaturvijayji, Munishri Jambuvijayji, Shrichand Ramporia, Amarmuni, Dr. Hiralal Jain, Dr. Jagdish Jain and others made extensive researches in Jain religion and literature. Munishri Punyavijayji made a very sound and rich contribution to canonical (*Agam*) research work.

In the field of literary research Shri Mohanlal Dalichand Desai's contribution is memorable. The three parts of *Jain Gurjar Poets* reveal his deep research in Jain literature and Jain history preserved in manuscripts difficult to comprehend. Shri Krishnalal M. Zaveri has rightly described it as 'magnum opus'. Similarly, his voluminous work 'A Short History of Jain Literature' which is a treasure of information, is important and useful even today.

The Sindhi Granthmala, the Punjabhai Granthmala, the Devchand Lalbhai Pustakoddharak Fund of Surat and such other institutions extensively published literature. The Gujarat School of Archaeology did important work in the exploration



of Jain Studies. On Siddhsena Divakar's 170 Prakrit gathas (Stories written in verse) titled *Sanmati Tarka*, Shri Abhaydevsuri wrote a commentary of twenty five thousand verses titled *Vada-Maharnava*. This book is a stockpile of Jain Philosophy. Pundit Sukhlalji collected its numerous manuscripts and edited them in collaboration with Pandit Bechardasji. Ten persons read the manuscript and Pundit Sukhlalji adjudged it. Even the scholar of the stature of Prof. Hermann Jacobi was astonished to see this scene. In this context one is reminded of 'Saman Sutta' a substance-book of the Jain religion which was compiled at the suggestion of Vinobaji.

Published in seven parts *Abhidhana Rajendra Kosha* can be regarded as a collection of Agam Literature. Extracting substance from agams, commentaries, annotations and other Prakrit books Shri Rajendrasuri compiled this lexicon. Against every Prakrit word, he placed its Sanskrit equivalent and explained it elaborately in Sanskrit. (*Abhidhan Rajendra Kosha*, Publisher : Abhidhan Rajendra Karyalaya, Ratlam) *Shatavadhani* (having ability to attend to a hunderd things simaltaneously) Pundit Munishri Ratnachandraswami compiled *Jainagam Shabdasangrah* in Gujarati. (*Jainagam Shabdasangrah*, Ed. Pt. Munishri Ratnachandrajiswami, Published : Sanghvi Gulabchand Jasraj, Limbdi, First Edition : 1926 A.D.)

It gives short Gujarati meanings of Ardhamagadhi words. The *Prakrit Dictionary* compiled by him was published in five languages. Another noteworthy dictionary of the Prakrit language is the *paepa sadda mahannavo*. The eight parts of the book titled *Jain Sahityano Bruhad Itihas* and published by Prachya Vidyamandir (Vadodara), Bhandarkar Institute (Pune), Jain Sanskrit Series and Parshvanath Vidyashram of Varanasi

should be regarded as very valuable. This institution awarded the Ph.D. degree to many. The Ahimsa and Prakrit Vidyapith of Vaishali is devoted to Jain studies. The chairs of Jainology in the Banaras Hindu University, the Mysore University, the Pune University, the Udaipur University, the Patiyala University etc. direct studies and research in Jainology. The Kendriya Sampurnanand Sanskrit Institute in Delhi and the Prakrit Department of Dharwar University do this work.

In the field of journalism, the tradition of Jain magazines of Gujarat enjoys a respectable status.

With financial co-operation of Sheth Shri Umabhai Hathisinh and Sheth Shri Maganbhai Karamchand, the Jain Sabha of Ahmedabad published the monthly titled *Jain Deepak* only after two years following the Independence war of 1857. Then in 1875 A.D. Shri Keshavlal Shivram and Shri Chhaganlal Umedchand published from Ahmedabad the magazine, *Jain Divakar*. As many as 126 Gujarati Jain Magazines were published from 1959 to 1982 A.D. (*Jain Patrakaratva : Ek Zalakh*, Author : Gunvant A. Shah, A research paper presented in the fourth Jain Sahitya Samaroh). Published by Shri Keshavlal Shivram from Ahmedabad in 1884, *JainSudharas* continued for about a year. Under the supervision of the reknowned dramatist Dahyabhai Dholshaji, Shri Jain Dharmappravartak Sabha (Ahmedabad) published the magazine titled *Syadvad* and a few months later it also published *Jaina Hitechchhupatra*. Its editor, who was famous as V. M. Shah, was a philosopher. The oldest of Jain magazines which are published today is *Jain Dharma Prakash*. The Jain Dharma Prasarak Sabha of Bhavnagar has been publishing it since last hundred years. After he had started publishing the newspaper *Prajabhandu* in Ahmedabad,



Bhagubhai Fatehchand Karbhari published *Samalochak* and subsequently on 12th April 1903 *Jain*, the first weekly for Jain Society. This weekly was published initially from Ahmedabad and subsequently from Bombay and now it is published from Bhavnagar. The first fortnightly *Jain Subhechchhak* was also published by Shri Devchand Damaji Kundlakar from Bhavnagar. The first women's monthly *Jain Mahila* was also published from Bhavnagar. In the glorious history of Jain journalism the names of Bhagubhai Karbhari, Devchand Damji Kundlakar, Sheth Kumvarji Anandji Kapadia, Vadilal Motilal Shah, Paramanandbhai Kapadia, Gulabchandbhai Sheth, Dhirajlal Tokarshi Shah, *Jaybhikkhu*, Ratilal Dipchand Desai and others are memorable. According to a survey of 1977, Gujarati is next to the Hindi language in which the largest number of Jain periodicals are published. Jain periodicals are published not only from such cities as Ahmedabad, Bombay, Bhavnagar and Vadodara, but also from such places as Gandhidham, Deesa, Jamnagar, Chhani, Palitana, Bhabhar, Bhuj, Vadhwan, Songadh and Himmatnagar. (Tirthnakara, Jain periodicals special No. Year 7, No. 4, 5 August September 1977) Such quarterlies as *Jain Yuga Jain Sahitya Sanshodhaka* and *Paratattva* have done useful research work in Jain literature and other arts. Pune and Calcutta have also contributed to the publication of Jain periodicals.

Some serial books have done an important work of diffusing and disseminating Jain literature. Here the contribution of *Murti Devi Granth Mala*, which is published in memory of Shri Shantiprasad Sahu's mother, is noteworthy. *Shatkhandagam Jayadhavalra Mahadhavala* and other such books, as valuable as Agams, have been systematically revised and

edited in Sholapur. The publication of Digambar books in Jivraj Gautam Granth Mala under the supervision of Dr. A. N. Upadhye deserves to be mentioned. The Jnanapith Award worth one lakh rupees (tax free) is also symbolic of Jain Sangha's devotion to knowledge and its generosity. The members of his family presented the scheme of this Award on the occasion of Sahu Shri Shantiprasadji's ingress into his fifty-first year. The books published by the Jnanapith in three parts, under the title 'Jain Art and Architecture' are valuable. ('Jain Art and Architecture', Part : 1, 2, 3 by A. Ghosh, Pub. Bharatiya Jnanpith, Delhi, 1974) Shri Gokaldas Kapadia's illustrated book 'Shraman Bhagwan Mahavira' published in collaboration with Rev. Acharya Shri Yashodevsuri and the illustrated book 'Tirthadarshana' can be regarded as memorable books.

Among Jain institution Shri Yashovijayji Granthmala, Shri Atmanand Sabha and Shri Jain Dharma Prasarak Sabha of Bhavnagar made a valuable contribution. Institutions such as the Jivadaya Mandali of Bombay spread the message of ahimsa. As a result of Shri Gulabchand Dhhadhha's efforts, the Shwetambar Conference came into existence in Falodhi in 1958. Next year its grand session was held in Bombay. This institution published a reference book entitled *Jain Granthavali*. It is of the level of reference books of *Jainagam*, logic, didactic literature, linguistics, philosophy, science, etc. This reference book contains lists of books in the libraries of Jesalmer, Patan and Limbdi and these lists are invaluable to scholars. This institution also publishes periodicals and books and it is a noteworthy contribution of the institution.

In 1893 Digambara established the Bharatavarshiya Digambar Jain Mahasabha with its main office at 'Khurai'. In

1906 the first Conference of Sthanakvasis met at Ajmer. As an attempt to unite Jain sects of all India, the Young Men's Association was founded in 1899 AD. In 1910 it was named Bharat Jain Mahamandal. As a result of Yugadarshi Acharya Shri Vijayvallabhasuriji's inspiration, the Mahavira Jain Vidyalaya was established. This institution which started working with fifteen Students and in a rented house on 18-6-1915 gave to the new generation not only religious education and culture, but also facilities for higher education and, thus, it made a great contribution to social uplift. Besides two hostels in Bombay, this institution has its five branches in Ahmedabad, Pune, Vadodara, Vallabh Vidyanagar and Bhavnagar. In collaboration with Pujya Agamprabhakar Muniraj Shri Punyavijayaji the big scheme of Jain Agama Granthamala along with extension of studies was undertaken by it and thus it made a special contribution in the field of publication of literature. Shri Mahavira Jain Vidyalaya stands as a lasting memorial to Acharya Shri Vijayvallabhasuriji's eager longing for social uplift and his ardent desire for dissemination of knowledge.

Jain libraries are not only store-house of books, but their founders and preservers make admirable efforts to store books of all sects. Important old books of Buddhistic and Brahminic sects, which are not found elsewhere, are found in Jain libraries. They collected not only books of paper-sheets, but also thousands of books written on palm-leaves. Jains of Gujarat did the toilsome work of preserving whole accumulations of books. In a number of cities, big and small, of Mahagujarat, one finds one or more Jain libraries and cities like Patan, Ahmedabad, Limbdi, Bhavnagar and Khambhat are very famous for their

Jain libraries. As soon as these cities are referred to a scholar, it at once remind of its libraries.

If we take a bird's-eye view of pilgrimage places developed in last hundred years, Bhoyani, Pansar, Serisa, Mahudi, Mehsana, Kalikund Parshvanath (Dholka), Kangdi in Punjab and Pundaltirtha (Kesarvadi) in Polal town fifteen kilometres from Madras, have come into existence. At national level 2500th anniversary of Bhagwan Mahavira was celebrated. At the end of a thousand years of installation of Bahubali's image in Gomateshavar a great festival was held. In Dharmasthal in the south and in Ferozabad in Uttarpradesh, Bahubali's images of heights of 42 ft. and 39 ft. respectively were installed. New and large images of Rishabhdev, Bharatdev and Bahubali were installed in the Potanpur Ashram near National Park of Borivali. How can one forget the Sarvodaya Temple of Ghatkopar which awakens the wonderful conception of unity of all religions? Here are seen a number of idols of Shri Parshvanath. Abu, Taranga, Ranakpur, Junagadh and Shatrunjaya - these places of pilgrimage were renovated in a special way. A number of these renovations reveal the artistic insight of the great merchant Shri Kasturbhai Lalbhai. Shri Anandji Kalyanji's firm performed the excellent work of administration and renovation of places of pilgrimage. Shri Narmadashankar Sompura; Amrutlal Trivedi, Nandlal and Champalalji made a significant contribution in this field of work. During this period a good many Agam temples were created in Palitana. Agam temples were created also at Surat, Shankheshvar, Ahmedabad, Veraval etc. Shri Kanji Swamiji also got Agams temples erected. As many as 75 Jain temples were

set up in Gujarat. This period witnessed a number of disputes and controversies and this misfortune is in evidence even now.

The Sadadi conference of Sthanakvasi Shraman Sangha was held in the year 2008 of the Vikrama era. Here it was decided that only one Acharya should be appointed leader of the Sangha as in the Terapanth sect. Atmaramji staying in splendour at Ludhiyana in Punjab was selected to be the first Acharya. At Present his successor Anandarishiji is Acharya. But all subsects of Sthanakvasi Sangha did not agree to this arrangement and, so it did not succeed as it was expected to succeed. In 1934 A.D. a conference of monks of Shvetambar Sangha met in Ahmedabad and seven hundred monks assembled there. They gave out a genealogy chart (*pattaka*). As a result of efforts of the reputed trader Shri Kasturbhai Lalbhai, the all India Jain Murtipujak Shramanopasak Conference met in Ahmedabad in 1963 A.D. It had been planned with a view to purifying Sangha's conduct and removing its slackness. But it failed to fulfil its aim. In Ladnu, Acharya Tulsi founded the institution 'Jain Vishvabharati'. Inspiring teaching - learning activities are done in this institution. Publishing Agam literature can be reckoned to be its significant activity. The institution named 'Virayatan' founded by Sthanakvasi Sangha at the foot of the mountain of Rajgrahi under the auspicious of Upadhyay Amarchandji Maharaj does exemplary work of public education, public service, meditation, discipline, publication of literature and of studying and teaching scriptures. Shri Chimanlal Chakubhai, Khimchand Maganlal, Durlabhji Khetani and others have made considerable contributions to the Sthanakvasi Sangha. Visits of Shri Sushil muni of the sthanakvasi sangha and Shri Chitrabhanuji Maharaj of the

Shwetambar sect to foreign countries raised a hue and cry in both the sects.

Gujarat boasts of glorious traditions of great traders. Great Jain traders have taken living interest in extensive activities of social welfare, besides religious activities. The term of the fourth contract of protection that the firm of Sheth Anandji Kalyanji had made with the state of Palitana for annual payment of Rs. 15000 ended on 31-3-1926 and the fifth contract was delayed on account of the stern attitude of the ruler of Palitana and Mr. C. C. Watson, the political agent of Kathiawad towards 'Jain Sangha' and consequently the Jain Sangha put the pilgrimage to Shatrunjaya in Palitana under a total boycott from 7-4-1926 onwards.

As long as 26 months from 1-4-1926 to 31-5-1928 this boycott so strictly continued that during that period not a single pilgrim went on a pilgrimage to Shatrunjay in Palitana.

Ultimately, by the arbitration of viceroy Lord Irvin, fifth contract of protection for a period of thirty-five years for annual payment of sixty thousand rupees was signed at Simla on 26-5-1928. So pilgrimage to Shatrunjay was declared open from 1-6-28. In Jain tradition this incident is regarded unprecedented and memorable. (History of the firm of Sheth Anandji Kalyanji - Part I by Ratilal Dipchand Desai, Publisher Sheth Anandji Kalyanji, Ahmedabad - 1) Motisha Sheth, Narshi Kesharji Naik, Premabhai Sheth, Narshi Natha, Premchand Raichand, Hathibhai Sheth, Mayabhai Premabhai, Kasturbhai Manibhai, Ambalal Sarabhai, Mansukhbhai Bhagubhai Sheth, Lalbhai Sheth, Kasturbhai Lalbahi and others have done numerous activities for social or national welfare and for dissemination

of religion. Besides the works of administration of renovation of the firm of Shri Anandji Kalyanji and the foundation of L. D. School of Indology, the great trader Shri Kasturbhai Lalbhai has done numerous works of dissemination of education. Great women like Harkuvar Shethani and Ujam fai have also successfully engaged in works of great management. Years ago, Bhimshi (Bhimsinh) Manek planned to publish the four parts of 'Prakaran Ratnakar' at the cost price of one lakh rupees. He published 'Suyagadanga', other Agamsand and the eight parts of 'Jain Katha Ratnakosha' with translation. These books added to the religious knowledge of people. He died on Thursday, the fifth day of the dark half of the month of Jeth in the year 1947 of the Vikrama era. Later on, his firm published the texts of *Yogashastra*, *Haribhadrashataka* and other books with translation. For the last few years, they have been arranging for serial of lectures on Paryushan days and this shows a new tendency at the thought level.

When we examine religious activities of the last century, three incidents stand out as having far-reaching consequences. In the village Vavania near Morbi in Saurashtra, Raichandbhai was born on Sunday, the full-moon day in the month of Kartik in the year 1924 of the Vikram era. He professed the Sthanakvasi Jain Religion. He dealt in Jewellery. He was a poet and had the power to attend to a hundred things simultaneously. A man of sharp memory, Raichandbhai integrated practical wisdom with devotion to religion. At the age of sixteen (in the year 1940 of the Vikram era) he wrote *Moksamala* and two year later (in the year 1942 of the Vikram era) he wrote *Bhavanabodha*. In Bombay at the age of nineteen, he made experiments in attending to a hundred things

simultaneously. In Nadiad in the year 1952 of the Vikram era, he wrote *Atmasiddhishastra* in verse. More than a poet, he was a philosopher, essentially, intent on emancipation. He had a very intense desire to adopt the renouncing life of an ascetic in order to attain to emancipation. Whenever Gandhiji had a doubt in the Hindu religion, he sought an explanation from Raichandbhai. That is why Gandhiji wrote - "I gained the confidence that the Hindu religion can give me what I need and for this Raichandbhai is responsible." (Jain Sahitya Sanshodhak Part 3, Chapter I - "Some reminiscences of Raichandbhai. Author : Gandhiji") Afterwards Raichandbhai came to be known as Shrimad Rajchandra. Today his ashramas are at Vadva, Idar, Agas, Vavania, Narol, Devlali and such other places. Here people do the activities of self-study and discipline of the soul. His literature is also being published.

The subject founded by Shri Kanji Swami in 1934 A.D. brought about another change. A native of Umralla in Saurashtra, Shri Kanji Swami abandoned the Sthanakvasi sect and founded an independent schism which ultimately developed into Digambar Sangha. Kanji Swami, who had a sweet tongue and impressive personality, lived in Songadh. He was specially inclined to nishchayanaya. He laid special stress on nishchayanaya propounded in Kundakundacharya's Samayasara and Pravachanasara.

The third important incident is the transformation of Terapanth. Under the leadership of Acharya Tulsi this sect assumed altogether a new form and gave active importance to acquisition of knowledge. This is a valuable and exemplary incident. From his monks and nuns he gave great scholars of Sanskrit and Prakrit. Yuvacharya Mahapragna's (Former Muni

Nathamalaji's) illuminous creation of original thought-provoking literature inspiring the conception of soul, is specially noteworthy. Seeing all this one feels that Terapantha has undergone a complete transformation. What is special about Acharya Tulsi is that he made a revolution together with his sect rather than abandon it. He promoted the study of nuns and made them learned. Between nuns and laywomen (*Shravikas*) he set up a new category of *samani*'s which is a strong base of asceticism.

On examining religious activities of the last hundred years, one feels that the stream of donation has not flowed so much to education or social welfare as to temples and religious festivities and the spirit of public service has not fully developed. Massive Jain literature still lies hidden in libraries and manuscripts. Greater efforts for its study research and publication are needed. It is also an alarming fact that the stream of study of the Prakrit language and literature flows slimmer.

This religion preaches *anekanta* (the Jain doctrine that the knowledge of a thing is derived differently according to its various facets.) and yet disputes about places of pilgrimage and dates, which incite a narrow outlook and bigotry are still going on. People today hunger to know basic conceptions along with religions rites and the youth today wants to understand and examine the truths of this religion with reference to the present world.

The world is fast changing today. People of different nations, religions and colours are coming closer. As a result of scientific progress, the world is becoming smaller and smaller.

But at the same time the big arrogant nations, hungering for power and wealth and determined to defeat one another, are challenging one another. One, therefore, feels that the world is on the brink of total ruin. Today when man, instead of being shut in by narrow outlook, superficial conduct or aversion to other religions, craves to extract from religion such thoughts or conceptions that would inspire human welfare and to understand and expound them for the awakening of the whole of human race, the high ideals preached by the Jain religion such as non-harming, self-restraint, austerities, *anekantavada*, universal friendship and tolerance can help the modern man's march towards universal love and world peace. Precisely this is the essence of the Jain religion in the present context and perhaps at all times.

If we think of the Jain Institution and its activities, we find that research began with the Arrah publication of 'The Sacred Book of Jains'. The Jain Sahityika Sanshodhak Mandal of Pune published the research works of Muni Jinavijayji. Similarly, Nathuram Premi, the founder of Hindi Grantha Ratnakar and Jugalkishore Mukhatyar of the Vir Seva Mandir conducted important research work in this field. After having published as many as forty books the Jain Cultural Research Society wound up its activities. The Prakrit Text Society was founded in Delhi in 1954. This institution was shifted from Delhi to Banaras and from Banaras to Ahmedabad. It published translations of several useful Prakrit works. The editing of the book 'Sanmati Tarka' is a memorable work of Puratattva Mandir of Ahmedabad. It also gave us Gopaldas Patel's translation of important Agamic Texts. The Gomateshvar Shodh Sansthanak, The Todarmal Shodh Sansthan in Jaipur and the



Research Centre of Shri Mahaviraji in the Atishay Kshetre Mahaviraji in Rajasthan have also published very important research works. The Agarchand Bhairodan Jain Educational Institution of Bikaner provided a model for an excellent *Pathashala* and produced a number of scholars of Jain philosophy. A Jain research institution was founded in Pune, too, where the *Sanmati Tirtha* Institution has taken up the project of Prakrit dictionary. The Agama Shodh Sansthan Udaipur, the Prakrit Bharati Academy of Jaipur and the Jain Siddhant Bhavan of Arrah are also active in this field. The Tattvagnana Vidyapith of Pune conducts examinations in Jainology. The contribution of the Jain Vishvabharati of Ladnu in Rajasthan is in its publication of *Agamas*. It has published most of the *Agamas*. This institution has also published dictionaries such as the *Agama Kosha*, the *Niryukti Kosha* and the *Ekarthaka Kosha*. Considerable work has been done by the institutions of Bikaner and Byavar, too. By the inspiration of Arya Jnanamataji, a research institution has come into existence in Hastinapur. In Meerut, there is the Vir Yuvak Pratisthan. The Mahavira Jain Aradhana Kendra is coming up on a large scale at Koba. It has collected a large number of manuscripts. Such Institutions as the Prakrit Vidyamandal, the Prakrit Vidya Vikas Fund and the L. R. Boarding etc., are also contributing to the promotion of Prakrit studies in Ahmedabad.

On 21 March 1945 the Jain Bhavan was founded in Calcutta. Its aim is to popularise the study of Jainology. It has a good library containing mostly books on Jainology. It also runs the Jain Information Bureau. *Jain Journal*, a quarterly is published by the Jain Bhavan. It has also brought out certain publications such as *The Bhagvati Sutra* (Vol. I, II, III), *The*

*Temples of Shatrunjaya* (James-Burgess) etc.

Research Institute of Prakrit, Jainology and *Ahimsa* at Vaishali is established in the year 1955 by the Government of Bihar. Its aim is to develop the place (being the birthplace of Lord Mahavira) into a residential centre of higher studies and research in (a) Prakrit languages and literature, (b) Jainology in all its branches and (c) the principle of *Ahimsa* and its practice, both by individuals and the society. The activities of the Institute are divided into three branches : Post-graduate teaching, Research and Publication. It is affiliated to the Bihar University, Muzaffarpur. There are certain scholarships given to deserving students. The Institute has received a generous donation of six lakhs of rupees from Sahu Jain Trust. Certain other Trusts have also donated a large amount of money for the academic activities of the Institute. The Institute has a well-equipped library containing books on Prakrit literature and Jain philosophy in particular. An annual seminar of scholars from all over the country on the occasion of the Mahavira Jayanti is a regular feature of the Institute. The Institute has brought out a number of publications.

Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of the Indology (Ahmedabad) was established on 5 June 1958. The aim of the Institute is to provide facilities for the study and research in all subjects broadly falling under Indology including languages, literature, history, philosophy, religion, astrology, astronomy, archaeology, medicine and subjects which may form part of the cultural heritage of India.

The Parshvanath Research Institute of Varanasi is capable of being central to all other institutes. From this institute as many as 35 students have got the Ph.D. degree by research in



Jain literature and philosophy. Capable students and professors are easily available there. It is situated in congenial surroundings and is in constant contact with the Banaras Hindu University. It has gained co-operation of Krishnachandracharya, Mohanlal Mehta and later on, of scholars as Sagarmal Jain.

All these institutions, work in their own way. There is hardly any co-ordination amongst them. Hence, work is sometimes duplicated. Shri Mahavira Jain Vidyalyaya, Jain Vishvabharati of Ladnu and the Institute of Byavar – all these three institutes have published *Agamas*. Two years ago a seminar was organised in the Parshvanath Vidyashram regarding elimination of such duplication. But no concrete schemes in this connection have yet taken shape. Similar is the case with scholarships awarded to researchers. A central organisation awarding subject wise scholarships should be set up.

Now let us think of Jain Institutes in England, America and other countries.

### **Institutions in UK**

It is estimated that there are about 25 to 30 thousand Jains living in the UK at present. Most of them have migrated from East Africa. These people, or their ancestors, had migrated to African countries in the early 20th century. Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika (including old Zanzibar), Sudan and Aden were their favourite places. They were very well settled there. Most of them made good money, too. They preserved their heritage and age-old values. They built up temples and institutions in those countries. As the political climate became unfavourable, these people started leaving the countries of their original

abode. About 75 to 80% of Jains residing in the UK have migrated from East African countries for permanent settlement. There are 20 to 25% of Jains who have come here from India. The Jains, who came to the UK from Africa, brought with them their own life-style. Most of these Jains belong to the Oswal community. Their origin is in Halar (Jamnagar) district. About 60% of the Jains in Britain are Oswals. Their organisation is, therefore, the largest one. Probably there are 15 to 18 thousand Oswals in the UK. The Oswal Association believes in preserving the root values of the Oswal community. They are proud of their Oswal origin and rightly so. Oswals have purchased a site of 84 acres in a village north of London. They are planning to build a temple and Mahajanwadi. There it is certain that this dream will come true in course of time.

*The Jain Samaj of Europe* founded in Leicester is the organisation which accepts all those who are interested in the spread of ideals of Jainism. The Jain Samaj of Europe is trying to establish itself as a Jain body which can be regarded as the true centre of Jainism outside India. The Jain Centre in Leicester is lucky to have the first magnificent temple in Western countries. Jain Samaj publishes an excellent quarterly magazine called 'The Jain'.

The speciality of the centre is the recognition of various factions of the Jain community. The Jain Centre has Shwetambar and Digambar temples, a Sthanakvasi Upashraya and other facilities for all minority sects. Some non-Oswal Jains and other Vaniks in East Africa formed an organisation called the Navanit Vanik Associations. This Association exists in Britain as well. The Navanit Vanik Association in Britain undertakes marvellous activities. They organise religious and social functions, provide social help in finding a suitable match

for marriage and take to all sorts of social activities.

Other organisations in Britain are Vanik Samaj, Mahavira Foundation, Navyug Jain Pragati Mandal, Bhakti Mandal. etc. They are all contributing their might to promote religious and cultural values of life. 'Young Jains' is a small independent organisation active in inculcating high values in young Jains of Britain. Young Indian Vegetarians are busy spreading the great ideal of vegetarianism. Organisations in Britain are active. People are dedicated and sincere,

But they need to achieve one thing, and that is to eliminate divisions in the Jain community. Jains in America have already done this. They do not distinguish themselves as Shwetambar, Digambar, Sthanakvasi, Deravasi, Oshwal or Navanit.

Britain is a small country inhabited by 25 thousand or more Jains. It is now high time, something is done to establish a Chair on Jainism in some British Universities. It is also advisable that proper use is made of the ancient Jain manuscripts which are kept and preserved in the British Museum Library.

#### **Institutions in America**

The North American continent comprises of two nations, the United States of America and Canada. The time of arrival of Jains in North America is uncertain and no date either of their arrival or of their settlement is available. But there were Jains in North America before Jains arrived here from India. The original Jains of North America were those who had embraced the Jain religion as far back as forties or earlier. The evidences are many in Jain periodicals and writings both in India and in North America. Late Dr. Kamata Prasad Jain of the World Jain

Mission, Aliganj in Uttar Pradesh is responsible for the pioneering work of influencing and admitting westerners to the Jain religion.

The Jain settlers from India were mostly professionals-engineers, physicians and professors. Most of these early settlers in effect had come under the influence of the World Jain Mission and its founder, late Dr. Kamata Prasad Jain, who had started spreading Jainism among interested intellectuals around the world.

The numerical strength of Jain settlers in North America provided an impetus to an array of activities in Jain communities across North America. Many Jain organisations came into existence and they warranted religious directions and guidance in practising the Jain way of life based on the teaching of the Tirthankaras. The Jain communities espoused all the basic tenets preached in the tradition by the Jain saints of post Mahavira era. This is unique of Jains in North America, it could be heralded as the great Renaissance in the Jain religion to bring about harmony, fraternity and fundamental integration in socio-religious structure of Jainism.

The force of Jain communities in North America paved the way for many Jain monks, nuns, Bhattarakas, scholars to visit their communities in order to bring awareness to the Jain consciousness.

Cataloguing the achievements, consolidating and characterising them with organisational functions and publicising them, need an array of individual volunteers and institutions. A monolithic task it is to channelise the strength of the interested individuals into a cohesive force of an organisation. In this direction it has been a successful story.

Many Jain Societies and Centres have been established across North America. Here is a partial list of the Jain organisations in North America : Jain Centre of America, Boston, New Jersey, Pittsburg, South California; Jain Society of Charlotte, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Connecticut, Detroit, Houston, Long Island, North California, North Texas, Rochester, Toronto, Washington DC, Jain Social Group, International Mahavira Jain Mission of New Jersey, USA and Jain Study of centre of North Carolina.

While these organisations catered to the needs of their respective members, there are other organisations at national and international levels. One such organisation is the Federation of Jain Associations in North America founded in the summer of 1981. Its objective is to provide a forum to foster fellowship and unity among Jain communities in North America.

Jain Meditation International, founded by Gurudev Chitrabhanu caters mainly to western non-Jains seeking the spiritual immersion of Jain meditation, Yoga, Vegetarianism, peace and friendship, soul and its salvation.

Siddhachalam, a community of Jain monks and nuns and lay people, is a beautiful 108 acre hill-top place. It calls for the establishment of Pancha Tirtha Acharya Sushil Kumar's inspiration has brought Siddhachalam into reality.

Jainism in North America, so far, established an awareness of oneness of being Jain. Demographic features, of conflict as prevalent among Jains in India have disappeared and a common will has been established to date, and some are in the process of realisation.

On 2 July, 1988, a Jain Centre was inaugurated in Los Angeles.

At present in America there are 6 independent temples, 3 joint (with Hindu) temples, 4 major publications, 20 newsletters by centres.

### **In Japan**

Only 28 families in the city of Kobe in Japan have created a beautiful Jain temple with their sustained efforts and wealth. In the region of Kitan-cho there are centres and temples of a number of religions. In these a Jain temple is now being erected. This temple of the top of marbles, beautiful pillars and summits is set open in April 1985. A two-storey building has been erected.

The building has a .basement and floor area of 200 sq. metres. There are shower rooms and bath-rooms. On the first floor there is an Assembly Hall. In the temple on the second floor there is an idol of Lord Mahavira. There are four peaks with four cornerst.

The architect of this temple is a Japanese. He had been to India six times for study of Indian architecture. The dome, windows, pillars etc. were carved in India. The temple of Kitan-cho is an attraction to visitors. The expenditure of the whole project is estimated at 1000 lakh yens. 28 families of 180 Jains live in Kobe. This is a symbol of religious sentiments of only 28 families. Where there is will, there is a way. Congratulations to the Jains of Japan.

There were small or big temples in Sudan, Eden, Zanzibar, Adisababa and Daaresalam. The temple of Mombasa and Nairobi have become memorable today. The Visha Oshwal community of Nairobi is undertaking activities.

With the settlement of Jains, religious activities have started even in Antwerp.

As many as forty families in Hong Kong celebrate the festival of Paryushan.

Looking to Jain Institutions and their activities, one feels that they should be properly organised. There should be proper distribution of activities among these Institutions. If one Institute publishes magazines, books, periodicals, another should preserve manuscripts. If one Institute undertakes to take to research about the conduct of Jains, another institute should undertake to prepare literature in English for Jain children residing in foreign countries.

Today when the east and the west come closer, all the sects of Jains tend to merge into one. It is hoped that a powerful international institution will come into existence and consequently the sermons of Tirthankaras and the Jain philosophy will resound in the universe.

*[The speech delivered at the World Jain Conference,  
Leicester, U.K. on 22 July 1988 ]*



## **Jain Diaspora**

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- [1] The bravehearts of any community are not confined to one particular field. The Jain community, known for its enterprising spirit in business, has contributed significantly to a variety of fields. They set their foot in the uncharted Africa and then they spread their wings to myriad fields which include business, industry, management, computer technology and many others. One thing that stands out is the fact that the members of the Jain community, wherever they happen to live and work, adhere to certain principles such as *ahimsa* and *anekant*. The Jain tradition is a philosophical one and not an existential one - it is a tradition related to thought, behaviour and diet. Therefore, it is necessary to grasp the essence of this tradition to make it part of one's own life. The Jain community will have to create its own distinct identity in the modern world. It is foresighted and traditional, yet modern. We talk of

environment degradation today, elimination of pollution and digging of wells for storage of water, but the Jain religion dealt with these problems centuries ago. Bhagwan Mahavir gave the message of uniting the whole world एक्को हु माणुस्स जाई and it is time for the community to unite and contribute to the creation of a non-violent world before it is too late. Or in the words of novelist Ernest Hemingway : “For whom the bells toll ?”

- [2] Jain religion is one of the world's ancient religions. It has its own unique value-system, tenets and tradition. In times of Mahavir Swami, there were several religions and many of them do not exist today. This reflects the resilience of the Jain religion. It has survived through the centuries. We have to recognise its inherent strength and through its medium, we have to organise ourselves into an integrated society. I wonder why this has not happened. Is it because the world is too much with us or are we indifferent ?
- [3] The philosophy of Jain religion is so unique that it needs to be spread far and wide. For instance, it does not believe in conversion or aggression. Rather it believes in cooperation, harmony, consensus, service, surrender etc. This philosophy needs to be resuscitated and a campaign be launched for strengthening its base. Non-violence leads to fearlessness, friendship to humaneness compassion to sensitivity and when we embark upon such a journey, then the Jain culture will have its real justification. One is saddened at the thought that if we show apathy, we will have to pay a heavy price and the whole edifice of Jain religion will collapse and we will expose ourselves to

ridicule. The community must remain united in terms of its tenets of non-violence and value-system and its approach to environment, life-style and business and commerce. The independence of Jains is not the one akin to India's independence from the British rule; their independence is the one which makes one rule for the soul. The society today is afflicted with violence and aggression in which values are trampled upon and universal truths are beings ignored. In such a scenario the Jain religion, with its global vision, can play an important role and contribute significantly to saving the world from imminent disaster and the responsibility rests on the Jains wherever they reside. The future generations will not forgive us if we abdicate our responsibility.

- [4] The Jain society is progressive and Jainism is, therefore, found in countries outside India. But it is divided in sects, Gaccha etc and the need of the hour is to get united. Let us remember the dictum कलियुगे संघशक्ति that is in kaliyug, unity is the real strength. There are forces which are a threat to our unity. There are differences with respect to pilgrim centres, observance of rituals and religious texts. Such differences do exist in other religions too and these external differences often lead to conflicts and dissensions among the members of the same sect or with other sects, resulting in court cases, or physical violence. What this means is - we are becoming narrow-minded, while in fact, our outlook should be broad and catholic. How can we be narrow-minded when we believe in वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ? In the present time, the need of the hour is to adhere to our basic principles, develop a cosmic vision

and strengthen our belief in the philosophy of *Anekant*. Jain diaspora must unite the fragmented groups and find solutions to the problems besetting our society. We talk of a global village but our minds remains narrow and we skim on the surface.

The Jain community believes in unity. Mahavir's non-violence is not confined only to human beings but it embraces the animal kingdom too. It believes in unity of life and hence unity in Jain community must be our prime consideration. Our unity will lead to harmony in the world based on the principle of परस्परોपग्रहो जीवानाम् ।

- [5] The main aim of this organisation would be to ensure that the Jains all over the world speak with one voice on the principles and tenets of Jain religion. Such organisations do exist on a global scale among the Patidar community and the Oswal community. The Vishwa Gujarati Samaj, which is striving to serve the Gujarati community, is conducting various activities in this regards in different parts of the world.
- [6] The major problem we are facing today is the one that most of the people have been divided and subdivided into groups and into various religious sects. In such a situation, even if we want to raise our voice against any problem which harms our cause, there is no single world-wide central platform or a body through which we can raise our voice against such divisive tendencies. For instance, when the Gujarat government ordained that the Jain religion is part or a branch of the Hindu religion, we needed to have a global organisation to deal with the problem and solve it amicably.

- [7] If there is a central world-wide body, it could act as a representative body to raise our collective voice at world religion conferences, as and when they are held, and articulate appropriate views of the Jains in an appropriate manner.
- [8] Such a central body should have a federal structure and there should be co-ordination in each of the countries of the world. The proposed Central body may have two offices, one in India and the other in the US.

The Jain diaspora be divided into different wings. Jain religion emphasises three tenets - *Gyan*, *Darshan* and *Charitra*.

#### [A] GYAN WING

The Gyan wing will comprise all the activities related to the knowledge embedded in Jain Religion.

- [1] The manuscripts of Jain religion are located in *Gyanbhandars* and libraries in foreign countries and various other institutions. The Institute of Jainology has undertaken the work of cataloguing such manuscripts which were stored in Britain. There are about ten lakhs manuscripts in India, 2700 in Britain and some are in Germany, Italy, the U.S.A. etc. The Institute of Jainology is actively engaged in restoring the knowledge stored in these manuscripts and other organisations can also extend their helping hand in this monumental task. The Government of different countries are also eager to restore their precious heritage and we can collaborate with such agencies worldwide.



- [2] One of the wings may deal with educational problems which may handle such matters as are faced by the Jain *Pathshalas* and provide scholarships to bright students who may desire to go abroad for higher education.
- [3] There are many volumes on Jain religion in various libraries. A central library be created where one can have an access to information about such volumes and where exactly are they located. It will be a boon to the researchers and scholars.

#### [B] DARSHAN WING

- [1] There should be a committee consisting of scholars which can articulate the views of the Jains on matters relating to problems faced by the world. The same committee may undertake publication of books, pamphlets and such other literature on the Jain religion. It can also counter false propaganda conducted by the opponents of the Jain religion through media, lectures and publications of books. The central body may spread the gospel of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) and exchange information on experiments that are being conducted the world over. It can also exchange information among the Jains on important events that are taking place in their respective countries. There should be a wing which can provide information and training on the basic tenets of the Jain religion, Yoga etc.
- [2] Religions today, throughout the world, try to understand and respect each others philosophy, through interfaith activities. The activities of Jain religion are exemplary in this respect. Jains have never demanded their own "Land"

or state. There have been movements in India like Gorkhaland or Khalistan but Jains always try to mingle with the people where they happen to live. They have never displayed any kind of religious fanaticism; on the contrary their attitude has been liberal towards other religions. This is in consonance with their faith in religious philosophy which says that a person is known not by his/her caste, creed or colour, but by the deeds performed or virtues possessed by him or her. This is evident from the fact that many Jain Acharyas have authored volumes on other religions. A Jain sadhu, in order to acquire the rightful status, has to study the scriptures of not only his own religion but of other religions also. Hemchandracharya, known as *sarvagna* (omniscient) in *Kaliyug*, worshipped the Shiva Temple in Somnath and Vastupal-Tejpal had donated land for the construction of a mosque. During the drought from Vikram Samvat 1313 to 1315 - Jagadusha opened his graneries to the people irrespective of their caste or religion. Acharya Vijayvallabhsuriji offered donation for the construction of Gurudwara for the Sikhs. Acharya Buddhisagarji opened a hostel for the Dalits. Jayantmuniji works for the welfare of the *Adivasis*. The greatest example is that of Virayatan. And there are schools, hospitals and community kitchens built by Jain which admit people of all religious hues. About 400 years ago, Akbar and in recent times Gandhiji felt attracted towards Jainism known for its catholic outlook and philosophy of *Anekant*. Gandhiji studied the *anekant* philosophy while in South Africa and he said that it helped him to look at a

Hindu from a Hindu's perspective and a Muslim from Muslim's. Jain religion's *Syadvad* and interfaith programmes can become a bedrock for unity and harmony and Jains diaspora can contribute a lot in this direction.

### **[C] CHARITRA WING**

This will be action oriented.

A wing dealing with charitable and relief activities at the time of natural or man-made calamities such as floods, earthquake, tsunami, violence, conflicts etc.

There should be a political wing which can present the views of the Jains before their respective governments.

There should be a separate wing dealing with business, trade and commerce such as the JITO working in Mumbai.

With a view to enabling participation of Jains in different important events, a brochure should be brought out giving names, addresses, profession, E-mail, fax number and such other useful details.

The broad objectives of the central body may be as under :

- (1) To unite the Jains of the world under a single canopy and to ensure exchange of information among them.
- (2) On the international level or between different religions of the world, concerted efforts should be made to forcefully present the views of the Jain religion on important principles, tenets etc.
- (3) To awaken the Jains against the divisive attempts that

are being made against our religion and to oppose such moves and actions. For instance, a lot of religious conversion activities are going on or the false propaganda that is being conducted by bodies like Anop Mandal.

- (4) To make concerted efforts to propagate and spread the principles of non-violence, Anekant etc. and to organise programmes aimed at creating awareness about them. The co-ordinators and the office bearers may visit different countries and appraise the local people of their activities. The president of the JAINA visits different towns and cities in India whenever he visits that country and appraises the local people about the activities that are being conducted by JAINA in the US.

I appeal to one and all to make concerted efforts under the auspices of such an umbrella organisation and, in the words of Swami Vivekanand, we must 'arise, awake and stop not' till our goal is reached. The enlightened community must not wait for a messiah to come to us and stir us into action. Our salvation lies in action, now and here.



## **The Agam Vani in the Teachings of Shrimad Rajchandra**

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One can hardly find a person in the world who has not shed tears. Tears are shed when one is in pain or on the death of a beloved one or when one suffers a shock. But these are tears of ordinary mortals, not of a saint.

A saint weeps when he sees others suffer or are in a state of anguish. His eyes become moist when the world is in throes of pain. Bhagwan Buddha wept seeing an old man and a dead body. Bhagwan Mahavira's eyes welled with tears when he saw Sangamdev, bound by *karma* and committing sins. When did Shrimad Rajchandra shed tears ? It happened when he was aged seven and his mother asked him to mince vegetables. He wondered as to how many invisible organism he would be harming thereby.

We have known people showing compassion to visible souls but here was Shrimad Rajchandra

facting compassionate towards the invisible ones. And that too at the age of seven ? In the beginning, he was a *Vaishnavait* but he was initiated into Jainism by his mother Devba. He felt compassion for the invisible souls when he saw his mother performing *pratikraman* (Penitential retreat) Jainism inculcated in him non-violence, compassion and sensitivity. His ideal, while a child, was Mahavira and he set out on the path of renunciation. For him Bhagwan Mahavira's sermons were a source of inspiration and his devotion towards him become his goal.

He had studied many a religious text. He was a diamond merchant and his transactions amounted to lakhs of rupees. When he found time, he would read *Agams* (Scripture). Gandhiji was surprised to find him engrossed in business on the one hand to earn his living, and on the other hand he drank deep from the ocean of *Agams* and other religious scriptures. In fact, he was introspecting all the time. Externally, it appeared that he was a hardcore businessman but his inner being had set its eyes on the path of salvation.

Shrimad Rajchandra studied not only Jain scriptures but others too. His favourite was *Yogvashishta*. Bhagwad Gita was the first book he gave to Mahatma Gandhiji, when Gandhi faced a spiritual crisis in his life. He had even read the Bible and the Old Testament. One who sees the world beyond the physical world can only realise the true essence of religion.

He pored over such Jain texts as *Adhyatmakalpdrum*, *Adhyatmasar*, *Kartikeyanupreksha*, *Yogadrashti Samacchaya*, *Samaysar* and *Sanmati Tark*. His speeches were replete with

references to these volumes. The verses of Anandghan were his favourite ones and often he would sing them and the reverberations would be heard miles away in forests.

The essence of *agams* is found reflected in his speeches. He wanted to show the world the path advocated by Bhagwan Mahavira. The path shown by Mahavira had been forgotten and was lost in the welter of dead rituals, creeds and blind adherence to beliefs. People were misled and the real path was invisible to them. Shrimad Rajchandra, therefore, drew attention to Mahavira's *agamvani*.

He said, "The path of renunciation is the true religion and repose your faith in it." He had abiding faith in *agamvani*. One who understands the philosophy of *Anekant* [Doctrine of manifold Predictions] can only understand the heart of Jain philosophy. *Atmasiddhishashtra* was born when the philosophy of *Anekant* got translated into poetry. It is called the *upanishad* of *atma*, the soul.

Some people believed that salvation is not possible through *jap*, *tap*, *vrat* or detachment since they are all physical. Salvation can be attained only through knowledge. Some believed otherwise. Shrimad Said :

त्याग विराग न चित्तमां, थाय न तेने ज्ञान,  
अटके त्याग विरागमां, ते भूले निज भान ।

[One who has no renunciation and non-attachment in mind cannot have knowledge of soul, one who stays satisfied in renunciation and non-attachment and does not have desire for attaining self-realisation he misses the knowledge of own soul, that means having observed renunciation and non-attachment with ignorance he indulges in self pride and honour and does not attain self realisation.]

Renunciation and abandonment are necessary to attain

*samyag gyan* but the *sadhak* has to go ahead and stop not till the ultimate goal, that is *moksha*, is reached :

आतम भावना भावता जीव लहे केवलज्ञान

He authored *Pushpamala* and *Mokshamala*, followed by *Bhavnabodh* in which he discusses the twelve *bhavanas* of Jainism. In *Vachanamruta* he asks not to abandon the path shown by Mahavira and at another place he says : Do not hesitate to take to the path shown by *Vir* [Bhagwan Mahavira].

He ate once a day and his diet consisted of one *roti* and milk. He would drink water only if offered. He did not give any specific instructions about his food prior to taking his meal. He insisted that a *mumukshu* should everyday study regularly *acharangsutra*, *uttaradhyansutra* and *dashvaikalikasutra*. He found profound philosophy in *acharang sutra* and he liked the simplicity of *dashvaikalik sutra* and *suyagadang sutra*.

The knowledge embedded in *agam* is answered in question 168 wherein he states that one life will not be sufficient to understand even one principle of Jain religion and to understand everything is next to impossible. He had reverence for all religions but he also believed that Jain philosophy is the essence of all sects. *Agams*, he said, discuss the cardinal principles and Jain philosophy has a holistic approach which examines truth from different angles. Just as no two souls can reside in one body, similarly no other philosophy can equal Jain philosophy.

He emphasises four principles of *agam* : (1) perfection, (2) abstinence, (3) truth and (4) desire to be helpful. He refers to

*Uttaradhyayansutra*, *Bhagwatisutra*, *Samvayangsutra* and *Sutrakrutang*.

He quotes *acharangsutra* : एगं जाणई से सच्चं जाणई, जे सच्चं जाणई ए एगं जाणई and says the path of self realisation is found in *agams*. He wants that not a single moment be wasted and he quotes ‘समयं गोयम् ! मा पमायए !’ from *Uttaradhyayan*. According to him reading or listening of *Sutrakrutang* is not enough but its goal should be self-realisation. Shrimad Rajchandra spread the gospel of Bhagwan Mahavira and the voice of *agamvani* among the *sadhak* and the *mumukshu*.



## Glossary

Adharma	- demerit
Ahimsa	- non harming
Ajiva	- non-living substance
Aloka	- light, vision
Anantanubandhi	- a karma, Infinite - bonding passion
Anashana	- fasting
Anekant	- multiplicity
Anekantvada	- the doctrine of manifold aspects
Anuprekshas	- laymens renunciation stage
Anuvratas	- minor vows pertaining only to lay people
Aparigraha	- non possession
Apramada	- vigilance
Asatta-adana-viramana	- sex indulgence
Atithi	- sharing with (ascetic) guests
Avasarpini	- regressive half-cycle
Avirati	- nonrestraint
Bhogopabhogaparimana	- vow of limiting consumables and non-consumables
Chaturmas	- rainy residence
Dana	- charity; alms-giving
Devata	- deity, celestial, divine god
Digvrata	- direction - restricting vow
Diksha	- initiation
Dushama-Sushama	- privation with plenty
Ekant	- one-sided

Ganadharas	- supports of the order; i.e. the first mendicant disciples of Tirthankara
Gotra	- exogamous groups
Gupti	- self-control, restraint
Himsa	- violence
Jain/Jaina	- follower of a Jina, Synonym for Nigantha
Jina	- spiritual victor, a synonym for tirthankara
Jiva	- soul
Kaivalya	- omniscience
Kala	- time stages within the progressive and regressive half-cycle
Karma	- fine particles of matter
Karunya	- compassionate feeling
Kashaya	- passion
Kausagga	- meditation with detached body
Kayaklesha	- mortification of the body
Kevalajnana	- knowledge isolated for karmic obstruction, infinite knowledge; knowledge involving awareness of every existent in all its qualities and modes
Loka	- sphere, universe, cosmos
Mahavrat	- the five great vows of a mendicant
Maithuna	- copulation
Mithyatva	- non-righteousness
Moksha	- salvation, emancipation from the cycle of birth and death
Mrushavada	- false world utterance untruism

Nirjara	- dissociation of karms
Parishaha-jaya	- affliction
Paryushan	- eight or ten scared days of spiritual activities and austerities
Pramoda	- gladness
Pratikraman	- ritualized confession
Pratimas	- Image
Prayaschitta	- repentance
Pudgala	- matter
Ratna traya	- the three jewels, right faith or insight, right knowledge, right conduct
Sadhu	- mendicant
Sadhvi	- nun, female saints
Samayika	- attaining equanimity; fusion with the true self
Samiti	- regulation
Samsara	- cycle of transmigration
Samvara	- inhibition
Samyag darshana	- true spiritual insight
Samyag jnana	- right knowledge
Shasana	- jain teaching, Jain discipline
Shramana/Sramana	- jain monk
Siddhatva	- siddh - liberated soul
Sramani/Shramani	- jain nun
Sravaka/Shravaka	- householder
Sravika/Shravika	- Female votary
Svadhya	- the study of the scriptures



Syadvad	- the doctrine of qualified assertion
Tirthankaras	- builders of the ford, the omniscient, spiritual teachers of the Jinas
Unodari	- semi-fasting, under-eating
Utsarpini	- progressive half-cycle
Vaiyavruttya	- respectful/selfless service, adamant
Vinaya	- reverence to the elders
Vivikashayya	- solitary place of rest
Vrata	- vow
Vruttsamkshepa	- abandonment of stimulating or delicious food
Yagna	- sacrificial rite
Yoni	- tortoise - like raised birth place, a place for conception

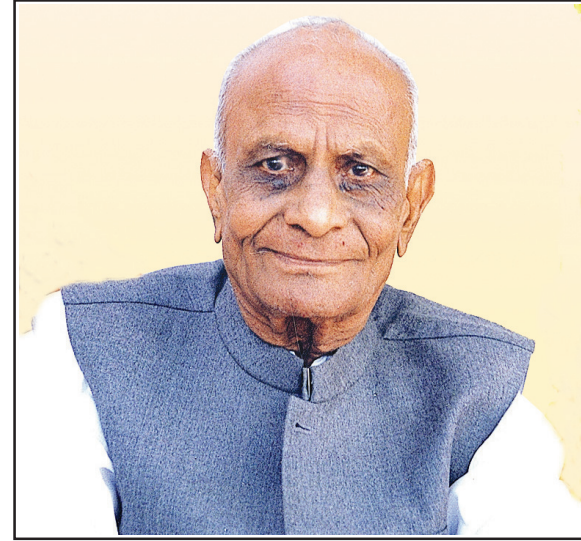


### **Book Cover**

Jain religion, one of the oldest in the world, can provide a new vision to the present-day world. Its precepts and principles have contemporary relevance in a world torn by violence, strifes, intolerance, greed and fratricidal wars. At the same time the values it epitomizes can lead people to live a joyous and harmonious life.

The present volume by eminent Jain thinker and litterateur Dr. Kumarpal Desai is the epitome of his profound thinking and deep reading of Jain philosophy.

*I dedicate this volume to*



**Late Shri Shantilal Shah**

(Editor - Gujarat Samachar)

Your inspiration ignited my creativity;

Your love and warmth filled my heart;

I received new insights into aspects of  
journalism and religion.

**Kumarpal Desai**